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THE MAKING OF URBAN SAFETY AND IM-MIGRANTS' POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN ITALY.

A comparative ethnography of local conflicts in Verona and Modena.

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This thesis is dedicated to phone centre-owners:
those who still have their shop and those who were forced to close down.

It is also dedicated to Maya, Fede, Rafa and Ana Sofia
that were born while I was 'giving birth' to this thesis.

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GLOSSARY

Assessorato Regionale alla Sanità (of the Veneto Region): the Assessorato responsible for Health policies at the regional level. **(see 1, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Assessore (Comunale) alle Attività Economiche (of the Municipality of Modena): the Assessore responsible for Economic Activities. **(see 2, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Assessore (Comunale) alla Sicurezza (of the Municipality of Verona): the Assessore responsible for Urban Safety. **(see 2, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Assessore Regionale alla Sanità (of the Veneto Region): the Assessore responsible for Health. **(see 2, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Circoscrizione: a sub-municipal administrative unit (similar to London boroughs). It is responsible for some administrative functions decentralised by **Municipalities** (*Comuni*). It is headed by a *Presidente di Circoscrizione*. **(see 3, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Comandante of the Local Police: the Chief of the Local Police (*Polizia Municipale*). He/she reports to the *Comune*. The main functions of the Local Police are the traffic control and the enforcement of local laws relating to commerce, legal residence and other administrative duties. In the last two decades, the Local Police has been increasingly entrusted with tasks relating to urban safety and tasks included in integrated plans for security - are carried out in coordination with the National Police.

Comitato(i) Provinciale(i) per l'Ordine e la Sicurezza Pubblica: permanent Councils that were introduced, with Law 121/1998, as auxiliary consultative bodies for Prefects, in order to allow for an effective coordination of the National Police and Local Authorities as far as public order and security related activities are concerned. The *Questore* is responsible for the operational definition of the guidelines defined by the respective Comitato Provinciale.

Comune(i) (see 4, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Consigliere(i) Comunale(i) (see 5, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Consiglio Comunale (of the Municipality of Modena) **(see 6, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Consigliere(i) of the Circoscrizione (see 7, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Consigliere(i) Provinciale(i) (see 8, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Consigliere(i) Regionale(i) (see 9, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive (of the Municipality of Verona): a Municipal Manager responsible for Commercial and Productive Activities. **(see 10, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Dirigente (Divisione) Polizia Amministrativa (of the Questura of Verona): the Chief of the *Divisione Polizia Amministrativa* of the Questura.

Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici (of the Municipality of Modena): a Municipal Manager responsible for Economic Interventions. **(see 10, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Dirigente Servizio Politiche per la Sicurezza e la Polizia Locale (of the Emilia-Romagna Region): the Dirigente responsible for the regional office for Safety Policies and Local Police. **(see 10, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Giunta Comunale (of Modena and Verona) **(see 11, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

I**nspector of the Local Police** *(Ispettore della Polizia Locale)*: a junior Officer of the Local Police.

Local Authority (see 4, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Municipality (see 4, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

President of the Circoscrizione *(Presidente della Circoscrizione)* **(see 12, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Provincia (see 13, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Questura: the provincial headquarter of the National Police.

Questore: the Chief of the *Questura*, which is the provincial headquarter of the National Police. He/she reports directly to the Ministry of Interior and is responsible for the technical and operational coordination of order and public security services. The structure of the Questura is characterised by the Ufficio di Gabinetto del Questore (the Cabinet Office of the Questore), the Divisione Anticrimine (the Anti-crime Division) and the *Divisione Polizia Amministrativa, Sociale e Immigrazione* (the Division of the Administrative, Social and Immigration Police). The latter deals with administrative functions and comprises the Ufficio di Polizia Amministrativa and the Ufficio Immigrazione e Stranieri.

Regione (see 14, glossary guide pp. 13-14)

Responsabile Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana (of the Municipality of Modena): a Municipal Manager who carries out administrative functions within the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana. She reports to the Local Police and the Assessorato alla Sicurezza (the Assessorato responsible for Urban Safety). The Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana was created in 1995 as part of the project 'Modena Città Sicura'. Until June 2009, this office was part of the Gabinetto del Sindaco (the Mayor's Cabinet Office). Following the 2009 elections, it became part of the Assessorato Qualità e sicurezza della città that deals with quality of life and urban safety and in particular with issues relating to prevention and territorial control. **(see 15, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Responsabile Ufficio Edilizia (of the Municipality of Modena): a Municipal Manager who carries out administrative functions within the Ufficio Edilizia. He reports to the Assessore alla Programmazione e Gestione del Territorio Infrastrutture e Mobilità (the Assessore for the Infrastructures, Mobility, the Programming and Planning of the Territory). **(see 15, glossary guide pp. 13-14)**

Vice Comandante of the Local Police: the Deputy Chief of the Local Police, who supports the Comandante in his/her activities.

Glossary guide: A brief introduction to the Italian Administrative System.

The Italian administrative system comprises three main tiers: Comune, Provincia **(13)**, Regione **(14)**.

The Comune (I use the terms Municipality and Local Authority to refer to it) **(4)** is an administrative entity characterised by precise territorial boundaries referable to the local level; The Provincia is a sub-state administrative entity with responsibility over a number of Local Authorities; the Regione (the Region) is an autonomous administrative entity with its own statute, power and functions. Italy comprises more than twenty regions, including among others Veneto, where Verona is located, and Emilia-Romagna, where Modena is located.

The Consiglio Regionale is the legislative body of the Region. It comprises 30 to 80 Consiglieri Regionali - as set forth by each regional statute. They are elected by citizens and they are part of a Gruppo Consigliare, that is to say a group comprising Consiglieri **(9)** who share the same political orientation. The Consiglio Regionale has the following functions: legislative functions relating to the exclusive sphere of competence of the Regione and its complementary role with respect to the State; administrative and control functions relating to the monitoring of the activities carried out by the Giunta Regionale and the Presidente della Giunta Regionale; investigative functions which are carried out through specific Commissioni Consigliari (Commissions), which can be either permanent or temporary and which provides the Consiglio Regionale with an advisory support as far as the legislative process, as well as control, investigative or research activities are concerned; functions relating to the definition of the political orientation of the Regione. The Consiglio Regionale has its own regulations, budget and personnel, which are independent from those of the Giunta Regionale.

The Giunta regionale is a the executive body of the Regione. It is a board structure that comprises the Presidente of the Regione, who has a coordinating role alongside executive, administrative and legislative functions, and various Assessori - the number of whom is set forth by the regional statute. Every Assessore **(2)** is devolved responsibility on specific policy fields (the same applies at the local and provincial level, as indicated below). While the Assessorato **(1)** - the department within which Assessori sit - can be compared to a small Ministry, it does not embody a separate distinct administrative unit, but it is part of the Regione's organisational system. The members of the Giunta are nominated by the

Presidente of the Regione. He/she can choose them both within or without the group of the Consiglieri Regionali.

The Dirigenti are public officials who are responsible the management of a given office within the Regione which deals with a limited number of policy fields. They report to the Assessore who is competent for the policy fields they deal with. He/she can be entrusted with specific functions relating to inspections, consultancy, research. He/she can also represent the Regione in international events. The 'figure' of the Dirigente derives from a principle set forth by art. 4 of legislative decree 165/2001 which ruled over the separation between political and administrative duties. Access to this position is through public concourse. A number of Funzionari can collaborate with the Dirigente in running of the office he/she is responsible for.

The Comune and the Provincia have the same organisational structure of the Regione. They comprise a Consiglio Comunale **(6)** and Giunta Comunale **(11)** and Provinciale respectively. The Consiglio Comunale is made up of the Mayor and a number of other Consiglieri Comunali **(5)**. The Consiglio Provinciale is made up of a Presidente della Provincia and a number of Consiglieri Provinciali **(8)**. As for the Regione, a number of Dirigenti **(10)** are responsible for the management of specific offices and a number of Responsabili **(15)**, that is to say Municipal Managers, carry out administrative functions within a given office.

It should be added that the Italian administrative system comprises the Circoscrizione **(3)**. These are bodies which hold participatory, consultative and implementation functions. In addition, the Comune can entrust them with responsability over issues concerning their specific sphere of competence, that is to say those relating to a territorial area comprising one or more neighbourhoods. The Circoscrizione is made up of a Presidente **(12)** and a Consiglio di Circoscrizione, which in turn includes various Consiglieri **(7)**.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyses, in a comparative light, two cases of local conflicts in the northern Italian cities of Verona and Modena. Both relate to phone centres, that is to say commercial spaces that generally offer Internet and telephone services (see section 4.2). Various conflicts emerged in Italy throughout the 1990s and have continued doing so with the beginning of the new millennium. They invariably centred around perceived and actual problems somehow connected to neighbourhood decay and micro-criminality. Scholars provided considerable evidence in this sense, with focus on native residents' narratives and the reasons that led to the emergence of conflicts in the first place. In other studies, attention was focused more on policies. They showed that the majority of conflicts have been dealt with by keeping a strong emphasis on safety. The cases reviewed here represent no exception.

The main aim of this work has been to highligh contentious dynamics, with the ultimate goal of providing a voice to actors, in particular to those whose voice is mostly absent in relevant academic accounts: im-migrants[1]. In the specific context of this thesis, specifically referring to phone centre-owners and customers, that is to say the target of phone centre-policies. I have been guided first of all by a political scope.

I have been an activist in the field of migration for almost ten years now and I have grown increasingly preoccupied with the ample space the media have dedicated to their alleged criminal nature. Very little account has been given instead to their contribution to the receiving society. I have learnt a great deal about it, particularly through my collaboration with Cestim, a local NGO in Verona which has been working on immigration related issues since the beginning of the 1990s, when the first consistent flows of im-migrants arrived in Verona. For my part, I mostly collaborated in projects relating to school integration of young people with parents of immigrant origins. At the same time, I have had the chance to become familiar with a whole variety of other projects relating to the

[1] All throughout the following chapters I will continue using the term 'im-migrants', as a noun, while alternating it with the term 'newcomers'. This will make some paragraphs sound rather redundant. However, a choice was made in this sense as it vividly recalls the im-migration movement of people from their country of origin into a receiving one with all the political and legal implications that derive, which ultimately constrain their agency. By doing so, I intended to keep attention high on the unequal power distribution among contentious actors.

sphere of housing, work, health and culture. I have noticed that within all of these projects there were different ways in which im-migrants were engaging, despite the fact they did not necessarily do so within an actual project, nor through the institutional avenues (potentially) accessible to them. I will now briefly describe the steps I made at the beginning of this research work.

When I first started reflecting on it, I was very much fascinated by the debate on '*insurgent citizenship*', promoted by anthropologist James Holston (1999) and urban planner Leonie Sandercock (1998, 2003). As banal as it might seem, this made me feel 'more comfortable', as my background was in this discipline. I had explored some of her work while writing my master thesis on local integration policies in Leicester (UK) and Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and had found it inspiring. It had brought my attention to the collision between 'formal' and 'substantive' citizenship and I was eager to explore these concepts further. My principal intention was that of researching on im-migrants' political participation, while paying attention to non-conventional forms that fall outside institutional channels and might be invisible to researchers. I reviewed the literature on citizenship studies, searching for an adequate theoretical and methodological approach that could support my endeavour.

After considerable hours spent reading books and articles and numerous discussions with colleagues, friends and researchers[2], I came to realise that my interest in citizenship could not lead me very far (see section 3.3.1), but I did retain an important idea from it: if we take im-migrants' engagement seriously, we need to go well beyond any formal model of citizenship to reach out for actual actions. This could be defined as an '*anthropology of citizenship and of ordinary citizenship*'[3] (Cefaï 2002: 55), which is capable of putting their agency back on the agenda. In fact, urban dwellers typically engage and get ahead of the public discourse. While awaiting for any right to be granted, they continue asserting them.

As my work progressed, my main preoccupation matured to be strictly connected with politics. The term in itself is sufficiently contentious to have spawned a rich literature, as Davies and Imbroscio (2009) affirmed[4]. However, as the authors suggested, it can be described as follows:

[2] I am particularly grateful for discussions with Tommaso Vitale. He regularly gave me a real hard time but his help has been precious.
[3] my translation
[4] See Leftwich (2004) for an overview of the key debated (cit. Davies and Imbroscio 2009).

'*the study of government, institutions and public engagement in dialogue and partnership with, or against, government. It is about the dynamic relationships between peoples, conflictual or otherwise. (…) It transgresses other disciplines. Centrally, of course, urban politics is and always has been about power; its genesis, its acquisition, its forms and its uses.*' (4)

If we look at immigration studies in Italy, three main lines can be identified, as Caponio (2006) suggested: a descriptive one focusing on policies and the so-called good practices which has been mostly heralded by international agencies; a second one on im-migrants' participation which has taken the perspective of '*political opportunity structures*' (Kriesi et al. 1995, Tarrow 1989, 1994, Tilly and Tarrow 2008) thus highlighting the outcomes of mobilisation rather than processes; a third one on policy processes which has reconstructed actors' networks. While the latter has addressed issues relating to politics, it has mostly done so with focus on the homo politicus and his/her interest in maintaining consensus. Additionally, little work has been carried out on the nexus between politics and policy. This is hardly surprising, as scholars' attention - at least in Italy - has very much concentrated on the idea that local policy matters. At the same time, researchers, outside Italy, have long been highlighting the limits of a similar approach: '*polices are not just outputs but dynamic processes (Wildavsky 1979). They are interrelated actions (Jenkins 1978), comprising decisions and non-decisions (Bardach 1977) which are all somehow oriented towards a socially perceived problem (Dunn 1981).*' (Caponio 2006: 23). Throughout this research project I have tried to give a contribution in this sense, by shedding light on contentious dynamics among actors, with specific attention to im-migrants. As anticipated, this choice was first of all political. It was also academic. In fact, newcomers have been mostly studied as objects of policies rather than subjects of politics (Castles and Miller 1993). How could this be addressed in a practical sense to lead to a successful outcome?

Sociology has always been very attentive to conflictual dynamics. It has taught us that if we want to understand what happens with marginal groups, including im-migrants, as well as poor and deviant people, it is at conflicts we need to look. We learnt it from the Chicago school. Piven and Cloward (1977) re-inforced this point further from the perspective of political science. My work acknowledges these traditions and draws from them, in part.

It also draws from scholars (Koopmans et al 2005) who argued that, in that past decade, against an increasing politicisation of immigration and ethnic relations, newcomers have become active participants in the political process. Italian researchers, on their side, have

only recently focused on this field of analysis, by investigating on associationism and conventional forms of engagement (see Camozzi 2009 for an overview). In fact, these are generally the first forms of political engagement to be studied. Time is now ripe for attention to be cast on other '*non conventional*' forms (Sani 1996). This research work can be understood as a little piece of the puzzle that will shed light on im-migrants' political participation, by looking at dispersed forms of participation falling both within and without official institutional scenes.

A brief introductory note is required to present the Italian perspective on im-migrants relating to politics. Any analysis of newcomers' political engagement needs be set against a particular scenario. Italy has long been a country of emigration. Unprepared as they were to cope with it, politicians have consistently 'treated' immigration it in terms of emergency. Over the past decades, another phenomenon has been dealt with in a similar line: that of micro-criminality. Public opinion throughout the EU has been increasingly troubled by the insecurity of urban life. Dedicated discussions have invaded both political and media debates. Numerous alarmist campaigns have been organised all over the country. Im-migrants, in turn, have been blamed as the main cause of insecurity. Alternative accounts have described them as victims. What is important is that their role as political actors, particularly in the context of urban safety policies, has failed to be considered at all. It is apparent that scholars have assumed their passivity. I wanted to question such an interpretation, as I believe it suffers from a structural bias which explains im-migrants' collective action with reference to more or less favourable political opportunities.

CHAPTER 1
THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH.

1.1 Aims, objectives and research questions.

The main aim of this research project has been that of observing contentious dynamics. In particular, it was the author's intention to investigate the conditions for the emergence of im-migrants' collective actions, including especially non conventional forms of engagement.

The objectives of this work were rather ambitious. They included an analysis of the following: (1) how the issue relating to phone centres emerged and what arguments have been raised by actors over time, thus feeding into the definition of a dedicated legislative framework; (2) how the Municipalities of Verona and Modena, the cities selected as case studies, have been dealing with the trouble of phone centres; (3) how actors' collective actions, and in particular that of im-migrants, have changed over time, in terms of the forms and dynamics of engagement.

I initially aimed to address these issues with two main research questions in mind: 'If citizenship is an unstable and highly contested institution which emerges in specific places in response to specific struggles, can its dynamics be highlighted through the analysis of specific urban conflicts? Further to this, what are the conditions for the emergence of 'citizenship practices' that fall outside institutional channels?' These questions have remained almost unchanged during the course of this work, both in their form and substance. Nonetheless, as soon as I abandoned the literature on citizenship, I substituted the term 'citizenship' with that of 'engagement'. It seemed to be an appropriate decision to avoid any a priori association of im-migrants' political forms of participation with a normative model (of citizenship) which could preclude their capacity of action in the first place. I will further discuss this in section 3.3.1

As I progressed with my work, I have referred to the literature on social movements, in which two main interpretations of contentious dynamics can be found: the '*political opportunity structure theory*' (Kriesi et al. 1995, Tarrow 1989, 1994, Tilly and Tarrow 2008) and the '*resource mobilisation theory*' (McCarthy and Zald 1977, Morris 1981, McAdam 1982, Verba et al. 1995, Diani and McAdam 2003). Scholars studying im-imigrants' engagements have

privileged the first perspective. This very much inspired the selection of my second case study, as I will explain in the next section. Nonetheless, something was still missing from my theoretical frame. My main concern was not reporting on collective actions undertaken by im-migrants, as I did not want to merely highlight the outcomes of their actions. Rather, I wanted to elucidate the process that accompanied it. The political opportunity structure theory could be a valuable tool to detect the constraints and opportunities that im-migrants encountered, but I was looking for a perspective capable of moving away from structural considerations to focus on newcomers' capabilities. I wanted to try and overcome a narrative of domination that ultimately reinstates undeniable power asymmetries. Over time, I developed a '*pragmatic sensibility*' (Cefaï et al. 2009) (see section 3.5) which, I feel, helped me considerably in the effort to investigate the path that actors, and particularly im-migrants, have undertaken when opening up to a '*public arena*'[5].

1.2 The various phases of the research.

1.2.1 The exploratory phase of the research.

In April 2008, I started with the explorative phase of my work. I did so in Verona, my home town, where I have been working for a number of years. This was going to be helpful both to limit my costs and to have an easier access to the field. In fact, only the first consideration proved correct.

I undertook a quick press review in search for one or more cases of local conflicts somehow involving im-migrants. I soon found out that phone centres were at the centre of a heated debate, following increasing residents' complaints including, among other things, disturbances caused by their customers. I then decided to organise a few interviews (8) with entrepreneurs of various immigrant origins who manage restaurants, food stores, kebab shops, clothing shops and phone centres. I was wondering whether other shops, that I considered to be typical meeting spaces just as much as phone centres were, could be the source of similar complaints, even though the press did not report on them. In fact they were not. It was phone centres that were perceived as particularly problematic, as I later realised (section 6.1.2).

[5] Cefaï and Joseph (2002) defined it as '*a scene where, in front of some spectators, the claimants to ownership of a public problem face each other*' (my translation) (58). The author drew from work by Cooley (1909), Dewey (1927) and Park (1904) to show how the emergence of a problem is associated with the constitution of alternative descriptions of a given situation, around which contending voices confront in front of a public (Cefaï and Pasquier 2003: 20).

The 3 interviews I carried out with phone centre-owners encouraged me to investigate further on them, as a few interesting elements had emerged: a new legislative framework was being introduced to regulate the sector, in the face of residents' complaints. Additionally, owners were trying to mobilise to make their voice heard. In the following two months, I undertook another 10 interviews and I wrote up a paper I presented at a conference in St. Petersburg.

1.2.2 The identification of the case studies.

Interviews brought up various interesting issues about phone centres. More were highlighted in the feedback I received during my paper presentation. I grew convinced the case was well worth researching. Among other things, the Municipality of Verona was becoming well-known around the country for its strict spatial control approach to urban safety and for its discriminating attitude towards newcomers. Phone centres provided an exemplary case in this sense: the relevant legislative framework aimed at addressing urban safety issues in a way that phone centre-owners judged as discriminating. I thought there was space for ample empirical aspects to be investigated, besides the theoretical concern at the core of my project.

During summer 2008, the decision was taken to identify a second case study. This could allow me to further analyse, in a comparative light, some of the first findings with respect to both im-migrants' engagement and the policy process that lead up to the regulation of phone centres, together with the implications it carried with it in terms of politics. I was well aware that a regional piece of legislation had been defined in other regions too, such as Lombardy, Piedmont and Tuscany. While discussing with a few colleagues, it became clear that the Emilia-Romagna region was another case in point. I decided to focus on Modena, where also a local piece of regulation had also been under discussion.

There were various were the reasons why this city was selected as a second case study. First of all, I was introduced to the Dirigente Servizio Politiche per la Sicurezza e la Polizia Locale. She works with many officers of the Modenese local authority and offered to facilitate my access to the field in a city that she described herself as 'very sensitive' to academic research[6]. Second, this city has been at the forefront of urban safety policy, in

[6] She referred particularly to the mayor, a law professor who has been involved in the policy and research process that accompanied the definition of local safety policies over the past twenty years.

Italy (section 5.2) and it has also been cited over the year as a (natural) laboratory for innovative integration policies (Joly 1992, Rex and Samad 1996 cit. Caponio 2006). Third, Modena has long been governed by a Communist coalition, which has been uncritically considered as 'open' towards immigration related issues. Verona, on the contrary, has been governed by Christian Democrats. Particularly since the arrival of the new Mayor, in 2007, it has been assumed as rather inhospitable towards newcomers. Yet, little empirical investigation has been carried out to understand the conditions and implications for similar developments in these cities (for Modena see Barberis 2008). In addition, internal divisions more than the contrary have been observed within political parties as far as immigration issues are concerned, particularly when safety preoccupations predominate simultaneously (Freeman 1995, Hollifield 1997, Zincone 1998 cit. Caponio 2006). Fourth, as far as my main preoccupation was concerned, the political engagement of im-migrants, it could be fruitful to investigate, in a comparative light, how different political subcultures affected it, in line with the political opportunity structure theory. While this approach, applied to im-migrants' mobilisation, has provided much comparative evidence on the role of citizenship regimes, it has been far less attentive to the study of inequalities within countries, thus my research project was envisaged as a contribution in this direction.

It should be specified that Verona and Modena are situated in the so-called '*Third Italy*'[7] which has proved particularly attractive for im-migrants. Furthermore, it is here that some of the transformative trends of immigration, including first and foremost entrepreneurial dynamism, have been mostly observed (see section 4.1.1.1). The expression is used to describe an area, in the north-eastern part of the country, which has been associated with a particular economic development model, characterised as it as by the proliferation of small to medium size production units. Such a trend has been repeatedly contrasted with that of the North in general and even more with the backwardness of the South.

I do not wish to claim that the cases chosen for the analysis can be used in any way to further generalise on policy and political trends characterising the rest of the Italian peninsula, I do believe, however, they can provide with relevant empirical evidence, while unveiling processes (Mitchell 1983 cit. Small 2009), consistent with the idea that the fieldwork should actually be devoted to it (Lamont and White forthcoming cit. Small 2009).

[7] This expression is used to describe the proliferation of small-scale production units associated with developments which have characterized the north-eastern part of the country. This trend has been repeatedly contrasted with that of the North in general and even more with the backwardness of the South. The term was introduced by Bagnasco (1977).

In this direction, even a single-case study, if well executed, can reasonably state that a particular phenomenon, tendency, dynamic exists (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Lofland and Lofland, 1995 cit. Small 2009). It is one of the main advantages of an ethnographic approach, as privileged in this work, because it opens up the possibility of truly emergent knowledge. In the worlds of Burawoy et al. (1991), rather than '*statistical significance*', such a method searches for '*societal significance*' (281).

This links up to another crucial issue. Various interviewees all throughout the research process wondered why I was researching on phone centres. As time passed, the whole issue was becoming part of history: on the one side, various pieces of legislation were being passed to regulate the sector and there was no apparent added value in carrying out any analysis in this sense; on the other many signs were becoming manifest that the business was slowly declining (see section 4.2). I believe very few interviewees actually understood the main research questions I had in mind. In part, I was always rather vague about it – I was much more explicit with phone centre-owners as I wanted to follow their engagement, in person, as much as possible; in part it was simply not evident for them. I am referring particularly to policy-makers. In spite of their reticence, I grew increasingly convinced of the relevance of my project, as it will become evident through the next chapters.

1.2 3 The choice of a qualitative approach.

In order to analyse contentious dynamics and im-migrants' forms of political engagement, I adopted a variety of qualitative techniques that I considered most adequate to carry out my analysis. These included a systematic press review of a few local newspapers, a content analysis of policy documents, semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

The research process started with a press review of l' Arena, the main Veronese newspaper, as anticipated above. I have had the possibility to access its dedicated online archive thanks to Cestim, the local NGO I am still collaborating with. A (non systematic) press review of Modenese newspapers was carried out through a variety of channels, instead. On the one side the Dirigente Servizio Politiche per la Sicurezza e la Polizia Locale gave me the permission to use the electronic search tool of the Regional Authority. As it did not allow a systematic review, I complemented it with a copy of articles which had been collected by the president of IP Associati, the association of phone centre-owners that was formed in

Modena, and by the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici of the Municipality of Modena.

Policy documents were all downloaded from the websites of the Municipality of Verona and Modena and from those of Veneto and Emilia-Romagna regional Authorities. They provided mewith invaluable material to integrate the empirical material that was cumulated all throughout the research process, as it allowed to highlight the dynamics of politics and their nexus with policies (see section 6.2; 6.3).

1.2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews.

From April 2008 to February 2010, I carried out 84 interviews. Approximately a third of them was to phone centre-owners (18 in Verona and 19 in Modena). If we consider the shops that are still open, it can be safely said I interviewed all respective owners at least once. The majority are of Bengalese origins, particularly those who work in Modena. On average they are aged between 30 and 45, with a few exceptions: a couple of cases were recorded of owners or assistants in their twenties.

Other people were interviewed, including different actors that were all somehow involved in the conflicts around phone centres: 2 Internet point-owners (1 in Verona and 1 in Modena); 4 lawyers (one in Modena and three in Verona), 3 representatives and 3 founding members of the Coordinamento Migranti, an association that supported phone centre-owners in Verona; the president of IP Associati, the association of phone centre-owners that was founded in Modena; one of the founding members of the informal association that preceded IP Associati; the president of the Consulta degli Immigrati in Verona; the Secretary of a workers union in Modena and 1 trade unionist in Verona; 5 shopkeepers; 5 representatives of neighbourhood committees in Modena. Among police forces, I interviewed: the Vice Comandante of the Local Police and a local police inspector both in Modena and Verona; the Comandante of the Local Police in Verona; the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa of Verona. Informal chats were carried out with an Inspector of the Local Police in the headquarter of the Veronese neighbourhood of Veronetta and with two officers I met during inspections in the same city.
Among policy-makers, I had the opportunity to interview the Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona and 5 officers and officials of the Municipality of Modena who took part in the participatory process that lead up to the

definition of the local regulation: the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici, the Responsabile Ufficio Edilizia, the Responsabile Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana and two operators of Punto d'Accordo, the mediation service. Moreover, an official of the Emilia-Romagna Regional Authority was also interviewed: a Funzionario del Servizio Programmazione e Distribuzione Commerciale.

For the sake of clarity, a glossary was created on page 10 that includes an explanation of the positions held by the above indicated interviewees. The same was done for other actors that were not interviewed and yet cited in this thesis, as well as for other terms. The main reason for it is that any translation would have carried with it potential mis-interpretations not only as far as their responsibilities and decision-making power are concerned, but also in relation to the administrative system within which they operate.

A last group of interviews was lead with a variety of actors that were involved in the conflicts of Via Rossa, in Verona, and Via Bianca, in Modena. These are two specific neighbourhoods on which I decided to investigate as to highlight a number of trends that were emerging in the contexts under analysis. In Via Rossa I interviewed a total of 8 people, including the operators of Punto d'Accordo; a phone centre-owner; the young representative of the relevant neighbourhood committee, who is also a resident; an occupier of the apartment building above the phone centre located in Via Rossa, two elderly residents; a shopkeeper; the president of the relevant Circoscrizione. In Via Bianca, I interviewed a total of 11 people, including 2 phone centre-owners; an occupier of the apartment block above of one of the phone centres; the president of the relevant Circoscrizione; the parish priest; 2 Consiglieri of the Circoscrizione, one of whom is also a resident and shopkeeper; another shopkeeper and two residents who acted as 'mediators' (see section 8.1.2).

The first 8 contacts, with phone centre-owners, were provided by a colleague of mine, who worked and still works at a local trade union. I did not know any entrepreneur of immigrant origins. As a native resident with little contacts with immigrant communities, I thought it would be better to be introduced by someone who was familiar with them. My fear was that of being perceived as an intruder. In fact I was, in a number of cases, when I approached them directly, by visiting their shop.

All other interviewees were also contacted directly. I managed to carry out all those I had planned, with a few exceptions: I was not granted the permission to interview the Mayor of Verona nor that of Modena, nor the Dirigente Polizia Amministrative in Modena. It would have been fruitful to interview more police officers too, not only from the Local Police but also from other police bodies. It was not possible.

I will not report any of the outlines I prepared for my interviews. A specific outline was prepared for every person I met. To be precise, starting from a first general one, I constantly refined those which followed, according to the person I was going to meet and the issues I wanted to investigate further. Interviews normally lasted between half an hour and two hours. They normally took place in interviewees' workplace, regardless of whether I was interviewing phone centre-owners, shopkeepers or local officers. In the case of residents and neighbourhood committee representatives, I mostly met them in cafès.

A last point on data analysis. I started transcribing interviews, without the support of any speech recognition software, as I progressed with my interviews. I only used Express Dictate, a computer based dictaphone system in the last months, when I was well into writing up my thesis and I had a few interviews left. On the one side, I chose to do the transcription gradually as I felt it was a good way to help me track the progress of my work and possibly save up time when writing the actual thesis. On the other side I forced myself to do as I soon started presenting parts of my research at various conferences[8]. Three of the papers I presented turned into proposals that are now under revision for publication. What I want to stress here is that this way of organising my work has proved very effective over time. First of all, it obliged me to have precise deadlines to meet. Second, it provided me with a precious opportunity to start reflecting on my findings, while confronting them with my theoretical stance in front of a competent audience. In fact, most of the empirical chapters of this thesis are a re-elaboration of papers written in the past two years. Third and most important, I would say, it has kept me going particularly at times when I mostly

[8] 'It is for the government to control and manage undocumented!': phone centre-owners in face of 'residual' deportation practices in Italy, presented at the conference 'Deportation and the Development of Citizenship. An International Conference', organised by Centre on Policy, Migration and Society and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford *December 2009*; 'Is there any continuum between policies and politics? The contribution of a pragmatic stance to the analysis of local conflicts', presented at the XXIII SISP Congress, Rome, *September 2009*; 'Migranti in gioco nella regolamentazione dei phone centres: i casi di Modena e Verona', presented at the conference 'Il gioco dei poteri nelle trasformazioni della democrazia', AIS, Rome, *May 2009*; 'Can you hear me? Migrants and the struggle for public space', presented at the phd seminar on 'Public Space', organised by TU Delft University of Technology, *March 2009*; 'Public space as a key site of conflicts over citizenship', presented at the conference 'Public space and social cohesion in the city', organised by the Centre for Independent Social Research of St. Petersburg and Manchester Metropolitan University, CISR St. Petersburg, Russia, *July 2008*.

felt the burden of loneliness that any PhD student is bound to experience and that was made even harder to cope with as I was struggling for any feedback. I would strongly recommend any PhD student to so the same, in spite of the efforts it definitely requires.

1.2.3.2 Participant observation.

In order to seize how im-migrants were opening up to the public arena and how contentious dynamics were unraveling, I needed to take a close look at processes. An ethnographic approach seemed to be ideal to support my objective. During my field work I constantly devised new strategies that would help me interact in the most effective of ways with all actors. I certainly made a number of mistakes. I learnt a great deal in the process.

Ethnography can be intended in various ways. On the one side, it is an approach that produces knowledge on an unknown social phenomenon; on the other, it can allow to '*de-familiarise*' (Dal Lago and De Biasi 2002) a well-known one, by looking at it from a different perspective. My intention was exactly that of looking at im-migrants' engagement from a different angle, by following the various steps they were making. However, ethnography was not the only method adopted to explore contentious dynamics in Verona and Modena. As anticipated, interviews were also carried out, thus feeding into participant observation and viceversa. According to many ethnographers it is desirable for interviews to follow up on ethnographic work. In my case, the process took a reverse direction. In fact, these two methods went hand in hand. In all various phases of my research, I tried and integrate as much as possible the findings accumulated both on and off the field. Having said this, participant observation was very much instrumental in providing me with rich material I could examine during interviews (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), not only to confirm the actual findings, but also to open up the research to new avenues.

The privileged site of participant observation were phone centres. I spent a lot of time in phone centres in Verona (from May to November 2008) and in phone centres in Modena (from November 2008 to May 20099). In the first two weeks my visits were planned on an everyday basis. They then followed at discontinuous intervals (twice a week on average on different days). Afterwards, I went back for occasional visits, for a day, mostly in coincidence with interviews I had planned either with phone centre-owners or other actors, till October 2009.

At the beginning I visited them with the main intention of interviewing owners. Due to their long working hours, there were very few chances for me to set up any appointment anywhere else. This seemed to be a constraint for my research. I had to spend entire days in these shops in order to conduct a full interview with owners. Furthermore, we were repeatedly interrupted every time a customer came in. It also proved rather expensive, particularly for the fieldwork in Modena, as I had to travel back and forth for a number of months. In spite of this, phone centres turned out to be an excellent site of observation. It was there that owners often met with fellow colleagues to discuss both business matters and issues connected to their collective actions. It was there that interactions took place between owners and police forces, as the shops became the target of inspections. Curiously enough, only twice did I experience a police inspection. Regular customers provided me with plenty of accounts in this sense.

The extended sites of my observations were meetings and protests. Unfortunately, when I started the fieldwork protests had already taken place in both cities and I could only be present in one, in Modena, at the end of 2008. Retrospective interviews helped me fill the gaps, at least to a certain extent. Meetings were well under way instead and I managed to attend a few of them (3 in Modena between November and February 2009, and 3 in Verona between May and September 2008, excluding smaller meetings in phone centres).

I was eager to attend the meetings whereby owners confronted local and police officers. I missed a few of them - that had taken place before my research started. Others that followed could not be attended either, not in Modena at least. With the beginning of the electoral period, the 'atmosphere' got very tense there, as I will better explain later and I thought it would be senseful to follow owners from 'behind the doors'. In other words, when I accompanied them to a couple of meetings, in November 2008, I waited outside the meeting room. I was also present when they protested, in December 2008, of course I remained 'hands off banners'. This created some misunderstandings with them. They could hardly understand why I could not help. I do not think they ever understood where the problem lied. Could I not be a researcher and at the same time an 'activist'? Some reflections on this will be reported at the end of the methodological section.

Neighbourhoods were another site of observation, including cafés, public squares, the street really. In the residual time of my observations in phone centres I walked around neighbourhoods, talked to people and asked them about the trouble of phone centres. This

is how I understood it was well worth focusing on a few specific case studies, as I eventually did when I identified those of Via Bianca and Via Rossa. I spent considerable time in the former, in May 2008. I was there for two weeks, almost every day. I got back a year later, in May 2009, for a few days, after I spent one week in Via Rossa. Previously, I had visited the area for a few days only, in December 2008. As I was hanging around a rather small area, a few residents grew suspicious about my prolongued presence. A few of them got a bit stiff and suggested I should talk to the president of the Circoscrizione.

1.3 Some of the difficulties in the fieldwork.

All in all the research process run rather smoothly. Nonetheless, some difficulties hampered my endeavours. While I was carrying out the first interviewees with phone centre-owners, in Verona, another student was starting researching around 'ethnic shops'. It was a design student and she was eager to take pictures of all these shops, in search as she was for their cultural traits. She was doing the same with phone centres. It was only when I first bumped into her that I started understanding why a few owners had been rather alarmed by my request to interview them. Later on they explained it was her intrusive attitude they had barely appreciated.

One of the biggest difficulties I experienced was certaintly with the language. Italian is my mother tongue and I can speak both English and French fluently. This helped indeed. I cannot speak any Bengalese yet - even though in these last years I have very much grown familiar with the Italian-Bengalese accent! In most of cases, I did manage to interview owners. Undoubtedly, it was rather tiring, as I had to swith continously from one language to another (as the original interview extracts reported in the appendices testify) or to ask someone - generally a phone centre-owner or a fellow im-migrants – to help me with the translation. In order not to complicate the reading of this thesis, whereby quotations were made in the body of this work, a full English translation was provided, together with a numbered reference to the original language extracts that can be found in the appendices.

The largest majority of interviews (78) were recorded with a professional voice recorder. Cases were not missing in which I switched it off during the interview. It was either because they asked me to do so or because I had the feeling the interviewee would feel more relaxed. Similar impressions mostly proved correct. In a few occasions, I decided not to use the voice recorder at all because interviewees seemed far too nervous about the

interview in the first place, to be even willing for me to record. I did repeatedly ensure interviews would be anonymous - with the exception of those carried out with police officers and policy-makers - but it did not help much. Arguably, this strictly depended on the fact that, all throughout the field work, tension was very high. It was all the more evident in Modena, when the electoral period was approaching, at the end of 2008.

I still do not know what happened exactly. Soon after I completed my first interview with a local policy-maker, I was kindly asked to interrupt my work. Apparently, the fear was rising that my presence on the field could be somehow intrusive with respect to the work the local authority was carrying out for a smooth implementation of the local regulation. I confronted with my supervisor to then explain, as calmly and professionally as I could, that I was confident my research would not disrupt officers' work in any way. I was determined to continue and I did so. The Dirigente Servizio Politiche per la Sicurezza e la *P*olizia Locale of Emilia-Romagna, did try and facilitate my access to the field. I never knew whether it depended on her pressure. Nonetheless, within two months I received an email stating there had been a misunderstanding: all local officers were ready to be interviewed. Things were in fact not so easy afterwards. Some of the interviews with policy-makers seemed to be characterised by a 'code of silence'.

It cannot be denied that my interactions with phone centre-owners were rather hard too. Part from the difficulties mentioned above, they were rarely neutral. While this can be easily expected for any interview, it is worth stressing that my opinion was often asked for. They wanted to know on which side I was standing. Some information would have been hard to acquire had I concealed my political affiliation and my impressions with respect to the conflicts I was exploring. A few of them even feared I had been sent by the Municipality 'to check on them'. At the time of my visits, owners were very much under pressure by increasing police inspections. As a result, my request for collaboration was met with distrust. Moreover, their distress indeniably affected my research efforts.

The influence of emotions on the research process has been largely omitted from related accounts. The latter are often empty of any feeling of what the actual process was like. However, upsetting and or unsetting experiences are as potentially paralyzing as ethical dilemmas with some researchers feeling unable to continue research when it brings them into contact with aspects of people's lives they feel emotionally ill-equipped to cope with (Widdowfield 2000).

After collecting phone centre-owners' and customers' narratives about police inspections, after experiencing a few of them myself, I found it very hard to feel any sympathy for police forces and their work. I found it very hard to believe a policeman could be any different from any of his/ own colleagues. Yet, various interviewees reported on friendly and kind policemen (fieldwork note, November 3rd 2008, Verona). After sharing the distress many phone centre-owners suffered when the local regulation in Modena was being introduced - the economic sustainability of their activity was severely at risk - I found it really hard to have any sympathy for policy-makers that I had been working on the regulatory framework. Interviews with all these actors were in my agenda. How could I cope with these emotions without letting them influence my research?

As a colleague suggested, discussing feelings could have a 'cathartic role' (Widdowfield 2000). I tried to write them down. I never felt they were 'academically relevant' to be dealt with in a paper. This is how I started analysing the findings I was cumulating to prepare papers and present them. It was a strategy to keep track of my progress and confront on it, as I anticipated, by it also functioned as a liberating experience. Furthermore, it helped me distanciate from the field while I was still well into it.

Interestingly, my role as a researcher was not always evident for phone centre-owners. Some of them kept asking whether I was a journalist, others stopped asking me what my job was about after realising my answers was unchanged and hermetic to their eyes. Cases were not missing in which my role was very much appreciated, on the contrary, particularly after I confirmed that, yes, I was a student of a Milanese university and it was not Bocconi University[9]! A few phone centre-owners actually became privileged informants over time - and almost friends I have to admit - as they felt my job was important and it was well worth supporting me, in the measure I could at least succeed in raising awareness on the local authority's attitude towards phone centres.

There were moments in which I perceived a certain research fatigue on their side. This was particularly acute when those I had already interviewed were visited for a second or even third time, while they had continued experiencing the pressure of police inspections and increasing worries for the passing of the new legislative framework. Nothing had changed,

[9] Bocconi University is well-known private university. It is considered as one of Europe's leading institutions in business and economic education and it is located in central Milan. It was in particular the president of IP Associati - the association of phone centre-owners in Modena, that first welcomed me with distrust when he thought I was enrolled in this university. In fact, it associated this institution with 'merely economic' research works that fail to take social issues into due consideration.

I had not managed to help them at all. Whey was I there again to interview them? In other words, they had given their voice with an expectation of impact, only to be disappointed when they realised no discernable change was taking place (see also Clark 2008).

The expectation was indeed very high among owners for me to do something about their situation: I repeatedly felt ill at ease in this sense, as I was clear I could not have any direct impact on the actual legislative framework, nor on any of their difficulties. They explicitly asked me for support, more than once. They still do so. I never refused to do it, whenever I was in the position to do it, as I will further explain in the empirical part.

I often wondered to what extent I could intervene at all in any way. Sociology and political science tends to be biased towards non-intervention, while ethnologists generally surmise that interventions can never be completely avoiced. I guess the point for me was rather to come to terms with what was my mission as a researcher and my profound engagement as an activist. As Weber (1919) taught us, the mission of sociology is that of engaging in a critical dialogue with public policies and discourses. As a young urban scholar and a sociology PhD student I could 'only' provide with some evidence to feed into academic debates, while possibly offering (willing) policy-makers, politicians and social workers with an alternative reading of the world as well as an opportunity for reflexivity. The disclosure of my findings to all the people that accepted to take part in the research and to those who will show an interest in them goes in this direction. I do believe this is an important form of intervention, as Gusterson (2008) argued and it should not be underestimated. In fact, scholars need to guard their achievement against misuse - especially by powerful actors - and they need to highlight the ambiguities of social life to prevent any superficial explanation of complex phenomena to be taken at face value.

A good example of the risk of misuse is that of a piece of research that was recently presented on 'regular and undocumented im-migrants and *hospitable* Italian cities'? The research highlighted that, out of eight Italian cities, Verona emerges as the most hospitable one for regular im-migrants. Far from scholars' intentions - I believe - , some policy-makers, first and foremost the Mayor of Verona[10], read it as a confirmation that Veronese policies that support the fight against undocumented migration are going in the right direction. I do not wish to go into details here, as it goes well beyond the scope of my intention here. I cited this example as it best shows how a superficial reading of a

[10] L' Arena di Verona, Stranieri nel Veronese: le statistiche e gli esempi. April 30th 2010, 1.

phenomenon together with a more or less conscious misinterpretation of research data can support narratives – as well as policies – that are to say the least discussable, both from an ethic perspective and from the point of view of the actual effectiveness of outcomes.

1.4 The structure of the thesis.

This thesis is structured in two main parts: a theoretical and an empirical one. The first is organised in two chapters, the second in five. In chapter 1, I introduced the research project and the methodological choices I made. In chapter 2, after a short preface on the work of the Chicago school and on the meaning of the term 'ethnic conflict' - with which urban conflicts are often associated - a literature review will be provided of urban conflicts in Italy, by raising the voice of actors, including native residents (section 2.2.1), government agencies (section 2.2.2) and im-migrants (section 2.2.3). Moreover, light will be shed on dynamics among them, as digged out by the relevant literature. Next, urban safety conflicts will be introduced, in their peculiarity. In this sense, specific sections will be dedicated to the arousal of the securitarian stance in Italy (section 2.2.4) and to the complex relationship between im-migrants and the media (section 2.2.4.1), as to set the review into context. Section 2.2.5 will focus on the response provided by institutions as far as these conflicts are concerned. It will deal with the birth of urban safety policies in Italy (section 2.2.5.1) and the intersection of immigration policies, internal security and practices of control (section 2.2.5.2). The reader will be informed on the immigration policy framework in Italy, alongside its strict connection with that of safety. In section 2.2.5.3, local governments' approaches to conflicts all throughout the country will be analysed, to then provide a reflection on the potential normative power of urban safety policies (section 2.2.5.4). The chapter will be concluded with two sections on the voice of im-migrants (section 2.2.6) and the voice of im-migrants in the media (section 2.2.6.1), as well as that of another actor that is crucial in the wider debate on urban and urban safety conflicts: neighbourhood committees (section 2.2.7).

Chapter 3 will link up the literature on conflicts to the concern for im-migrants' engagement. This choice derived from the awareness that attention on politics as far as urban dwellers and particularly marginal groups are concerned is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of an urban theory in the first place and for the analysis of contentious dynamics. The literature on im-migrants and political engagement will be revised the, by throwing light on the prevailing interpretations in the field. In section 3.1, some of the

terms adopted during the research work will be specified, including that of political participation, political engagement and non conventional forms of engagement. Section 3.2 will open up the debate on im-migrants and politics, while section 3.3 will provide a critical discussion of the main lines of inquiry that have emerged in Italy and beyond its national borders. Specific attention will be focused on the political opportunity structure model (section 3.3.3) as, to date, it is still largely adopted by the vast majority of scholars. Section 3.4 will draw from the literature on contentious dynamics, as my interest for political engagement fell into dispersed and contentious forms of actions to. Finally, in section 3.5, the French pragmatic approach will be introduced: it has considerably inspired this project and it will be explained how it can support progress in the study of newcomers' political engagement.

The first two chapters of the empirical part provide with background information on the case studies: section 4.1 gives an overview of im-migrants and entrepreneurship in Italy, section 4.2 introduces the business of phone centres and will also explain why it can be considered as a sort of public space (section 4.2.1) and what implications this carries with it. Chapter 5, on the other hand, will shortly analyse the political subcultures that characterise the cities of Verona and Modena, not only to set the research into context, but also to explicit the framework that will inform the comparative analysis of both contentious dynamics and im-migrants' engagement.

Chapter 6, 7, 8 are dedicated to the empirical findings. Section 6.1 will explain how the trouble of phone centres emerged, by reporting data on both narratives (6.1.1) and perceptions of disturbances (section 6.1.2). Section 6.2 will describe the complex legislative framework that now regulates the sector of phone centres, at the national, regional and local level. It will be followed by section 6.3 which will zoom on legislation processes, through an analysis of the relevant proceedings of Regional and Municipal Council meetings. Chapter 7 reports on the various actions undertaken by phone centre-owners in Verona and Modena. The chapter will be organised in a way that respects the chronology of events while at the same time allowing for an effective comparison of the Veronese and Modenese contexts. Chapter 8 will further investigate on phone centre-owners' engagement and on dynamics of contention in the two cities, by zooming on two specific conflicts: Via Bianca, in Verona, and Via Rossa, in Modena. This will help highlight a few points that are relevant to their respective urban contexts.

Chapter 9 is organised in four sections and will draw the conclusions of this research work, by revisiting phone centre-owners' engagement through both a structural and pragmatic lens (section 9.1 and section 9.2). I will then propose a short reflection on immigrant entrepreneurialism as a form of engagement (section 9.3). The last two sections will further explore how the politicisation of phone centre conflicts has carried with it an opportunity for voice and visibility, alongside a missed opportunity for normative innovation (section 9.4); and how phone centres, as a space, have evolved through the unravelling of the conflicts presented (section 9.5) .

THEORETICAL PART

CHAPTER 2
URBAN CONFLICTS AS DYNAMIC AND NORMATIVE PROCESSES.

Simmel is one of the authors that mostly reflected on conflicts. He considered them as a ubiquitous feature of social life (Coser, 1956). The starting point in his work was in fact that conflicts are inherent in every society. While Marx focused on class conflict as a structural characteristic of capitalist society, Simmel analysed them as a general form of social '*interaction*' (1918: 213) that is manifested in a variety of group and societal contexts. In particular, by using the terms '*Streit*' or '*Kampf*' he referred to them in these terms: '*the actually dissociating elements are the causes of the conflict – hatred and envy, want and desire. If, however, from these impulses conflict has broken out, it is in reality the way to remove the dualism and to arrive at some form of unity, even if through annihilation of one of the parties.*' (1904: 490)

It might seem paradoxical that conflicts can produce forms of units among social actors. In this sense, Simmel rather pointed to the general confusion around the concept itself. According to him, it is often intended in terms of consensus (in opposition to dissensus), while society should be understood as the result of both harmonic and disharmonic forms of interaction which surpass any dualistic matrix for interpretation. In addition, opposition might actually represent an element in a given relationship. It may be a means of preserving it, as well as a concrete function which constitutes the relationship itself. Here, he referred to specific latent forms of conflicts, including marriage and the Hindu caste system, but also distance and aversions in urban life.

The German author stressed the need to look at conflicts by focusing on their dynamics. He described their status as processual, giving important insights into the different trajectories they can take. Their uncertain nature was also recognised. He insisted they can have positive functions, such as strengthening groups boundaries and uniting group members in a common cause, while at the same operating powerful forms of inclusion or exclusion.

This links up to another aspect that Simmel highlighted: the normative nature of conflicts. The idea they can play a constitutive role in social relations has long been maintained. As Hirschman (1994) recalled, a first contribution was put forward by Eraclito. Machiavelli

followed. However, conflicts' deriving harm and threats were traditionally considered as so evident that scholars' focus was put on the search for order, that is to say on the absence of conflicts. Their constitutive nature was hardly addressed in the literature. Thus the debate was repeatedly reintroduced by various authors, as Hirschman stressed. None of them quoted Simmel. His contribution was quickly forgotten, after the world was invested by devastating conflicts, in the period 1915-1945. It was Lewis Coser (1956), with his English translation of the author's work, who brought the German sociologist to the attention of scholars.

Simmel described conflicts as '*sui generis facts*' (1918: 214) that can take the shape of a plurality of relational forms, even though academic analysis tends to 'treat' them as an elementary unit. Furthermore, the forces at work in this process are not an intrinsic characteristic of society: '*there must be agreement in order to struggle, and the struggle occurs under reciprocal recognition of norms and rule.*' (1904: 508) This throws light on the fact that conflicts do not take place in a vacuum but in an institutional context that regulate them and therefore mediate dynamics. As the author clearly highlights '*the common subordination to the law, the reciprocal recognition that the decision can be made only according to the objective weight of the evidence, the observance of forms which are held to be inviolable by both parties, the consciousness throughout the whole procedure of being encompassed by a social power and order which are the means of giving to the procedure its significance and security – all this makes the legal controversy rest upon a broad basis of community and consensus between the opponents*' (1904: 509-510)[11]. By subjecting to norms, individuals contribute to their adaptation to a given situation and to the renewal of their legitimacy. Furthermore, they experience the possibility of influencing them and through them other individuals, while in turn being influenced.

The literature often overlooks the '*autonomous propulsive function*' that resides in conflicts as well as their '*transformative role*' in terms of social change (Dal Lago 2005: 13). Research has mostly focused on what happens prior to conflicts. Through such a reading, actors have been locked up in pre-defined identities. Conflict, on their side, have been explained on the basis of factual evidence preceding actual episodes, in the assumption that nothing unpredictable can result through the unraveling of its dynamics. Barely any attention has been put on interactions. Simmel, on the contrary, conceptualised conflicts as a generative process. He charged them with indetermination, while suggesting it is their normative character that needs emerging.

[11] See note 1.

The position of some social movements scholars recall a similar stance. In his famous theory of the '*emergent norm*', Turner (1974, 1996) supported that a central feature of collective action resides in the definition of the situation. This is not to say that whenever actors experience a normative pressure they necessarily internalise it. The production of norms, understood in both their emotional and cognitive dimensions, cannot be taken for granted. It takes place only in specific circumstances, when a risk that was previously considered as acceptable suddenly changes: '*emergent norms arise, provided other conditions are conducive to it, when the sense of normally acceptable risk is greatly intensified or greatly diminished. If it is intensified, the emergent norm will either define previously tolerable conditions as intolerable or call for a harsher, prompt adoption of negative sanctions upon the deviant(s), or both. If the sense of risk is diminished, the emergent norm will pronounce previously prescribed behaviour as acceptable'* (Turner 1996: 9)

The heritage of Touraine is also worth mentioning. The author focused on conflicts with particular emphasis on identitarian issues. He did not analyse them as the actual cause. He rather focused on their processual dimension. According to him, what defines actors is not their position nor their function within the society or a given community. They are rather defined by the tensions, conflicts, cultural transformation and social relations they experience (Touraine 1997). This gives a crucial insight in the study of contemporary conflicts: identities cannot be treated as essential unities, as they change and evolve throughout processes of collective action (ibidem). Such a conception greatly influenced the work of Alberto Melucci. In his view, identities are constructed through negotiations whereby individuals define the spaces of possibilities and constraints in relation to their capacity to identify themselves with respect to others (1993). An important function of collective actions is that of making them visible, thus putting them in the position of challenging existing codes (1991) in a context in which they are not stable and change over time (2000).

In fact, what is most important about conflicts is that they can bring about change (Simmel 1918). They are indeed necessary for societal change to happen at all, as '*a purely harmonious group is empirical unreal and could not support any real life process*' (214). This opens up the space

for potential societal and institutional innovation[12]. Conflicts are not automatic mechanisms, however, nor do they result in any automatic outcome.

Having said this, Hirschman (1994) insisted that any conflict presents some space for negotiation. This may equally bring positive consequences or contribute to the breaking up of social relations. Undoubtedly, against a background characterised by an increasingly complex society, individuals and groups can find it harder to tolerate conflicts and cope with them. At the same time, where the lines of conflicts decrease or overlap, the risk emerges for strong forms of belonging to develop (Simmel 1908), thus giving way to forms of social fragmentation. In fact, an interdependence among actors is generally granted by the existence of multiple lines of conflicts. They ultimately prevent social disintegration, because they encourage individuals to aggregate. This is why, Simmel stressed it is on dynamics that we need to focus and more precisely at the specific sequences of conflicts, to prevent the risk of advancing any a priori assumption.

Similarly, Hirschman (1985) insisted for scholars to adopt a stance that pays attention to improvised, unexpected actions[13]. He suggested we should leave room for '*possibilism'*, that is to say '*to the discovery of paths and outcomes that any simple probabilistic reasoning seems to exclude.*' (90)[14]

[12] As Vitale (2009) suggested, for any process of innovation to emerge at all it must be first reflexively recognised by the actual protagonists of innovation, that is to say experts and politicians. It results that innovation must derive from a form of institutional learning (De Leonardis 2001). The concept is very precise and refers to forms of learning that transform the conventions and normative frames that structure knowledge and organizational action thanks to exploration and exploitations of alternative and inedited ways of acting and learning.

[13] Here Hirschman was revising the work by Eisenstadt who in turn reflected on the circumstances that are necessary for a revolution to have either a democratic or an authoritarian consequence. Hirschman suggested investigating on revolutions by concentrating on what they produce rather than looking at their mere consequences. According to him, by focusing on coercion and dislocation, Eisenstadt had in fact stressed on their costs, while he paid not attention to benefits.

[14] my translation

2.1 Urban conflicts and im-migrants.

2.1.1 Preface : the heritage of the Chicago school.

Sociology has long been interested in urban conflicts. Dating back to the beginning of the 1900, the Chicagoans started investigating the city as a '*social laboratory*'[15]. They taught us that if we want to reflect on immigration it is at the city we need to look at and at dynamics unraveling in urban spaces. Their work developed from a first article that Park wrote in 1915[16]. His observations were progressively elaborated in subsequent steps, leading to various publications. Simmel's work on group conflict had an important impact on the American sociologists. Conflict and competition were among the four basic social processes specified in an influential textbook by Park and Burgess (1921).

The authors focused on urban problems in relation to the historical changes that were taking place in the United States. They intended the city as '*problematic*', by referring to the increasing heterogeneity that contributed to its social '*disorganisation*' (Park et al. 1925: 25). According to their opinion, the population, in its original form, was in fact characterised by a natural state of equilibrium deriving from variations in mortality rates and emigration waves. With the improvement of channels of communication and means of transport, a new phenomenon started operating: a ceaseless process of individual migration. This explained why individuals suddenly found themselves short of any interiorised code that had been previously derived from tradition, ethic-religious belonging as well as from a common perception of collective goods.

Drawing from the ecological theory by Darwin, the Chicagoans elaborated a spatiotemporal model which aimed to describe the relationship between natives and newcomers. It identified four main phases: competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation[17]. The prevailing explicative dimension was the physical one. The '*invasion*' of im-migrants was described as having different effects, both positive and negative. In an early stage, it was mostly expected to destabilise the natural equilibrium and bring about conflicts resulting from forms of competition in the use of space. Park and Burgess (1921) asserted that following a continual process of invasions and settlements, a selection or

[15] Park, R. E. 1929. The City as a Social Laboratory in Chicago. *An Experiment in Social Science Research,* edited by Smith, T. V. and White, T. D. (eds.), the University of Chicago Press.
[16]Park, R. E. 1915. The city: Suggestions for the investigation of Human Behaviour in the City Environment. *'The American Journal of Sociology', XX, March, 577-612.*
[17] ibidem

segregation mechanism would operate, thus ultimately resulting in individuals moving to homogeneous '*natural areas*' (Park et al. 1925). The latter were seen as the '*natural product*' of interaction between economic and cultural factors.

Park stressed the city should be understood as a '*social organism*'[18], rather than a pure geographical phenomenon. It was intended as the site of the '*possible*', where mobility could be promoted, while at the same time the worst forms of marginality could be created (Rauty 1999). Individuals were the main protagonists within in: they settled in a (physical) environment, at a given time, thus transforming it while being in turn transformed. Nevertheless, natural areas were described as the attestation of social processes that escaped any kind of planning. Newcomers were subjected to a power game specific to a particular historical and cultural period (ibidem). Against this background, the city emerged as the irreversible site of human beings' destiny: it represented the world they themselves built, but also the world '*they were doomed to inhabit in the future.*'[19]

The sociological tradition has often ignored the work of the Chicagoans. Its relevance for contemporary urban analysis has often failed to be appreciated. Yet, what they defined as mechanisms of competition and conflict do contribute to understanding some of the dynamics at work in the cases under analysis here, as it will become evident. In this sense it should be specified, that the ecological model adopted the term 'competition' with specific reference to the 'economic' sphere. While it supported that natural areas were destabilised in their equilibrium by conflicts, it was not 'political' ones that Park and Burgess (1921) had on mind. It was rather issues of pacific cohabitation. Apart from this, any reference to the Chicago school needs to be treated carefully. It is well-known that a number of ambivalences and contradictions characterise their elaborations. First of all, Park and Burgess developed a model for human interactions based on reflections drawn from animals' ecology that are clearly hardly applicable to humans in a straightforward way. Immigrants were expected to assimilate. No consideration was given for any alternative trajectory. Second, Park et al. '*concentric zone model*' (1925) 'divided' the city into five distinct non-permeable areas. In later revisions they grew aware of their respective interdependence and of the fact that their interpretation had to allow for newcomers' mobility (Rauty 1999). In spite of this, '*concentric circles*' were still intended as essentially '*natural*'. Social

[18] Park, R. E. 1950. An Autobiographical note in *Race and Culture* edited by Huges E. (eds.), Glencoe Ill.: The Free Press.
[19] Park, R. E. 1929. The City as a Social Laboratory in Chicago. *An Experiment in Social Science Research, p. 1,* edited by Smith, T. V. and White, T. D. (eds.), the University of Chicago Press.

disorganisation was expected to emerge from an excessive increase in the resident population, which, to say the least, could hardly be quantified. Third, Chicagoans continued pointing to residential dynamics while overlooking those relating to social and economic determinants. Furthermore, structural factors were not taken into due consideration, even though public policies, economic, political and social processes play a fundamental role in im-migrants' settlement and in their relationship with natives. Power asymmetries among various groups were equally ignored (Wacquant 2004).

2.1.2 'Ethnic conflict': a few considerations on the term.

The international literature on '*ethnic conflicts*', or rather conflicts identified as such, is vast. It is beyond the scope of this work to draw a review in this sense. The debate is very complex, due to the variety of both conflicts analysed and the disciplinary perspectives adopted. The notion in itself is very problematic. It suffices to think of the implications of the adjective '*ethnic*', as various scholars, including first and foremost anthropologists, have long argued (for a review see for example Amselle 2008).

Generally, scholars define conflicts as '*ethnic*' in order to address events comprising one or more groups identified by some marker of ethnic identity. When confronted with their empirical findings they often claimed that what appeared to be an ethnic conflict, in fact was not. This point was argued by Gilley (2004). In his contribution, the author specifically referred to sustained and violent conflicts, by ethnically distinct actors, in which stakes are integral to one ethnicity. Nonetheless, he raised some relevant considerations that are worth bearing in mind with reference to the conflicts that Cotesta (2003, 2009) qualifies in a similar way and which are also the conflicts I am dealing with in this thesis.

The empirical and theoretical justifications for the adoption of an 'ethnic lens' to the study of politics are rather weak. Gilley did not suggest that this dimension should be ignored. On the contrary, he acknowledged the economic, political and social implications it carries with it. At the same time, he stressed how the concept of 'ethnic conflict' wrongly conflates ethnicity as identity and as a '*frame*' (Snow and Benford 1988). In other words, he did plead a distinction should be made between ethnic conflict as an ends-based and a means-based notion. While the former makes sense if the motivating purpose of contention is some matter of specific relevance to an ethnic group, the latter is more useful if we want to look at ethnicity as a mobilising frame for supporters. In both cases the term in itself does not

highlight what is going on beyond *ad hoc* appeals to ethnicity, because it over-emphasises this aspect, to the detriment of more causally-effective frameworks.

Taking Gilley's suggestions seriously, the conflicts analysed here will not be defined as ethnic, thus rejecting Cotesta's definition. It would certainly prove misleading to 'label' them as such. Ethnicity should be rather questioned as the actual stake of conflicts. Hence, it cannot be assumed a priori. It is enough to say these conflicts are somehow related to issues of pacific cohabitation with immigrant residents. Authors such as Wieviorka (2001) indicated the increasing proliferation of similar conflicts in Europe and stressed on a specific feature they share: the emergence of citizens that make a stand against an absolute and indomitable enemy, that is often identified as the main cause of insecurity: im-migrants[20].

It is worth making another observation. The adjective 'ethnic' is clearly useless to distinguish between a group and another, alongside their cultural traits. At the same time, actors should be taken seriously and the same applies to the categories they adopt, as far as they hold any relevance for them. Categories such as 'ethnic' can ultimately be used to legitimise the intrinsic sense of the concept, thus carrying with them considerable social and political implications that scholars should investigate accordingly.

2.2 Urban conflicts in Italy: the voices of actors and the response of institutions.

In the past two decades, some research has been undertaken, in Italy, on various aspects which relate to cohabitation difficulties, including focus on the following: ethnic minorities' problems in general (Fondazione Michelucci 1993, 2000), urban cohabitation difficulties in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, residents' perceptions of im-migrants (Alietti 1998, Alietti and Agustoni 2009, Colombo et al. 2006, Marzorati 2009), identitarian issues (Maritano 2000), urban renewal and citizenship (Dines 2002), conflicting uses of public space (Bifulco 2000, Del Sole 2009), neighbourhood disputes in a micro-sociological perspective (Semi 2004), dynamics in 'urban ghettos' (Vianello 2006), ethnic entrepreneurship and the management of urban space (Cologna 2008), conflicts and normative production (Vitale 2009), conflicts and tensions between representation and participation (Vitale 2007, 2008).
Another strand needs to be added. It comprises projects on urban conflicts that are specifically framed in terms of urban safety (Belluati 2004, Allasino et al 2000, Quassoli

[20] See Quassoli (2004) for an overview.

2004, Petrillo 2005). Similar conflicts cannot be intended as a completely separate entity, nor would it make sense to do so. Studies reported findings which are very much alike those of the research works mentioned above. Nevertheless, I do believe they are worth investigating in their specificity, as Allasino et al. (2000) suggested.

Empirically, they can be identified as sharing two coexisting features: first, they include forms of protests organised (and complaints advanced) by citizens to lament a general worsening of quality of life in their neighbourhood. Second, they best exemplify an ever increasing tendency, particularly in Italy (Diamanti 2000), to link a supposedly growing diffusion of micro-criminality and anti-social forms of behaviour to the presence of newcomers. While scholars have given only passing reference to them, there seems to be a general (implicit) agreement that if im-migrants emerge at all in these conflicts they do so as the target of policies.

This thesis aims to contribute to progress in this debate by questioning narratives. It will do so in two main directions: on the one side by shifting attention to actors other than (Italian) residents, including particularly im-migrants, whose voice is barely spoke; on the other side by investigating on the potential normative power these conflicts might exert, in the attempt to put forward alternative ways of understanding them (Allasino et al. 2000). Before proceeding in the revision of the literature dedicated to urban safety conflicts specifically, a brief overview will be given of the research strands cited at the beginning of this section. My purpose is not to draw the reader's attention to the actual causes of conflicts. I wish to focus on the voices that spoke up in them and resonated in the academic literature, as well as on responses given by institutions.

2.2.1 Much ado about nothing? The perspective of residents.

In order to depart from any ideological stance, it needs to be reinstated, as banal as it might seem, that difficulties of cohabitation are undeniable. I do believe there is more to residents' complaints than a mere expression of the frustrations of irrational actors. Let's see what the literature says in this regard.

Cotesta (2003) refers to '*new metropolitan conflicts*'[21] to define an ideal-type that is most spread in the country, that is to say conflicts springing from perceptions of urban decay, episodes of anti-social behaviour and disturbance, often blamed onto im-migrants. Alietti and Agustoni (2009) investigated on everyday cohabitation in a few neighbourhoods, north of Milan. They digged out natives' narratives and rhetorics on how hard it is to share urban space with im-migrants. Their research showed that the largest part of problems do not derive from the failure of newcomers to assimilate, nor from their lack of respect for 'common rules', nor from a racist attitude on the side of residents. They rather pointed to actual difficulties connected with poor housing conditions as well as insufficient support for all residents in terms of access to housing and mediation services. This apparently went hand in hand with a gradual shrinkage of the local associational texture. In other words, associations used to be an important channel who brought groups together. Nonetheless, they no longer function in this sense. Additionally, the authors threw light on the representation of im-migrants' places. It did not go unnoticed how they came to be linked with a topography of '*discomfort*' (13), which ultimately resulted in the dramatisation of spatial cohabitation among groups and to a reinforcement of the sociological isomorphism between urban marginality and im-migrants' presence (see also Wacquant 2004).

Dynamics of cohabitation generally emerge as problematic in public spaces, such as the 'piazza' (Dines 2002), public parks (Del Sole 2008), 'ethnic shops' (Cologna 2008) and the streets immediately adjacent to them. What alarms residents are not always the signs of marginality. Paradoxically, evidence of integration seems to have a strikingly similar impact on them. Ethnic businesses provide an excellent example. They represent a source of suspicion for residents (Semi 2004, Castagnone and Gasparetti 2008), as they find it hard to understand how they could find a large enough amount of money to invest in their activity and how they can still survive with a business that, to their eyes, is hardly economically rewarding. A lack of regulation which privileges im-migrants' shops is often suggested as an explanation.

Martinotti (1993) argued that it is the progressive diversification of inhabitants' use of urban space which might generate conflicts. He referred to city users in general, but his observation holds some relevance for im-migrants too. As they appropriate urban space, newcomers produce a sense of discontinuity among residents, in that neighbourhoods are normally experienced as the space of the '*familiar and predictable*' (Kearns and Parkinson

[21] 'Nuovi conflitti metropolitani'

2001). The arrival of newcomers might engender forms of competition in the access of both material (i.e. competition in the use of urban space) and symbolic resources (i.e. downgrading of job and residential opportunities) (Borgogno 1990).

In general, im-migrans turn familiar space into a problematic one, because '*problematic difference*' becomes manifest through their presence (Sayad 1991). Similarly, Debauge (2003) stressed on the undesired '*public visibility*' of both these people and their activities, with are interpreted as deviant with respect to the accepted '*moral order*' (Durkheim, 1963). For instance, people of immigrant origins are well used to meeting outside ethnic shops with friends. In turn, this can represent a source of disturbance for neighbours. It is worth noticing that similar practices are not an automatic translation of an '*essential*' diversity. They can be best understood as forms of adaptation with respect to practical needs, such as that of socialising, in a context that often fails to satisfy or even just address them (Alietti and Agustoni 2009).

Of course, neighbourhoods are not just spaces, they are inhabited spaces. Their existence implies the definition of a '*common good*' (Thévenot and Bolstanki 2006) embodied in a public space requiring discretion and sobriety (Pharo 2001), where any '*irreconcilably different way of living*' (Breviglieri 2007) can break up the rules of the '*bon voisinage*' (Breviglieri 2007). When im-migrants repeteadly appropriate urban spaces in ways that can disturb their enjoyment, the will of residents might prevail to protect their own private sphere instead of making any effort towards pacific cohabitation (Breviglieri 2005).

Feelings of insecurity and discomfort seem to be also attached to the increased spatial proximity of high-income groups to (what are considered as) problem-people (Young 2007). Arguments in this direction support that liberal sensibilities have been thrown into confusion by the fact that when denied any proper permanent private retreat, some people have been forced to perform acts like toileting in public space (Mac Leod 2002). This example specifically refers to homeless people, even though im-migrants have been frequently blamed for similar behaviours too, as the empirical evidence will also highlight. In general, references to activities that are normally connected with the private space of home and yet carried out publicly in the piazza can be very powerful. They somehow accentuate a sense of disorder and further contribute to delegitimasing im-migrants' presence (Dines 2002).

Other tentative explanations on neighbourhood conflicts rely on boundaries. Barth (1969) underlined it is not only the actual content of discourses people advance that is worth investigating. The '*social boundaries'* created through them are equally significant. (Ethnic) groups are categories of ascription and identification and they therefore organise interactions between people. Related processes can feed into existing boundaries and legitimise them further, even more than groups' actual (physical) presence on the territory. Let's see a few examples. Bifulco (2000) described the emergence of a boundary between the '*legal'* and the '*illegal*' city in the Milanese neighbourhood of Stadera. She showed how it shifted to include or exclude im-migrants, according to the group that spoke up and the alleged legitimacy of its activity, not without consequences, both symbolic and material. Natives and residents alike can insist on identitarian categories such as '*we*' and '*they*' (Semi 2004, Alietti and Agustoni 2009), or '*established*' and '*outsiders*', as Elias and Scotson have long noticed (1965). Similar categories associate a given community of established with an essential superiority or operate a differentiation of outsiders on the basis of what are perceived as culturally divergent practices. It goes without saying that discourses within groups are not homogenous. Researchers have often reported on cases in which boundaries were drawn specifically by a group of residents, such as shopkeepers (see for example Gianotti 2006). Distinctions are also made between '*good*' and '*bad*' im-migrants, with reference to (perceived) behaviours by members of (some) im-migrant communities. As a native interview reported: '*Chinese are not very problematic, north Africans want to try and outsmart me, Egyptians, all in all, are more serious than Moroccans because they are hard workers, my favourite customers are Filipinos and especially south Americans. Banks prefer them to other im-migrants, as they are well integrated into the job market*' (Alietti and Agustoni 2009: 69-70).

In a world where diasporas are assuming an increasing importance, borders are not disappearing, on the contrary (Friedman 2000). Of course they might change. Nevertheless, the continued dichotomisation between members and outsiders can help specify the nature of such dynamics too. In other words, boundaries are not neutral, nor unproblematic.
Moreover, they carry with them a diagnostic (and possibly even a prognostic) property. Sidney Plotkin (1991) adopted the term '*enclave consciousness*' (5) to explain the normative position of citizens that see their neighborhood as a home territory, surrounded by alien threats. Clearly, this embodies first of all a political orientation to the defence of such a place. '*It channels the political activism and resistance of ordinary people mainly into demands to 'leave us alone*' (17).

It would be reasonable to expect the category of '*old fashioned racism*' (Sniderman and Tetlock 1986, Dovidio and Gaertner 1998) to emerge in natives' claims, but the latter are not necessarily of a racist nature, as Rex and Moore (1967) noticed long ago. They are mostly associated with the reporting of perceptions on experienced social problems. Their research in the neighbourhood of Sparkbrook, in Birmingham, demonstrated that it was structural rather than socio-psychological variables that drove white residents' appraisal of their objective situation (in a competitive housing market). Semi (2007) raised a similar point in his microsociological observation of a neighbourhood dispute in Turin, by suggesting that the latter took place against a background of urban renewal which included an interweaving of housing, commercial and cultural dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. This brings to the fore the role of local authorities and the way they deal with a given conflict.

In spite of the scenario sketched above, dynamics of cohabitation are not necessarily critical. A clear contrast has been observed, for example, between xenophobic rhetoric and positive interactions. Piccone Stella (2003) pointed to the positive impact of contacts between neighbours to overcome forms of prejudice. (2003). Frisina (2007) insisted on the importance of direct contacts between natives and im-migrants through forms of voluntary collaborations in the third sector. In any case, it is hardly possible for residents to escape '*everyday multiculturalism*' (Colombo and Semi 2007).

Neighbourhoods emerge in their immediacy, devoid of any mediation instrument or place capable of collecting the expressions of urban malaise. 'Ethnic shops' and pubs, characterised as they are by a virtual '*cosmopolitan canopy*' (Anderson 2004) and the possibility of meeting different individuals, somehow 'force' people into questioning their representational categories, even though similar experiences do not automatically result in their opinions nor attitudes being substantially modified. There are cases in which natives enact a '*pedagogical*' attitude instead (Alietti and Agustoni 1998, 2009), whereby they assume that im-migrants have different habits in their home country and need teaching how to behave with respect to locally shared rules.

In spite of possible conflicts, newcomers do succeed, at times, in reproducing their own life style. Gale and Naylor (2002) explored debates around the establishment of worship sites by Britain's minority religious groups. Buildings of non-Christian religious communities have been portrayed as '*alien*' and incommensurate with surrounding urban landscapes. In

numerous cases such opposition had a decisive bearing on the failure of plans to develop them. Successful episodes were also reported in which new patterns of interaction between the state and minority religious groups had become evident. Regretfully, scarce attention was given to contentious dynamics.

2.2.2 What role for local governments?

As it should be clear from the above, urban conflicts and problems of pacific cohabitation tend to be invariably described in terms of difficult encounters between natives and immigrants. In spite of the nuances characterising each specific interpretation, cultural factors seem to predominate as a privileged explicatory variable. What is most important is that authors focus on what they understood as the causes of conflicts, that is to say on what happened prior to their unraveling. In fact, their aim was that of understanding why they emerged in the first place. By doing this, they have made the implicit assumption manifest that both dynamics and themes that accompany disputes are immutable over time. In turn, the literature has produced a rather simplistic equation whereby residents' complaints feed into a public discourse on what are perceived as social problems, while enforcement agencies respond the them.

What are social problems in fact? Spector and Kitsuse (2000) took distance from any definition which intends them as a condition, in favor of a dynamic notion associated with claim-making activities. They consider the emergence of a social problem as '*contingent upon the organisation of activities asserting the need for eradicating, ameliorating or otherwise changing some condition (…) and emphasise that any given claim or complaint is about a condition alleged to exist, rather than about a condition whose existence we, as sociologists, are willing to verify or certify.*' (76).

In a similar light, Cefaï (1996) stresses that a '*public problem*' is '*constructed, thematised and interpreted within a frame of pertinence which evolves in a context of interaction'* (47). According to the author *'it emerges from a dynamic of production and reception of descriptive and interpretative accounts as well as of solution proposals (...) It is more than the mere product of a collective labelling* (22). *It is actually a collective action 'en train de se faire', whereby the attributions of casuality, the imputations of responsibility, the identification of actors and the configurations of actions, as well as the evaluations of prejudices and solution proposals take the shape of 'practical accomplishment'* (23) *which take place in situations experienced and perceived as problematic.*'[22]

[22] my translation

An important point should be made in the wake of the above paragraphs. There is no mechanical, causal relationship between a given condition, the experience of dissatisfaction with it and the activation of responses to related complaints. In fact, according to Spector and Kitsuse (2000) the conventional argument that troublesome, disruptive, or dysfunctional conditions create dissatisfactions, which in turn activate institutional responses, can be reversed. They suggest that the establishment of an agency authorised to deal with certain conditions generates dissatisfactions in the first place about conditions that were previously unseen or routinely accommodated. The awareness in itself that services are available leads to the definition of problems that might not otherwise be judged as such, nor call at all for any intervention.

There is ample evidence of residents resolving their complaints by putting pressure on local authorities for defensive components to be adopted. It is them who are often ultimately blamed for forms of disturbance and urban decay. They are mostly accused for their lack of intervention. Rex and Moore (1967) was among the first authors to underline this aspect. More recent pieces of research do confirm this too. Vitale (2008), for example, reported that preoccupations for the development of a park in Milan stemmed from a perceived negligence by local authorities. Interestingly, while conflicts are strictly connected to residents' perceptions, they are often dealt with by institutional actors alone who construct the legitimacy of any intervention within official institutional scenes, thus excluding residents from feeding into the process (see for example Vitale 2009).

A general tendency has been observed for institutions to privilege intermittent emergency types of actions, particularly when limited funding is available. Occasionally, action-research and participatory projects have been undertaken to explore issues with all interested parties, including also im-migrants (see for example Dal Sole 2008). Forms of participatory democracy are rarely defined by norms on how policies are to be agreed upon. To be true, they are generally constructed on the basis of specific '*rules and identity*'(March 1993: 81). People are invited to participate only if a specific collective identity can be attached to them. Ordinary citizens are often left with a restricted space for participation, consisting in the definition of oppositional interests. This is clearly exemplified by various experiences in the Milanese provincial area (see for example Bifulco 2000, Centemeri 2006, Vitale 2008, 2009). As it emerged, no space was given to inhabitants for the elaboration of conflicts within a public arena, that is to say no common ground was provided to facilitate a reciprocal form of recognition. The contribution of inhabitants seem to be more and

more replaced by that of associations. Hardly any attempt has been observed by local authorities (and associations themselves) to rethink forms of representation. Common achievements have failed to be recognised as a result (Vitale 2008), because actors' interests have been 'treated' in isolation, as if they were a mere sum of issues. Space was required instead for conflicts to emerge and negotiations to take place (ibidem).

Needless to say, positive or negative opportunities for participation depend on how far political authorities are sensitive to similar concerns. Drawing from the rational choice theory and sociological institutionalism, Lowndes et al. (2006) threw light not only on institutional measures strict but also on what local governments' '*rules-in-use*', that is to say forms of unwritten customs and more or less formal codes of conduct - that maxime access, while valuing diversity or rather contribute to the promotion of social exclusion mechanisms. Another important questions should be stressed. Inhabitants themselves define the quality of relationship with local institutions. If we want to determine the effective opportunities for participation available to them, we need to consider the repertoire of categorisations they constituted through previous collective experiences (see for example Cousin and Vitale 2003). Their expectations and attitudes do in fact connect to their memory of how their demands were addressed over time.

As anticipated, local governments can act also on emergencies, as anticipated above, with non negligible consequences. Arguably, this represents more a rule than an exception, in the Italian context, at least as far as issues of pacific cohabitation are concerned. An interesting example is represented by housing policies in Bologna, at the beginning of the 1990. A norm was introduced that gave priority access to those who had have been living in precarious housing conditions for a minimum of two years. This somehow validated im-migrants' alternative strategies to access housing opportunities: as illegal presence in reception centres was turned into regular admittance, a considerable increase of irregular arrivals was recorde (Decimo 2003). Apparently, it did not lead to a generalised attribution of public resources. Instead, such a choice reproduced, in a circular way, the same problem it was meant to overcome: an increase in irregular guests. Moreover, (native) residents started complaining on the alleged privileged access of newcomers to public housing, thus threatening local officers with an uprising.

Against more or less successful attemps by local governments to involve residents and be proactive with respect to their needs, cases were also found that testify a laissez-faire

attitude. Cologna (2008) reflected on the conflict around Via Sarpi, the Chinatown of Milan. Here, 41% of activities, that were all managed by Chinese entrepreneurs, turned from wholesale to retailing. The Municipality, on its side, failed to rethink urban and mobility policies adequately. The area came to be affected by increasing logistic difficulties, with residents punctually reported. As negotiations were under way, after a protest organised by entrepreneurs, local officers proposed Chinese entrepreneurs to move their shops to a different area (see also Dines 2002 on urban renewal plans in Naples). Let apart details of the costs and limits such a proposal for entrepreneurs themselves, it clearly shows an effort to deal eventually with complaints advanced by actors, at least native residents. While little was reported on this case by researchers, it seems that the emergence of a conflict in Via Sarpi opened up the space for politics.

Notwithstanding considerable evidence which points to im-migrants (and in cases also native residents) exclusion from political processes, opportunities can emerge for them to shape and bend institutional forces in new directions[23] and contentious dynamics can positively contribute in this sense. Not to be underestimated is also the fact that contextual and institutional factors can change, with a variable level of intensity, thus carrying with them unexpected outcomes. Arguably, this can hardly happen, however, when a number of assumptions come to be accepted as reliable indisputable knowledge (Tosi 2005). It is often taken for granted that the concentration of im-migrants' presence, in a given neighbourhood, is bound to create problems for native residents. Unfortunately, academic research might have further legitimised similar interpretations in the measure it has ignored contentious dynamics, by stressing on difficulties of cohabitation alone and at the same time failing to question whether they actually represent an exception rather than the norm.

[23] Crouch and Farnell 2004, Gains et al. 2005, Lowndes 2005 cit. Lowndes V. et al. (2006).

2.2.3 Is anyone missing on the stage? The voiceless presence of im-migrants.

Scant evidence is provided by the literature of im-migrants' voice emerging at all in urban conflicts, at least in the role of political actors. A few exceptions can be counted. In spite of the fact they were overall excluded from political debates, some degree of interaction with shopkeepers and confrontation on renewal plans in Piazza Garibaldi, in Naples were reported by Dines (2002). The unmediated diversity of the Piazza was described as a central virtue of democratic public space. To start with, it represented the result of im-migrants' re-appropriation of urban space, while claiming their right to the city as peddlers. It was more than this. The piazza was also the site of protests. It is therefore necessary to examine any assumptions about inclusion and exclusion implicit in the design of urban space. Who is it for? Whom does it actually exclude? Why and how are prohibitions maintained? Besides an examination of legal systems and practices of social control, accounts of exclusion require an analysis of barriers and constraints from the point of view of the excluded (Sibley 1995): there is no single oppressive reality, no single structure obscured by the images of the dominant culture. Only to the extent that one person or group can dominate the whole scene it will be possible to look at it by focusing on one single set of rules and one privileged set of social relations. One part of the problem is then to identify forms of socio-spatial exclusion as they are experienced and articulated by subject groups (Sibley 1995).

Apart from individual actions, traces of collective ones emerge in the literature. Im-migrants' associations have certainly played a political role in some conflicts. Even though they were hardly given any operational responsibility within action-research projects, Ecuadorian associations, in Milan, did express the malaise of their community in relation to disputes on differential uses of public parks (Dal Sole 2008). Local authorities, on their side, lamented the absence of structured and representative interlocutors adequate enough to start up facilitation projects. Arguably, newcomers can hardly propose themselves as a credible and trustworthy interlocutor unless they can demonstrate they effectively represent a specific community (Alietti and Agustoni 2009). Unfortunately, representativeness is never an a priori feature, but rather the mediated outcome of a legitimate process of selection, that gives it a provisional and revocable statute (Cotta 1976). Interestingly, through their participatory actions, local officers contributed to the creation of a representative associational network. It cannot be denied that any opportunity for associations to be visible might activate mechanisms of communication and lead to the

emergence of forms of representation. It is questionable, though, whether the Municipality actually reached out for each and all associations. Some of them might be '*invisible*' and yet much more significant for im-migrants, regardless of their more or less formal status and therefore the easiness for local officers to identity them in the first place.

Another channel for newcomers to speak up have been spontaneous protests that arose periodically in the country, thus reflecting the breakdown of any formally constituted channel of engagement. The occupation of S. Petronio, in Bologna, is a case in point. After repeated complaints on the poor effectiveness of housing policies - which I mentioned above - a group of Moroccan families set off to occupy the church. This encouraged the local authority to reconsider its strategies. Unexpectedly, another outcome resulted from the event: im-migrant families were first recognise as a legitimate political subject, hence as a holder of rights in the quality of a domestic unit (Decimo 2003).

A protest was also organised in Milan's Chinatown, as anticipated. The press described the event as springing from an argument between the police and a female entrepreneur that was unloading goods irregularly[24]. In fact, tensions had been mounting for a while between Chinese entrepreneurs, the local authority and (Italian) residents, following continuous logistic difficulties accompanied by increasing inspections, as a response of police forces. Concerns by Chinese entrepreneurs had not been taken into any consideration. This had encouraged them to plan a protest well before the above episode occurred. In other words, their action did not embody an emotional outburst, as a behaviouralist reading[25] of the event might suggest.

2.2.4 The arousal of the securitarian stance.

In recent decades, the insecurity of urban life has increasingly troubled public opinion in many European countries. In Great Britain, it first emerged in the 1970s, (Hall et al. 1978, Solomos 1988), when major British cities started being associated with places such as New York's Bronx; in French metropolitan areas it emerged a few years later, as scholars pointed to the urban violence that was spreading in the banlieues (Mucchielli 2001). It was

[24] Corriere della Sera, Guerra di strada tra cinesi e forze dell'ordine. 13 April 2007, Cronaca. Available at http://milano.corriere.it/cronache/articoli/2007/04_Aprile/12/cinesi_sarpi_vigili.shtml [accessed on 26 January 2010]

[25] Blumer. H. 1951. Collective Behavior in Lee, A. M. (ed.) *Principles of Sociology.* New York: Barnes & Noble, 67-121; Smelser, N. J. 1963. *Theory of Collective Behavior.* Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, Glencoe; Turner, R. H. and Killian, L. M. 1972. *Collective Behavior.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 2d ed.

only in the 1990s that similar worries reached Southern European cities and rapidly came to invade both political and media debates.

Numerous alarmist campaigns have been taking place all over Italy which addressed a wide range of issues such as illegal immigration, drug-dealing, street prostitution and, more broadly, the deterioration of local neighbourhoods and widespread forms of micro-criminality. They dominated the local news in all major cities of the Centre-North (Dal Lago 1999). A few examples are represented by the cases of S. Salvario and Porta Palazzo, in Turin (Maritano 2000, Allasino et al. 2000, Belluati 2004), Via Bianchi and Stadera, in Milan (Foot 1999), the centre of Genoa (Petrillo 1995), and some neighbourhoods in Bologna, Modena and Reggio Emilia (Barbagli 1999, Quassoli and Chiodi 2000).

In spite of their diversity, debates on security share some basic characteristics as Quassoli (2004) recalled well. On the one hand, the complex set of meanings attached to the concepts of '*security*'[26] and '*certainty*'[27] are collapsed into that of '*safety*' which relates to the growing preoccupation of individuals for their physical safety (Bauman 1999) and in turn evokes perceived threats for the spreading of micro-criminality (Bauman 2001). On the other hand, it is im-migrants - and in particular specific categories such as undocumented – who are blamed as the main cause of insecurity[28].

It has been largely demonstrated that the effective risk of criminality plays a marginal role in social (in)security (Dal Lago 1998, Palidda 1999). In spite of this, attention has been focused on it, to the detriment of other factors, such as the growing uncertainty that affects the socio-economic status of individuals, including environmental risk and deriving threats to personal safety, globalisation processes and the increasing complexity of everyday experience with the way it destabilises individuals' trajectories[29].

Most importantly, as Beck (2000) highlighted, the gap between individuals' and social groups' capacity to adapt to change opens the way to new forms of uncertainty and the inability of institutions to find adequate and coherent solutions can lead to the questioning of the existing order. Merton, in his anomie theory of crime and deviance, introduced the

[26] The term generally refers to ontological security, that is to say to the growing perception of a gradual loss of existential security and of social opportunities being at risk.
[27] The term generally refers to cognitive security, that is to say to certainty or not relating to the difficulty to draw stable categories to interpret the world.
[28] See Quassoli (2004) for an overview.
[29] ibidem

empirical concept of '*relative deprivation*' (1949) to explain that social resources emerge at a slower pace than collective demands and expectations. This can produce a sense of frustration that induces individuals to define their own situation as the result of flawed and unjustified social structures. Collective forms of resentment can arise as a result of the fact that a taken for granted state of well-being is no longer perceived as such.

Following the arrival of newcomers, for example, societies experience periods of transition in which they find themselves short of normative codes. The way forward can only be paved through the re-definition of the moral borders between groups and the emphasis of phenomena of deviance, as will be further discussed later. This is all the more true for countries such as Italy, where the emergence of immigration has been hardly problematised at all (Marletti 1991 cit. Belluati) and where the lack of appropriate cultural categories to address relevant issues have cause an increasing disorientation of the public opinion thus feeding into ideological forms of radicalism in both directions (Taguieff 1988 cit. Belluati 2004).

All fears deriving from a wider and deeper structural crisis (Petrillo 2000, Palidda 2008, Barbagli 2008) have been catalysed into an anti-social behaviour discourse which has diverted attention towards an imagined '*enemy*', newcomers (Maneri 1998, Dal Lago 1998). Arguably, the ultimate scope of such an operation was that of reinstating an original status quo which never existed as such (Petrillo 2000). As Kuehne (2002) suggested, when we feel threatened by economic problems, health, etc. we tend to develop a form of hostility against anything which is somehow 'strange(r)'.

2.2.4.1 Im-migrants and the media: a complex relationship.

Regardless of their effective involvement in criminal activities, im-migrants' inclination to criminality can be certainly understood as the result of a social construction (Maneri 1998). Since the 1990s, news-making apparatus have been operating a symbolic mediation of dominant common sense discourses that portray newcomers as the main source of urban insecurity (ibidem). Of course, while media messages can be a stimulus for readers they do not necessarily provoke any direct reaction by them. At the same time, it is reasonable to expect that the more an (alarming) interpretation recurs in the press the more it will be taken for granted. It might in fact be perceived as objective thus creating a legitimate cognitive frame for actors to 'read' the world out there and to define the space within

which their behaviour can be situated, as well as relationships of proximity and separation (Thomson 1995). This suggests that media do much more than mediating common sense discourses. They actively contribute to the emergence of true '*moral panics*' (Cohen 1972). They do so in three different ways: they select and launch protests by adopting sensational headlines to then follow them up with a series of dedicated articles; they launch campaigns themselves by retrieving information on a contentious episode in order to draw readers' attention to a given problem; they may well publish occasional articles on a specific topic to keep public attention high. Plenty of references are available in the literature in this sense (see for example Maneri 1998, 2009 and Dal Lago 1998).

This is not enough, however, to explain the eruption of an 'emergency' discourse on immigration in Italy. Media have sounded the warning but other actors have ridden symbolic threats. Hence they have certified and confirmed the warning itself. Politicians, neighbourhood committees and police forces have elaborated interpretations which re-produce the (mostly) shared discourses in a circular way: they have been feeding media's reporting while in turn being influenced by them. Dal Lago (1999) defines this process as tautological (Dal Lago 1999) because it demonstrates the actual alarm it denounces, similarly to an autopoietic mechanism (Maturana and Varela 1985). Clearly, without political legitimation media emergencies would die out quickly. This is hardly surprising in a country in which the relationship between media and politics is particularly tight. Legitimation by residents is needed too and the growing relevance of neighbourhood committees demonstrate it vividly.

In February 1990, a group of shopkeepers, in Florence, organised a protest. This was the first time newspapers gave ample space to the voice of neighbourhood committees. The latter managed to ensure an adequate visibility for their initiatives, by using the media as an alternative interlocutor. This is how they gradually transformed into a privileged source of information (Belluati 2004). Journalists did not fail to recognise an opportunity in voicing their concerns: this could prove the press was close to common people (see also Sorrentino 1993 cit. Maneri 1998). In addition, their opinion represented a precious source of information. It was for politicians too. After the explosion of the protest, they started addressing shopkeepers complaints, thus legitimising them and fuelling new protests, while at the same time demonstrating they were responsive to their requests.

As far as police forces are concerned, they have long been considered as '*primary definers*' (Hall et al. 1978) as they preliminarly select and frame the type of news to be published by media. Of course, the latter do not merely report the information they receive. It goes without saying that news production follows what is known as '*media logic*' (Altheide and Snow 1979, Wolf 1985) and '*agenda setting*' (McCombs and Shaw 1972), that is to say a complex set of editorial dynamics that intervene in the selection of newsworthy items. Undeniably, linguistic forms have often been supplied by control policies. This includes a description of im-migrant sites as dangerous (Maneri 2009). Similar narratives cannot be blamed onto police forces alone. It should be clear by now that various actors have supported them, thus legitimasing a number of categories through which safety issues have come to be expressed, in connection with the inevitable spreading of systematic practices of social control and exclusion (see Palidda 2000, Maneri 1998, Quassoli and Chiodi 2001), as we will see later. Arguably, there has been no space for alternative terms and meanings to be negotiated. This is not to say that no repertoire of news portrayed im-migrants in a positive light, as we will see later. Yet, they barely leave any trace in political debates. Politicians seem to be responsive only when crime news are involved (Maneri 2009).

From an historical perspective, the birth of public discourse on immigration is rather hard to seize. The majority of studies tend to locate it in the second half of the 1980s. Sciortino and Colombo (2004), on their side, insisted it was simply latent. Most interestingly, they pointed to shifts in the topics covered. According to their analysis[30], in the course of the 1990s, news items regarding foreigners' participation in the labor market and more generally in the Italian economy practically disappeared. This happened at a time when newcomers had become a structural component of manual labor in many sectors (Ambrosini 2001). This gap between 'reality' and public discourse seems to be even more radical and unjustified than media's insistence on im-migrants' deviant nature: '*A country that imports large numbers of foreign workers but does everything to avoid talking about it could be considered rather bizarre*' (Sciortino and Colombo 2004: 110).

[30] Their research is based on a press review for the period 1969 - 2001. In particular they analysed three of the main weekly magazines for the period 1969 - 1981 and a daily press for the period 1982 – 2001.

2.2.5 Urban safety conflicts and institutions.

Where do concerns for safety come from? What is their genealogy? Crime and safety have always been a preoccupation of urban dwellers. The descent of dark in itself has always troubled their lives, as well as the arrival of im-migrant populations. There is a whole sociological tradition that reports on the efforts of elites to try and promote social cohesion, particularly in periods characterised by intense transformations[31].

According to Melossi (2002), the emergence of safety concerns in the most recent decades of Italian history can be traced back to the 1960, that it to say to a period of social transition characterised by social divisions along political and class lines. Economic transformations resulted in the empowerment of factory workers. For long they had represented a marginal presence within society. They held scarce relevance for the production process, they came from rural areas and they portrayed (deviant) behaviours that were seen as inadequate with respect to the prevailing moral order. In other words, they were assimilated to '*dangerous classes*'[32]. This all happened in coincidence with the maturation of a democratic form of government, in which 'crime' emerged as one of the main elements that would promote social cohesion (Matza 196). Slowly opportunities opened up for them to play a role in politics and they turned into political actors. Towards the 1960s, the theme of immigration and criminality was brought to the centre of attention in criminological studies: concerns related to southern Italians that had moved to the north, Italians in general, as well as Turkish, Spanish and Yugoslavians that had moved to Switzerland and Germany. No alarm had spread at the time. The situation rapidly changed following the petrol crisis, in 1973. It was the year in which a severe halt was put to im-migration polices. In face of a continuous request of labor force, im-migrant flows did not stop. At the same time, their 'irregular' presence fed into a debate that progressively

[31] In the first decades of the 1800s, England experienced a period characterised by a severe breach of social piece, alongside intervals of economic and political crisis. Incessant economic changes pushed large sections of the population to move from the countryside to urban areas. A constant element that accompanies this transition was the problem of criminality, vagrancy and banditry (Lefebreve 1932, Foucault 1975 cit. Melossi 2002). The 'social question' soon invested the rest of Europe too, in the second half of the same century, contextually with the emergence of the traits of modernity, and in particular the growth of metropolitan areas and of a new urban 'figure': the crowd.

[32] The term refers to the work by Chevalier (1985). As the author argued, all throughout the XIX century, the 'crowd' imposed itself to the eyes of the bourgeoisie and of political elites under a specific light: it was a crowd straving of misery, torn in pieces by various diseases, inclined to sedition, reduced to a state of moral depravity. Various authors had expressed their worries well before, about the impossibility of 'keeping this dangerous classes under control'. The problem was often 'read' from a specific perspective that derived from stereotypical memories of what had happened in Paris, during the French revolution: the crowd took possession of the streets, committed crimes, killed nobles... It was associated with delinquency.

associated im-migrants with criminality, in spite of the fact that safety is not only connected to newcomers.

We might be tempted to think that September 11th had a considerable role in raising concerns about newcomers – and in particular those of muslim religion. On the contrary, as Simon (2007) explained[33], fears were a feature of the society well before this event took place. In fact, in the last decades, crime has come to be a strategic issue. First of all, across all kinds of institutional settings, people are seen as acting legitimately when they act to prevent crimes or other troubling behaviours that can be closely connected to crime. Second, we can expect people to deploy the category of crime to legitimate interventions that have other motivations. Third, the technologies, discourses and metaphors of crime and criminal justice have become more and more visible features of all kinds of institutions, where they can represent new opportunities for governance. In other words, it is essential to recognise there has been a shift from '*governing crime*' to '*governing through crime*'.

2.2.5.1 The birth of urban safety policies in Italy.

The introduction of a specific approach to urban safety, alongside its jargon, is a recent matter in Italy. Some scholars (Braccesi 2004) identified it with the founding of the journal '*Sicurezza e territorio*', in 1992. The cultural stance of the journal was made rather explicit: it drew from the tradition of prevention and it mutuated from the experiments of France and England. Its main objective was that of equipping the political-administrative staff of the region Emilia-Romagna with the skills necessary to face the growing spreading of a new pressing demand for security. Emilia-Romagna - where the city of Modena is situated - was the first Italian region to implement specific actions in this sense. A few years later, the so-called '*Città Sicure project*' took off. It was characterised by the innovative relationship between scientific elaboration and political-administrative choices. In particular, the scientific committee insisted on the importance of recognising the crucial role of local authorities in the government of security (Pavarini 2006). As a result, a dedicated '*protocollo d'intesa*' (agreement protocol) was gradually signed between the Mayor and the Prefect in various towns of both the Emilia-Romagna and other regions. It symbolised the end of state monopoly over safety policies (Braccesi 2004, Pavarini 2006).

[33] He referred to the American context but his observations can well be extended to the European one.

It was only in the first years of the new millennium that the theme of safety was explicitly addressed at a national level. Prior attempts, by both ruling and oppositional coalitions, had resigned to opinion campaigns and symbolic interventions, with a nuance (Braccesi 2004): left wing parties focused predominantly on promoting the certainty and exacerbation of custodial sentences for predatory crimes, while right-wing parties insisted in the implementation of highly visible operations capable of impacting on the symbolic reinstating of order in town centres, mainly through forms of patrolling.

At the end of the 1990s, an explosion was recorded all over the country of initiatives to improve urban safety. Various are the reasons for it: the ever growing emergence of a strong demand by imhabitants, the relevance that this came to occupy in local electoral campaigns and the new powers accorded to mayors (ibidem). In particular, with the introduction of national law 81/1993 their role changed dramatically. Their responsibility in terms of policy making had been rather limited. Since then they were invested with larger discretionary powers. As a result, they became the privileged target for citizens to express their expectations about local life. Accordingly, the achievement of consensus has become a function of their capacity to respond quickly to tax payers (Pavarini 2006, Selmini 2004), through the elaboration of projects that address their perceptions of unsafety. While local authorities have taken up more and more responsibility in the government of local safety, an increasing coordination with national authorities was made possible thanks to the role entrusted to the newly created Comitati Provinciali per l'Ordine e la Sicurezza Pubblica. Having said this, the conditions are yet not present in Italy for an effective redefinition of mayors' responsibility in terms of safety (Pavarini 2006). Unsurprisingly, many of them have made large use of ordinances to try and overcome this limitation. At the same time, the political options chosen by local authorities to address urban safety issues have opened the way to different experiences (Pavarini 2006) depending on their political affiliation - but not only -, as I will better explain in the next sections.

2.2.5.2 The intersection of immigration policies, internal security and practices of control.

With the beginning of the 1990s, increasing attention was paid to the theme of im-migration in conjunction with that safety. While in previous decades they were intended as two distinct discourses, they have gradually transformed into interchangeable categories of phenomena (Dal Lago 1999, Maneri 1998). Immigration, criminality and unsafety are now part of a discursive continuum. It would be more correct to speak of a frame for the capacity they have to frame public debates along these lines (Maneri 2001). This is all the more true since the introduction of the so-called '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law)[34] which ruled over the definition of a crime of irregular migration, thus transforming a personal condition into a penal status, regardless of whether individuals might or not represent an actual threat for the society. Let's take a few steps back.

Palidda (1998) showed that the evolution of migration policies in Italy can be set in the more general framework of a changing government of internal security and therefore in the disciplining of contemporary society. In any period of social transition, social and moral borders need to be redrawn before social groups can make a step forward in the re-definition of an accepted moral order. This is often done by emphasising phenomena of deviance and it can degenerate into the securitarian circuit Dal Lago (1999) sketched out, which can ultimately climax in forms of moral panic. This requires the identification of a '*convenient enemy*' (Christie 1986) that functions as as a scapegoat. Im-migrants embody this role perfectly because of their uncertain extraneous position with respect to the rest of the society, as Simmel and many other authors pointed out (see Colombo 1999 for an overview). Moreover, their illegitimate presence makes it all the more easy to stigmatise them: it suffices to say they reside in a territory without having any entitlement to citizenship. Above all, they have a special feature: they represent a (perceived) threat. In fact they are not, they are weak enough in the structure of societal power relations not to affect any equilibrium.

It is not easy to isolate from the complex framework of immigration policies those explicitly inspired by control objectives. Similar measures emerge in many of the legal norms that regular the status of im-migrants. Undoubtedly, police forces have always had a crucial role in the government of migration. Following the shift to a post-industrial society, in which no large mass of workers is necessary nor does it need to be controlled as a result,

[34] Italian government, 2009. Law 94, 15th July 2009: *Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica.*

newcomers have gradually transformed into a threat for democratic states. Against this background, the adoption of repressive measures has acquired more and more legitimacy regardless of the target of action: the same resources that are used to fight the mafia and terrorism have been equally devoted to the fight of micro-criminality or anti-social behaviours blamed onto im-migrants.

With some occasional exceptions, Italian migration policies show a clear and fairly consistent restrictive trend and a general anti-immigrants' rhetoric, with recurrent shifts between inclusion and exclusion (Bolaffi and Damiani 1996). For a long time the only legal framework on immigration, in Italy, was provided by the 1931public order law[35] which contained penal norms addressing the safeguard of order and public safety. The first organic piece of legislation dates back to 1986[36]. Its main aim was that of limiting migration flows to meet specific labour demands, while granting some basic rights to workers, including access to public services, family reunification and a permanent permit after six years or residence. Since then, the policy emphasis shifted from internal labor control to external control and public order issues (Sciortino 1999). The following piece of legislation, the so-called Martelli law[37] introduced a distinction between regular and irregular mi-migrants, on the basis of their possession of a regular residence permit. A clear discriminatory and repressive imprint characterised the so-called Turco-Napolitano law[38], which was passed by a centre-left coalition and which can be mostly understood as the actual implementation of the Schengen treaty. The repressive character of this regulatory framework affected newcomers since the very beginning of the migration experience to accompany them during the various phases of settlement, when the divergence in treatment with respect to natives becomes strikingly evident[39].

At the end of the 1990s, the issue of expulsion turned into a keystone of the internal control system. A very restrictive law was passed in 2002 by the then centre-right

[35] Italian government, 1931. Law 773, 18th June 1931: *Testo Unico di pubblica sicurezza.*

[36] Italian government, 1986. Law 943, 30th December 1986: *Norme in materia di collocamento e di trattamento dei lavoratori extracomunitari immigrati e contro le immigrazioni clandestine.*

[37] Italian government, 1990. Law 39, 28th February 1990: *Legge recante disposizioni in materia di stranieri richiedenti lo status di rifugiato.*

[38] Italian government, 1998. Law 40, 6th March 1998: *Disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero.*

[39] It suffices to say that the same offence, for example that of failing to provide police forces with an identity document, upon request, is punished differently depending on whether the request is made to a native resident or an immigrant, as it becomes clear by confronting art. 6 of Law 40/1998 with article 651 of the penal code. In addition, when migrants actually make it into the country they easily become the object of checks by police forces as a result, but not only, of the intersection between residents' sense of insecurity and police forces' repressive interventions.

government coalition, the so-called Bossi Fini[40]. It defined specified social integration measures for regular im-migrants and it sketched out a more repressive policy for undocumented.

Phenomena as the presence and reproduction of a population of undocumented have come to characterise the Italian context. The main pillar of internal control is the residence permit. In this system the 'regular' presence of im-migrants on the national territory is subjected to the delivery (and renewal) of the residence permit itself. Newcomers can apply for it only once they have signed a job contract. The work permit is normally understood as one of the tools of the internal control system. It is rather different from the classical ones that serve to 'contain' im-migration flows, by preventing their actual entrance into a country. In fact, the work permit is a 'market control system', which is functional to the 'disciplining' of im-migrants, through their insertion in a marginal section of the job market (Moulier Boutang 2002). Yet, it does not contribute to the promotion of newcomers' full integration, because they are tied up to their job and cannot dismiss unless they take the risk of 'falling' into irregularity, by loosing their work permit. This represents clearly a severe limitation to their mobility, since their job can only be partially intended as 'free'. Furthermore, this officially transparent system is very much 'divorced' from the mechanisms that im-migrants experience in everyday life (Sciortino 1999). Many of them may live for years without leaving any track of their activities, because they had to accept works in the shadow economy. When they do succeed in having access to a regular job, instead, they might still be stuck for long while trying to work around rather complex and heavy bureaucratic requirements that need to be fulfilled for the delivery of a work permit. This condition is widely acknowledged by decision makers, but the immigration policy debate has barely touched upon it. It would mean taking the risk of dealing with a burgeoning shadow economy.

[40] Italian government, 2002. Law 189, 30th July 2002: *Modifica alla normativa in materia di immigrazione e di asilo.*

2.2.5.3 How do local governments react to citizens' requests?

In the previous section I focused on the intersection of immigration policies, internal security and practices of control. The reader's attention was drawn to the national level. What has been happening at the local level?

The explosion of the securitarian theme, in Italy, has some peculiarities. The country lacks any memory of social control policies because they were never adopted in the past. A true culture of control has never been part of the welfare state. Social control has traditionally been devolved to the penal system. Italian politicians, on their side, have traditionally resigned to act on emergencies by introducing draconian legal sanctions for related offences, in the hope of overcoming emergencies themselves (Della Porta and Vannucci 1999).

There has been scantly any capacity by political actors to elaborate a new idea of social order. The debate has evolved along very ideological lines. It should not be surprising therefore that, faced with a period of social transition and with the emergence of forms of social panic, the political class sent some observers to new York to draw from the experience of zero tolerance. More about it later in the section. In order words, the local government of safety has been framed outside any culture nor praxis of social control (Pavarini 2006). Politicians have failed to decline it in terms of common good, while resigning to narratives that close it up in the domain of public order.

Centre-left coalitions have focused on two main alternatives: on the one side they have entrusted mayors with more responsibilities, on the other they have elaborated responses in terms of social and situational prevention, in association with control types of activities. The vast majority of centre-right coalitions have privileged interventions based on territorial control, instead. This is all the more evident if we look at a group of mayors in the north east of Italy, that have won the recognition of 'mayor-sheriff', after advancing a whole range of anti-social behaviour ordinances, often targeted at im-migrants. The current Mayor of Verona is among them.

Needless to say, trends between and within member states are complex enough to disallow any simple and unique story to be told. Italy, again, has its own peculiarities, but it is

reasonable to think that some of the points that will be raised next are constitutive of a scenario that goes well beyond Italian nation borders.

Traversed as it is by a multitude of people that escapes the classical categories of conformity and deviance - because they comprise all of them and yet cannot be identified with any particular one - the city seems to require the definition of what, by re-reading Bauman (2001), could be defined as an '*order without a norm*' (De Giorgi 2005: 81). Various observers have pointed to its loss of character as a social space in coincidence with its transformation into an apparatus of arrest and surveillance, aiming to address citizens' perceptions of unsafety. It is widely accepted that the latter are often fed by (visible) anti-social behaviours rather than actual crimes. Over the last decade political attention has more and more shifted towards them. This can be seen in the sheer number of legislative powers that have been introduced to tackle anti-social behaviours in Italy[41], similarly to England (see for example Millie 2008). Within a relatively short period of time the term has become part of a common lexicon.

What it means is not so straightforward (Wacquant 2000) and it depends largely on the specific context (see Burney 1999, Whitehead et al 2003, Millie et al 2005, Macdonalds 2006)[42]. The danger is of course for this type of behaviour to be over-identified. Furthermore, while these forms of 'incivilities' have no relevance for the penal system, they lack an adequate enough policy frame capable of dealing with them and the risk is high for them to contribute to the expulsion, division and denying of the pluralism of urban voices.

Attention to anti-social behaviours is central in the '*zero tolerance'* approach (see for example De Giorgi 2000, 2005) that draws from the theory of broken windows (Wilson and Kelling 1982). Its underlying assumption is that in places where disordered non standard behaviours emerge, episodes of criminality can spread more easily. One of its paradoxes is that it interprets the desire of an order expressed by a non specified community and it is clearly only this segment of the resident population that has the possibility of imposing its own views. Curiously, zero tolerance is not based on any criminological theory and there is no evidence of its effectiveness (De Giorgi 2005). Nevertheless, it keeps being adopted

[41] For an ample list of examples in this sense see the website Ordinanza pazza available at http://ordinanzapazza.wordpress.com/ [accessed on 17 October 2009].

[42] According to Millie (2008) a key factor lies in '*aesthetic acceptability*'. Interestingly, Crawford and Lister (2007) have noticed that there is little distinction between presence and behaviour and that (some categories of) people can be punished for just being there. As Young says: '*to know that there are different ways of doing things which in their own world are considered just as one's own takes away security'* (1999: 98). It is the precisely the contested nature of people's everyday activities that can lead to certain behaviours being labeled as anti-social.

throughout the US and Europe. In Italy it arrived in 1997 and it was soon introduced in Milan and Naples, as well as in other cities.

Popular discourses often associate it with a model of urban space management and an option of policing but while the latter is certainly its most relevant function, it is not the only one. Various tools have been adopted in fact. Apart from the installation of security systems, an increase in police presence has been promoted for example (see Quassoli 2004, Belluati 2004) to guarantee the territory would be patrolled and threatening individuals expulsed (Maneri 2001, Palidda 2000, Quassoli and Chiodi 2000). According to De Giorgi (2005) the zero tolerance approach can be described as a peculiar modality of populist and authoritarian thematisation of diverse social problems. It provides politicians with a patina of modernity through a rhetoric that allows to re-affirm the determination of the state of act against disorder, by liberating the public dimension of every responsibility in relation to the social genesis of society. This recalls what Smith (1996) discussed about '*revanchist policies*'[43] in the US. In his view, they embody a '*reaction against the alleged theft of the city cloaked in the populist language of civic morality and neighbourhood security*.' (120) By further elaborating on it, Atkinson (2006) suggested that revanchism operates not only through property markets. It operates also through other policy fields such as those of housing, urban development and social policy. The resulting interventions tend to be invariably played-out in strategies to '*re-order*' and '*clean*' urban space from a dangerous other, in an on-going management of residents' anxieties. The author showed well that revanchism can be understood on the basis of three main strands, namely: a mode of governance, resulting from an increasing decentralisation and discretion that allow local authorities to act in coercive ways; a set of programmes designed to secure public space; a prophetic and dystopian image of a downward spiral of social relations in which vengeful polices are thought as ameliorative of public places, seen in turn as representative of an urban malaise; a reference to economic objectives relating economic urban development to the securing of city spaces.

As social fears, household privatism and desires for order and domesticity have risen, predictability and safety have become non-negotiable principles of social life. These factors have tended to produce public policies aimed at generating relief from those we see as the sources of such apprehension and worries. The emotional drive underpinning such policies

[43] The concept of revanchism draws from the French ultra-right 'revanchist' populist movement, which throughout the last decades of the 19th century reacted against the liberalism of the 2nd Empire and the socialism of the Paris Commune. Smith (1996) adopted it to elaborate on cities whereby '*the benign neglect of the other half has been superseded by a more active viciousness that criminalizes a whole range of behaviours and that blames the failure of urban policy on the populations it was supposed to assist*' (227).

is a modulating and uneven characteristic of political and urban life: '*even if they want to, politicians cannot simply base urban policy on what `experts` define as scientifically evaluated best practice about what policies do and do not work. They also have to consider the raw play of power and the rhetorical pressing of buttons that evoke the darker human emotions*' (Stenson 2007: 67). This is not to say that political leaders need to 'dissolve' any threat to enjoy political legitimacy. They rather need to continue identifying specific groups as threatening, while promising they will do something about them, thus out-manoeuvring attempts by other political actors to do so (Ost 2004). One of the attractions of the '*politics of fear*', as Furedi (2005) would call it, is that it absolves policy makers from having to formulate what they actually stand for. It can be seen as a manipulative project that aims to immobilise public dissent, a kind of mantra with which disconnected elite readily manage to respond - or pretend to do so - to constituencines' needs.

The extreme-right party Lega Nord has been extremely effective in this sense. It has shown the capacity to pick up on citizens' uneasiness. From the ideological point of view, its proposals are generally of a communitarian type: reference is often made to an imagined community with specific characteristics that need preserving. When Lega Nord politicians refer to '*La Padania*'[44] it is not important whether such territorial entity actually exists or not. What is important is for people to be able to identify themselves with it. Convenient enemies, which are mostly associated with im-migrants, are equally crucial in this sense, because it allows to define the boundaries of belonging, inclusion and exclusion. According to Diamanti (1996), the ability of the party to address citizens' requests has not translated into any effective response in terms of policy, not more than those of other parties.

It should be clear by now how fears and insecurities run the risk of justifying practices of power that blend prohibitionism, protectionism and authoritarianism and that ultimately strike the weakest part of the native population (Palidda 2009: 5). Having said this, the response to secure urban space has been not only a story of revenge strategies. It has been a story of '*domestication*' (Zukin 1995) too. Atkinson reported various examples. Among others, he mentioned the case of the Port Authority bus terminal, in Manhattan: waiting rooms were created there to 'civilise' its users. A similar experience was reported by Dines

[44] The territory of the Padania refers to the actual 'Padana plain', in the north of Italy, that is to say the patch of territory that stretches from the city of Cuneo (in the Piemonte region) to the Adriatic see and which is traversed by the Pò river and its affluents. Apart from its geographical definition, the territory of la Padania refers to a territory with an economic model characterised by the spreading of small to medium size entrepreneurial activities, while from the political point of view it refers to the inclination towards a strong secessionist stance.

(2002), with reference to peddlers presence in Naples. The local authority tried to force them out of Piazza Garibaldi and to move them to a dedicated 'exotic market'. Such a place could function as a magnet for tourists. At the same time, it could serve the scope of 'domesticating' peddlers presence.

It is reasonable to think that the recurrent demands for reassurance by citizens can have heavy repercussions on the work of both politicians and police forces. The latter have come across peculiar difficulties in giving answers that could be perceived as adequate and satisfactory by the citizenry. This is particularly true for anti-social behaviours that cannot be linked to any specific crime, as anticipated above. Police forces have lamented a shortage of instruments that 'forced' them to modify their intervention strategies as to manage the so-called '*rules of disorder*' (Palidda 2000). In front of their incapacity to govern the behaviours of the urban multitude, they have adopted dispositives of urban control, including systems of surveillance and containment of masses (Pavarini 2006). Borders between included and excluded (Wacquant 2002) have been artificially re-instated as a result. Curiously, in face of considerable investments, operators have scarcely used these technologies, if not to support investigations of perpetuated crime. Moreover, little evidence has been reported on the effectiveness of similar methods to mitigate, to a considerable extent, individual and collective actors' claims (Quassoli 2004, Belluati 2004).

What is often unsaid is that while local police forces have taken up more and more responsibility to regulate anti-social behaviours, while the role of other actors, particularly that of social services, has been obscured and marginalised (Bricocoli 2005)[45]. It is therefore unsurprisingly that the police has had a crucial role in the definition of the safety frames. It goes without saying that police forces are not exempt from stereotypes which are largely shared in the public opinion (Palidda 1999, Maneri 1998, Dal Lago 1999). Accordingly, they contribute to conveying an image of urban society associated with chaos and disorder, taken over by marginalised individuals who have little right to the city but make a respectable and included society feel fearful.

Following reports by residents, the practice is well spread among police officers to organise increasing runs of inspections around the city, if not to specific targets. They themselves

[45] As the author argued, three main reasons explain the stretching of the police mandate: the tendency to refer anything somehow relating to security to the theme of control; the strong relationship between mayors and local police forces and the fact the former has become the privileged interlocutor for citizens to forward their demands; the emergence of specific funding programs made available by regional and provincial authorities to deal with safety issues which have encouraged police forces to draw up projects in which they are protagonists.

revealed, at times, the potential perverse effects that can derive when focusing on residents' claims, without activating dispositives capable of providing with alternative definitions of safety as a 'public good' (Bifulco and De Leonardis 2005).

One of the distinct features of our time is not the cultivation of fear in itself. It is rather the cultivation of our sense of vulnerability. Governments now treat citizens as vulnerable subjects, according to Furedi (2005) and politicise the minutiae of their existence.

Attention to anti-social behaviours, particularly by im-migrants, can, in certain cases, been understood in this direction. Unfortunately, its suppression, is hardly permitted by law. Yet, the police has to do something about them because the average citizen seems to be more concerned about these than actual crimes. A practice has evolved accordingly, whereby the category of illegal/irregular im-migrant has been used not only as an administrative devise but also for crime prevention and repression. In other words, newcomers have increasingly been stopped, checked and asked for documents as this can be claimed by policemen as a positive 'outcome' of their work (Quassoli 2004). The fight against irregular immigration provides local governments with an (easy) opportunity to act strong or at least to show a determination to do so. This has happened alongside an increasing blurring of the category of irregular and criminal im-migrant which derives from a conflation of the administrative and criminal sphere, following both the lines of evolution of immigration policy - as sketched out above - and everyday practices by police forces.

What is important here is clearly not the actual effectiveness of such a system but rather its power to provide with an immediate and effective response to the definition of problems as expressed by the public. Of course there is nothing illegal if the police checks foreigners's documents. At the same time, if this is actively used as a way of preventing crime it may lead to the decline of legal standards (ibidem). Furthermore, this would contribute to the active role of the police in the criminalisation of im-migrants. Various examples point to people that did not commit any crime but were arrested as a result of police agents' excessive zealousness or even power abuse (see Palidda 2009, Mucchielli and Nevanen 2009). It is known, for example, that people are more likely to be the target of controls and repression if they belong to the weakest groups in society, including certainly im-migrants..

2.2.5.4 The potential normative power of urban safety policies.

Identifying (urban safety) conflicts as powerful (normative) agents of change means shifting attention from the emergence of a given problem to the unraveling of conflicts themselves. Interestingly, Ruggiero (2004) highlighted urban sociology has been traditionally dealing with issues of security. This has been done alongside wide reflections on social change and conflict. Worries for social order have been accompanied by an invocation for innovative processes to be supported. Nonetheless, with the emergence of a sociology of deviance analytical intuitions on conflicts have been largely abandoned.

As widely discussed, urban conflicts are more than often described as follows: residents' complain on disturbances and forms of urban decay; institutions, in turn, respond with territorial control types of interventions and an increase in police inspections. In other words, they have been mostly dealt with in terms of 'urban safety'. What I mean here is that this frame has had a totalising effect over urban contentious dynamics. This has inevitably supported univocal indisputable discourses (Allasino et al. 2000 and Belluati 2004).

Such a frame has not emerged out of conflicts themselves. Hardly any space has been allowed for alternative ways to interpret and manage conflicts to become manifest. Hardly any space has been allowed for contentious actors - a part from residents, occasionally - to speak up their concerns and opinions on any ongoing trouble. The normative power of conflicts has been actually suffocated. Apparently, measures embodying the frame of urban safety - to cite one territorial control interventions - have been privileged over time by government agencies, but they have been merely 'attached' to different types of urban conflicts. This can be possibly understood in relation to the fact that safety is still considered as priority number one in the country and that, together with predictability, has become a non-negotiable principle of social life. There has barely been any conflict, in the normative sense of the term. The frame of urban safety has 'followed' conflicts. What I am saying here is that relevant debates have been progressively depoliticised by shifting residents' attention on the responses put forward by government agencies to address their complaints. Government tools and their rationality have been widely highlighted in public debates (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2009). Indeed the latter carry out a crucial symbolic function: by drawing their strength from the decision-making process that precedes them, they make legitimate power manifest. Arguably, institutional actors have repeatedly 'shown'

constituencies that their requests were being addressed, thus re-producing invariant narratives discourses within the walls of 'urban safety', while at the same time failing to question requests and the way to go about them in the first place. Unsurprisingly therefore, alternative narratives have been missing. Furthermore, it is evident that tools can actually orient social behaviours because in fact they state the values and interests granted by public authorities (ibidem). Paradoxically, this has further reinvigorated and legitimised discourses constructed within the frame of urban safety.

In their analysis of policy controversies, Schoen and Rein (1994) argued that '*policy positions rest on underlying structures of belief, perception and appreciation*' (23), which they call '*frames*'. They see policy controversies as disputes in which contending parties hold conflicting frames. Such disputes might be resistant to resolutions, there might be no space at all for any resolution but for an univocal interpretation of issues. In addition, frames might be tacit, that is to say exempt from conscious attention and reasoning. They might be also used in a 'strategic' way, to promote a specific set of values and discourses, as Snow and Benford (1988) suggested, when analysing contentious dynamics. I will come back to their work in section 3.3.3 In any case, frames do carry with them some implications. The work by Allasino et al. (2000) - on which this section will mostly concentrate - is very illuminating in this sense. It shows well how disputes, in Turin, were accompanied by the emergence of various frames.

Problems were diagnosed. Safety and public order issues were certainly paramount. Prognostic frames were also formulated and solutions put forward to try and cope with them. Initially, the Municipality was mostly concerned with social malaise and young people's deviance. Gradually, its attention focused on control types of activities, overwhelmed as it was by residents' securitarian pressures. It made extensive use of surveillance instruments and strengthened its collaboration with police forces.

The second diagnostic frame that clearly emerged was that of urban renewal, as disputes came to be understood in terms of urban decay. Local authorities are well equipped with adequate instruments in this sense, hence prognostic frames privileged maintenance interventions that are generally very visible and pretty effective in the short run, that is to say ideal to raise consensus.

The social frame was certainly not at the centre of attention, on the contrary. Disputes highlighted the malaise experienced by natives, while leaving that of im-migrants in the background. At a second stage, the Municipality 'diagnosed' disputes in terms of pacific cohabitation. This encouraged policy officers in retrieving projects and initiatives that had been elaborating well before the explosion of disputes. It is reasonable to say that a similar 'reading. In the same way, while the Municipality could count on a number of specialised officers, many of them were not included in the management of conflicts. It is the case of social workers. They themselves did not offer their support as they felt their competence was not relevant considering the dominant 'label' under which disputes had been dealt with. Vitale (2009) reported similar findings, in his exploration of the conflict around the building of a mosque in Milan. As he explained, discussions initially focused on the possibility of granting planning permission. As the conflict's frame shifted towards issues of multiculturalism and im-migrants' integration, the collaboration of expert officers was sought.

Far from what could be expected, media also contributed to the promotion of alternative frames and the activation of projects and resources, in Turin (Belluati 2004). In the first phase of the conflict, when other no other influential sources were available for the definition of the situation, journalists became true entrepreneurs of the urban crisis. This visibility certainly supported the explosion of forms of alarmism. At the same time, it successfully pressed for projects to be implemented quickly. Furthermore, an increase in news was noticed that portraying (the renewed) neighbourhoods in a more positive light.

What can be learnt from the above is that urban disputes can function as a catalysing element that encourages revisiting problems from different perspectives. This can ultimately result in the adoption of alternative frames as well as in changes in the structure of collaboration and projects, as specific types of competences and interventions come to be seen as relevant. The imperative which pressurises local authorities into doing something about residents' complaints implies they should know how to act. It is not always so. Needless to say, however, a re-definition of a situation can certainly prove helpful in this direction (Allasino et al. 2000).

One of the paradoxes of the case explored by the authors is that all solutions were already available. However, the conflict functioned as a stimulus to active them. Crucial was the role of '*policy entrepreneurs*' (Giuliani 1998), both institutional and non institutional, in

indicating innovative paths to address complex issues and manage the emerging disputes. Again, they actively contributed to re-defining the terms of issues at stake and they highlighted potential new avenues for debates to progress further in conncetion with other actors. When no dispositive is available for actors' coordination, the production of any common normative ground to be shared and discussed among parties can be severely constrained (Vitale 2008). I will further focus on this point in the next chapter, when discussing the effectiveness of the French pragmatic approach in the analysis of contentious dynamics (see section 3.5).

This section has shown its is actors that the shape the narratives of local life. This is true as far as institutions are concerned. It can be so for other actors too, even though they do not always succeed in shaping the city as they want. Conflicts have their own dynamics that are mostly unpredictable and cannot be controller nor necessarily re-directed. Having said this, narratives can change over time and power equilibrium too.

2.2.6 Are im-migrants only victims?

Reflections on safety policies tend to evolve around a normative stance of social control, with scarce or no reference to actors. Nedless to say, any proper model of social control should be analysed from two different points of view: an internal analysis, on the rationality and effectiveness of given tools with reference to costs and objectives; an external one which weigh it against acceptability, with respect to criteria of social inclusion (De Giorgi 2000).

Their status of exclusion makes it all the more improbable for im-migrants to advance any claim (Palidda 1998). At a time when it is hard to imagine a different distribution of power symmetries, particularly if we consider prevailing discourses on immigration which portray newcomers as a threat to the society, can we expect the, to speak up at all? Or should we simply assume they are absent from the political scene? To start with, any absence is significant *per sè*, as it suggests power asymmetries might be at work. It might equally hint to an 'invisible' actor, whose presence could be intercepted through alternative research approaches. Arguably, a pragmatic stance can be again helpful in this sense (see section 3.5).

As anticipated above, the Italian literature on urban policies tends to elude contentious

dynamics (Vitale 2007). It is even more so as far as safety policies are involved. This equally applies to Italy, Europe and the US. Scholars often assume the passivity of actors, in an implicit reading of the 'urban texture' as characterised by power domination. Their attention has so far focused on policies, with little or no space has been reserved to actors, and im-migrants - as the target of policies - in particular. If they are mentioned at all, newcomers (as well as homeless and other categories of disadvantaged people) are described as mere victims.

More recently, citizens' safety has been more and more constructed as antagonist to the presence of non-citizens. With the beginning of the 1990, discourses have focused more and more on nomads and newcomers. This is not to say that only im-migrants are classified as 'victims'. Following the shift from social to situational prevention (Crawford 1999 cit. Pitch 2007), safety has been more and more declined as an urban problem whose responsibility was assigned to vulnerable actors including im-migrants, prostitutes, poor people, homeless, drug addicts and young people. In particular, a mechanism has developed whereby anti-social behaviours has been gradually interpreted as a symptom of deviance. Such an association has resulted in the intensification of forms of social control aimed at people - identified on the basis of a status - rather than at the repression of deviant phenomena (Pitch 2007).

The 'victims' of safety seem to be removed from any chance of negotiation. When reporting on the clearing out of Tompkins square park, in New York, Smith (1996) mentioned the community resisted against it. As for homeless, he reported they just moved to another location. A similar picture was given by Mitchell (1997) who, in his study of US anti-homeless interventions, highlighted they simply left. In his discussion of British '*vengeful polices*' (2006: 1), which draws from Smith's work, Atkinson argued their target are likely to be the actual victims. De Giorgi (2005) claimed it is the '*damned of the metropolis*[46]' (85) who pay for zero tolerance in New York. They have been often criminalised by spatial control practices. A few years earlier Dal Lago (1999) had brought this very issue to light, with reference to the Italian context too.

Im-migrants have been often projected as the main cause of urban unsafety. Hence they tend to be the privileged target of related policies. This dialectic has proved unable to address urban problems at their very roots (Pavarini 2006, Braccesi 2004). Moreover, it has

[46] That is to say homeless people, drug-addicts, prostitutes and marginal groups in general.

failed to widen the spaces of access to and exercise of rights for many individuals (Pavarini 2006), including first and foremost newcomers themselves. In his analysis of urban safety policies in the boot-shaped peninsula, Pavarini (2006) did argue in this direction, but the concerns of these actors were not raised. Della Porta (2004) provided with a thorough overview of neighbourhood committees in Italy, including those focusing specifically on urban safety. As she stated, they hardly ever counted any im-migrant as their members. Once again, newcomers' voice was not spoken up.

While they embody the idea scapegoat for residents' fears, they were hardly asked how they feel about it. An important point should be made here. As anticipated, the existence of a dedicated office or agency that deals with complaints might well generate dissatisfactions on issues that were not previously perceived as worth any intervention. While specific offices exist for residents to report on their complaints, what agencies have been set up for im-migrants to report on their claims? It could be certainly argued that 'complaints-offices' are open to everyone. Are they really?

Furthermore, no attention at all has been paid to any possible reaction on their side (Belluati 2004). Arguably, the capacity of newcomers to get organised in autonomous forms of participation tends to be denied or merely ignored. It might be a reasonable attitude, for a variety of reasons that will be better explored in the next chapter. It goes without saying that a careful investigation should be undertaken to prevent any legitimate assumption to be taken as a fact. This is what this project proposes to do.

Bellauti (2004) hypothesised that '*im-migrants, for the time being, stand still and look*' (147). Many of them are still going through a first phase of settlement whereby their primary needs remained to be satisfied. It becomes therefore difficult to engage, due to their precarious living conditions. Under such circumstances, it is somehow normal to expect the choice on their side to keep quiet at the margins of conflicts. Nonetheless, reaching well beyond a psychological understanding of the isolation they often experience a few other interpretations can be given of im-migrants' (apparent) lack of engagement.

The representatives of their communities are often hardly incisive in their actions, possibly due to scarce leadership skills (Allasino et al. 2000, Bellauti 2004). So far, it is lay and catholic pro-immigrants associations that have been mostly active, in their name. They have involved newcomers too, generally in a vicar position. A shortage of social networks might

add up as an important explicatory variable, at least for newly arrived im-migrants. Scholars do not always confirm this, as will be discussed later. A number of authors (see for example Mantovani 2007) have rather stressed cleavages within associations: it is not enough to share the status of newcomers for internal divisions to be overcome. Considerable divergence in opinions, regardless of members' nationality, can constrain their opportunities to action.

In spite of the scenario sketched above, some authors (Belluati 2004) acknowledged that autonomous initiatives by im-migrants are on the rise, alongside a renewed awareness on the need to put forward their claims. It should not be forgotten, that while their inclusion in the political arena is limited, they are becoming increasingly integrated in the host society through other forms of participation. An evident example in this sense is represented by the launch of entrepreneurial activities, as this thesis will also show.

2.2.6.1 The voice of im-migrants in the media.

We already said that journalists generally draw information from official sources. They hardly provide any space for voices that are 'not organised'. Furthermore, '*as a consequence of their mass audience they seek to retrieve stereotypes, they try and stage a moral comedy, in which the role of victim and executioner may be easily identified*' (Maneri 2009: 32).

According to Dines (2002) the media did not conspire to silence the voices of im-migrants, in Naples. They were simply not included in the construction of a consensual representation of Piazza Garibaldi. They were systematically excluded from any access to the news. The press rather built on the opinions and statements of politicians and the police. Possibly, in a contingency which was already dramatic enough to be newsworthy, little space was left for alternative viewpoints. Nonetheless, in the author's view, most of newcomers were aware of the public images associated with them: they were indignant about being labelled criminals, particularly as they have been contributing to the thriving of the local economy.

In their investigation of disputes in Turin, Allasino et al. (2000) identified a group of people - made up of extreme left movements, anarchists and in particular squatters - that eventually supported the cause of im-migrants, by expressing their opposition to control policies. The authors did not specify further the nature of their support, nor whether they spoke in their name. They did not mention whether newcomers managed to speak their voice in the press through the support of these groups or whether the latter somehow spoke in their name. Curiously, even in the work by Belluati (2004), who specifically analysed the same disputes through a systematic press review, no such point was raised, thus leaving the reader with the assumption they had no access to media debates.

If we look beyond urban conflicts, it cannot be denied that newcomers have been reserved some space in the press over time. Leaving aside repeated associations between immigration and criminality, news have been reported on cultural events promoted by their own communities and second generations. Limited examples are not missing either of (occasional) articles denouncing the difficulties they experience upon arrival and all along their settlement. At times, im-migrants are described according to criteria that seem to be drawn from a good intercultural manual. Similar accounts tend to present a paternalistic character and can be mostly found in newspapers associated with left wing political

affiliations (Maneri 1998). This sort of attitude ends up confirming they are part of an isolated well defined group, at the margin of the (main) community. What is most evident is that newcomers have been repeatedly voiced through communication by the majority, that is to say in the form of self-referential depictions. All in all, there seems to be a general difficulty in 'treating' their everyday presence as something different from an emergency.

It should not be forgotten that media also intervene in im-migrants' individual and collective experiences. The stereotypes that news spread on their communities (King and Wood 2001) reach them too. They are well aware of them and often feel outraged by similar representations.

To summarise the last sections, scholars have given just a passing reference to im-migrants' voice in the context of urban conflicts. It might simply reflect the general de-politicisation of the public sphere that has been claimed all throughout the 1900s. Swyngedouw (2007) forcefully argued that proper politics has been evacuated from the urban. According to him, '*a neo-liberal governmentality has replaced debate, disagreement and dissensus with technologies of governing*'. (2). In spite of it, he acknowledged that '*spaces of political engagements occur within the cracks, in-between the meshes and the strange inter-location that shape places that contest the police order*' (3). Furedi (2005) was more pessimistic. In his opinion, the mood of disengagement has even succeeded in engulfing movements of protest which have become more and more a strikingly personal matter. Nevertheless, there are people who speak up. There are im-migrants who speak up too, I insist.

They have been repeatedly obscured, as other vulnerable actors have. Moreover, apart from the fact that the equation criminality/immigration is spreading more and more, newcomers have been made invisible through laws that push them at the margins of society, while drawing forms of citizenship which are constrained within the walls of the job market. In fact, despite the various cultural categories that are repeatedly used to divide them into well-cut ethnicities, they still predominantly occupy those spaces that receiving societies have reserved for them because labor force is needed there (Sayad 1999). But all forms of social control carry with them a number of contradictions (De Giorgi 2000)…

This section started with a number of questions: at a time when it is hard to imagine a different distribution of power symmetries, particularly if we consider prevailing discourses on immigration which portray newcomers as a threat to the society, can we expect the, to

speak up at all? Or should we simply assume they are absent from the political scene? None of these questions has been satisfactorily answered, as scarce hints were found in the literature. After a critical review on the (Italian sociological) debate on urban conflicts, it remains to be seen whether im-migrants' political engagement has been investigated in other fields or disciplines. In fact it has been largely investigated by both social and political scientists, who have reflected around associationism and forms of collective action. The next chapter will be dedicated to an exploration of debates in these areas which have very much nurtured this research project. Before moving onto it, some pages will be devoted to an important actor that repeatedly emerged in urban conflicts and in urban safety conflicts in particular: neighbourhood committees.

2.2.7 Neighbourhood committees: a fight for what in the name of whom?

The obsessive demands for safety, that derive from a revived civic activism, have turned claims for the right to the city - that characterised the early 1970s' - into arrogant claims to affirm '*the right to urban safety*' (Petrillo, 2000). Actions at both individual and collective level have been undertaken. In many cases, they have stemmed from feelings of indignation rising from (negative) everyday experiences (Cefaï 2007) that have been transformed into accusations leveled at the political class for their (alleged) lassez-faire attitude.

Who are the subjects of similar actions? I am referring to neighbourhood committees. My choice to introduce them in this section of the chapter is of course open to criticism. Their presence is indeed by no means limited to this type of conflicts. The main studies have so far looked at larger cities (see for example Petrillo 1995, Selmini 1997, Della Porta and Andretta 2001, Belluati 2003).Some researchers (Della Porta 2004, Poletti 2003) later investigated on other contexts too. In her analysis of neighbourhood committees in Bologna, Sebastiani (2001) suggested they generally adopt defensive forms of mobilisation. Their constitution has often taken place in coincidence with the emergence of territory-bounded forms of identity. Unsurprisingly, the stake of conflicts in which they get involved might therefore include material objectives and more or less explicit struggle for recognition (ibidem).

Concerns advanced by them range from environmental issues, to urban planning, safety and social services. Post-materialistic preoccupations - such as those relating to urban safety and quality of life - are also at the heart of their interests. These are mostly theme

that hardly find any space in electoral programs nor in the political agenda, with a partial exception for the specific theme of urban safety (Della Porta 2004).

Neighbourhood committees do not represent a new phenomenon. Cities like Turin and Bologna, for example, are well-known for a long standing tradition of spontaneous civic engagement by residents. Yet, scholars have defined them as new forms of localism, alongside the spreading of similar experiences, in the 1990s. According to Della Porta (2004) their novelty resides in the way these groups reclaim their role as well as in the fact that institutions recognise them as urban actors, thus developing various modalities to engage with them.

The territorial movements that anticipated neighbourhood committees, existed as spontaneous forms of gathering in degraded suburbs. They were characterised by a highly political nature: they presented themselves as political actors and their demands were mostly filtered through political parties, particularly in 'red areas' governed by Communist coalitions, including cities such as Modena (Trigilia 1986). With time their attention shifted to the wider urban scale, they progressively stopped making use of parties and got organised in lobbies and networks supported by influential actors, assuming thereby a hybrid nature (Sebastiani 2001).

Committees mostly rely on forms of protests such as petitions, handing out leaflets, organising press conferences. In spite of differences with respect to old forms of local movements, their repertoires of action have not substantially changed (Allasino et al 2000). The breaking down of a committee does not always represent the end of activists' engagement. Some of them rather decide to get involved in new activities that require specific types of skills (Schlosberg 1999). They can also evolve, with some members entering an electoral list. Interestingly, however, whenever they tried to achieve an electoral consensus, by claiming they interpret citizens' orientation, they hardly manage to do so (Della Porta 2004, Allasino et al 2000).

Della Porta and Andretta (2001) defined them as '*characterised by localistic identities, flexible organisational and participative structure, low levels of coordination, protests, even if moderate, as their preferred form of action.*'[47] (45) They consist of citizens that group up on the basis of a shared territory. This does not mean there exists necessarily a physical territory, but rather a social

[47] my translation

one which is constantly experienced by its inhabitants (Jobert 1998: 89 cit. Della Porta 2004). The underlying hypothesis is generally that mobilisation has grown in the hope that change can take place. Such expectation relates to the increasing delegation of powers to institutions and the recent introduction of the direct election of mayors (Della Porta 2002).

Committees generally reject any political belonging and declare themselves free from any political influence. According to Poletti (2003) such a stance can be associated with the opening up to a market of popular consensus. It does not reflect the fact of being effectively free in fact. After all, they take charge of citizens' requests, while embodying their loss of trust in institutions and the grievances they suffer (Jasper 1997). Moreover, committees do not despise contacts with local councillors.

Some scholars argued they sprang from a crisis of political representation and the emergence of new forms of participation (Della Porta 2004), characterised as they are by the rejection of any ideological stance in favour of pragmatic ones and the rejection of any delegation of their rights and interests to any actors by themselves. Other authors describe them alternatively as either a threat or resource for democracy. Their interests are often associated with fragmented forms of particularism, regardless of the fact they recall forms of bottom-up mobilisation (Della Porta 2004).

Their budgets are generally limited (see Bobbio 1999, Buso 1996, Sebastiani 2001) and mostly consist of members' financial inputs. While resources are scarce, committees have shown the ability to present a detailed critique of public measures and a high level of project planning (Della Porta 2004). Their action does not always represent a reaction to public policies. Occasionally it takes the shape of proactive proposals, to the point it can even construct services for the collectivity (see for example Vitale 2001, Della Porta and Diani 2004). Pressure by them has also kept attention high on residents' requests (Allasino et al 2000).

Leadership is normally informal, active members are hardly more than ten. They have a spontaneous and self-referential nature. Many of them have claimed their legitimacy on the basis they cluster together people and their interests but there is a gap between their actions and their internal structure: committees' leaders often take it for granted they represent the interests of a given territory, without undertaking a legitimate test of representativeness Vitale (2008). Im-migrants are rarely counted among their members. The same can be said

for other groups such as young people, specific job categories, including first and foremost factory workers. Shopkeepers join often as members, instead. This can result in committees promoting practices of exclusion, unless local authorities acknowledge their existence in a responsible manner (Poletti 2003). Hence, it is necessary to ensure that these new innovative forms of participation do not end up being functional to the construction of a society of exclusion (Baratta and Giannoulis 1997).

The number of militants who engage regularly is very low. Leaders, on their side, are generally capable of mobilising large groups of people when needed. Research confirms the importance of activists' '*political capital*' (Piazza et al. 2003), that is to say the experience they have matured in political parties and trade unions (Oberschall 1973). Some have also shown new types of competence, including the capacity of dealing effectively with media.

2.2.7.1The rise of urban safety committees and their specificity.

Urban safety committees have been founded since the end of the 1980s, in order to protest against unsafety and urban decay, which were mostly understood as strictly related to the presence of nomads and im-migrants. The first time the media reported their voice was in 1987, in coincidence with a protest against a nomad settlement in the periphery of Rome (Maneri 1998). With the gradual increase of a perceived sense of insecurity, residents' demands for safety were increasingly legitimised and started spreading all over the country. This is clearly testified by the growing number of committees that were specifically created around safety related issues (Belluati 2004, Della Porta 2004).

Various observers have grown preoccupied in the way they have understood committees as hardly compatible with democratic forms of civil and political participation (Petrillo 1995, 2000, Dal Lago 1999). Protests organised by them have represented an expression of the anxieties aroused with a considerable increase in migration flows, in the view of Della Porta (1999). She later reported the results of a research undertaken in six Italian cities, between 1991 and 2000. In this context, she specified that 45,5% of the committees analysed - including not only safety ones - blamed anti-social behaviours onto specific groups such as im-migrants, and in particular undocumented (2004). At the same time, cases were mentioned of committees that highlighted the multiple dimensions of safety (see for example Pitch 2001). Della Porta (2004) insists that scholars have repeatedly given up to the adoption of certain categories for the analysis of protests. They have retrieved the

hypotheses formulated by old structural-functionalist or psychological approaches that described collective behaviour as an emotional outburst.

Among the factors that help explain securitarian protests, the political context is mentioned as particularly crucial. The research by Della Porta (2004) mentioned that 64,6% of all events that adopt a similar frame took place in cities governed by centre-right coalitions. Modena is governed by a centre-left coalition instead. Nonetheless, in the 1990s, against a background of increased perceived unsafety, safety committees emerged (Poletti 2003). More about them in the empirical chapter.

CHAPTER 3:
IM-MIGRANTS AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT.

According to Thompson (2009), issues concerning im-migrants' agency – he specifically referred to Black and Latino political engagement in the US - are not weel understood by urban theorists. In his opinion, this clouds what should be a dynamic inquiry in urban politics: undeniably the exploration of forms of agencies lies at the heart of any concern with urban theory. It is actually an essential requirement for the existence of an urban theory, in the first place, which is attentive to power dynamics. A similar neglect might well contribute to the inability of the discipline to explain why minority political mobilsation remains low depite the problems they face (ibidem). Most importantly, it might take it for granted that their levels of mobilisation are low, without searching for empirical evidence, as the preceeding chapters on urban conflicts testified well. I do believe scholars have to implore this risk, not only to grant an effective engagement with the topic, but also to avoid reinstating narratives of domination (by institutions) and of apathy or scarce engagement (by both natives and im-migrants). Before presenting my empirical findings, I will therefore revise the literature on political participation to highlight all forms of engagements that have been highlighted by scholars over time, with particular attention to newcomers. In the first section, I will provide a brief introduction on a few terms, to set the debate into context. Then I will draw an overview of 'im-migrants and politics' to then explore the main lines of inquiry and the prevailing interpretation promoted by the political opportunity structure model. As my interest goes well beyond 'conventional forms of actions', to include all types of dispersed engagement, some of the main tenets of contentious politics will be resumed. The chapter will be closed by a section on the French pragmatic stance, in which I will show the contribution it can give to further explore im-migrants' forms of political engagement and the 'vacuum' which yet exist in the relevant literature.

3.1 Political participation and political engagement between definitions and empirical needs.

As it is often the case in social sciences, discussions about concepts and definitions can be endless. My aim here is again not to solve any academic dispute but rather to try and clarify the specific meanings and features of certain terms that are relevant for this work.

Particularly after students' movements in the late 1960s, the term participation has come to be associated with an idea of *'power re-appropriation*' (Cotta 1979: 194). Such re-appropriation by citizens is a central issue in democratic regimes. It is supposed to guarantee the actual implementation of popular sovereignty (Cotta 1979). Yet, in spite of its highly evocative significance, the term has often been adopted with little rigour. Semantically speaking, it basically refers to individuals taking part in the political life of the society in which they live (Parry et al. 1992 cit. Blakeley and Evans 2009, Sani 1996)

Apparently, the concept is straightforward. Biorcio (2008), on his side, suggested two main issues need adddressing: *how* individuals take part and *in what* they take part (67).
Modalities of participation can vary: from individual involvement in politics to a vast repertoire of collective actions of which it is hard to draw an exhaustive list. It is more complicated to specify the sphere of associational life in which actors participate. That of politics can be distinguished from the social, economic, religious and cultural ones (Cotta 1979). On the contrary, the term politics does not have precise boundaries and it can be hardly defined univocally.

Various classifications have been adopted by scholars according to their specific research questions. In the most restricted definition, reference is made to forms of participation with the direct or indirect *purpose* to weigh on the process of production of binding decisions in a given political system (Sartori 1987: 257, Raniolo 2002: 20). A wider definition comprises '*any action that directly or indirectly aim to protect certain interests or (consolidated or emergent) values or to change or maintaining a power balance in social relations'* (Sani 1996: 503). In this perspective, a whole variety of non conventional actions can be included that do not fall within the category of activities linked to formal political rights. From the theoretical point of view, while the most restricted definition recalls a functionalist approach focusing on consensus (in the political system) and citizens' integration in the institutionalised practices of democratic regimes, the wider one recalls an approach that

tries to connect participation to conflicts, and to the dynamics of political and social relations.

Alessandro Pizzorno (1966) further elaborated on this second perspective[48]. He eventually proposed the following definition: '*an action, in solidarity with others, within a state or a class, aiming to maintain or change the structure (and therefore the values) of the dominant system of interests*' (1966, 255-256). Such a definition highlights a strong link between solidarity and participation and allowed, at the same time, the inclusion of forms of action as diverse as social movements and subcultural participation.

It might seem challenging to apply any concept of participation to im-migrants. They live in and with a community of natives of which they are part of, at least as far as they share the same territory and duties, but they do not enjoy full access to political rights, including first and foremost the right to vote. This sets them apart in a specific category. Nonetheless, we take Pizzorno's work seriously, the scope for research on newcomers actions opens up. A whole dimension relating to participation in conflicts, protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, hunger strikes, etc. emerge which has been mostly ignored or glossed over in research. This project intends to contribute to this line of inquiry, with particular attention to forms of im-migrants' participation at the local level.

For the scope of this thesis, I believe there is a better term to tackle with the topic under analysis. I am referring to the term 'engagement'. Però (2007), in his article on the politics of governance in Barcelona, did use this specific concept. With no claim to exhaustiveness, he used the notion to encompass '*not only the activities and practices normally associated with the formal/institutional political sphere (like voting, parliamentary and governmental activities) but also the daily activities of non-institutional actors (collective and individual) that are aimed at altering (overtly or covertly) power relations and the everyday practices through which such relations are articulated*' (281). Needless to say, while activity is a more general term, practice is a very complex concept, most often associated with the theoretical work by Bourdieu (1972). Furthermore, its use suggests locking up engagement in the realm of routines. This limit can be overcome by adopting the term (regime of) engagement(s) as intended in the French pragmatic approach, on which I will further elaborate in section 3.5.

[48] His work started from a criticism to the theory implicit in American research on participation in the 1960s. At the same time, numerous movements of international solidarity, that were active in that period, brought to light a typology of politically relevant action that went well beyond institutional participation within national states.

3.2 Im-migrants and politics.

Back in the 1980s, Miller (1981) and Withol de Wende (1978) observed that newcomers were becoming more than a labour force. They were developing forms of political mobilisation that did not rely on electoral politics. As far as the European context is concerned, im-migrants' political engagement was not considered to be an important issue in academia nor in the realm of policy making. The thesis of their political quiescience or passivity was the first to emerge. For a long time it was the dominant one. Im-migrant workers were not regarded as potential political actors. Apart from being formally disenfranchised, they were simply not supposed nor expected to be politically active at all. They were there to work and produce and it was assumed they were mostly oriented towards the achievement of short-term economic goals. Interpretations were not missing of scholars who understood their passivity in association with a lack of political and democratic culture 'inherited' from their country of origin (Bauboeck et al 2006).

In short, im-migrants have been considered as objects rather than subjects of politics (Castles and Miller 1993). This is hardly surprising as researchers have mostly investigated into their politicisation at the macro-level, in isolation from their lived experiences. Attention has been put on cross-national integration models (assimilationism, multiculturalism, etc.), hence with a prevailing focus on the nation-state[49]. It is also worth recalling, once again, that newcomers' lack of formal political entitlements has encouraged scholars to see foreign workers as a largely unorganised and apolitical component of the economy' (Ireland 1994). Clearly, this reductive conceptualisation is to say the least inadequate to account for their engagement.

Having said this, there has been a large theoretical concern with the '*ultimate origin*' of im-migrant collective action (Però 2008: 76). This has undoubtedly favoured the neglect of the objects of migrants' contention. It has promoted a '*detached and 'neutral*' rather than '*engaged*' and '*committed*' model of research on the topic (ibidem). For instance, research has been barely connected to a critical analysis of the hegemonic debate about integration in 'Fortress Europe', or to wider discussions about global and social justice. Nevertheless, there are scholars that fall outside these categories. According to Però, some of them - especially in the fields of anthropology and feminism - have recently developed approaches

[49] For a wider discussion and criticism on this aspect see Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003.

that seek to reconcile the micro and the macro level, the experiential and the abstract, in the attempt to draw more attention to actual actors, while recognising im-migrants' agency.

In the Italian peninsula, the political dimension of im-migrants' integration was the latter to be taken into consideration. The first studies were carried out in the last decade, as will be reported next. Initially works on migration presented demographic accounts (see for example Censis 1978). Research on economic and social aspects followed. Pieces of research on the political dimension of im-migrants' integration focused on formal rights and related forms of engagement, as it generally happens with the first studies in the field. The time is now ripe to move beyond them. This project has been following this direction, as anticipated above.

This chapter is not intended as a comprehensive literature review on im-migrants' politicisation. It would be hardly possibly to provide with any such account and it frankly goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. I will simply sketch out some of the main lines of inquiries, while focusing on those that have proved most useful for the theoretical construction and development of this research project and for the analysis of its empirical findings. In particular, I will explore the international literature, with occasional references to the specific Italian context. It seemed sensible to do so as the main strands of research converge, regardless of geographical origin. Some of the gaps that remain to be filled will be highlighted all throughout the next sections.

3.3 Im-migrants and political engagement: the main lines of inquiry.

Political science and political sociology have been looking at political engagement through various perspectives and paradigms. Traditionally the focus has been on voting behaviour, political party and associational membership. More recently scholars have tried to explain a(n apparent) decline in engagement as well as a(n apparent) retreat of citizens towards their private space in many democratic countries (see for example Swingedouw 2006). Nonetheless, if we accept that there is always some degree of political participation amongst individuals, we can rather concentrate on explaining the various forms their participation can take.

The relationship between im-migrants and politics has been studied with the following main approaches. Some authors (Breton 1964, Rex and Moore 1967) stressed ethnic identity as a crucial determinant in explaining their engagement. Others (Rex 1979, 1996, Castles and Kosac 1985) focused on class identity, instead. The line of inquiry that tends to dominate is that of institutional theory (Ireland 1994, Brubacker 1989, Soysal 1994). Such an approach pleads for variations to be observed in a comparative light: it is the specific context of host societies rather than the deliberative and strategic choices of im-migrants that are taken as the main explicatory variable.

Bousetta (2000) criticised it by arguing it removes agency away from newcomers. Nevertheless, the majority of authors have continued drawing from it. Among these scholars, a group emerged that has been trying to explain migrants' participation through the concept of political opportunity structure (Koopmans and Statham 2000, Koopmans 2004, Garbaye 2004, Fennema and Tillie 2001).

It cannot go unnoticed that im-migrants' political engagement has become a topical issue especially as far as the local level is concerned. The political scientists Mark Miller (1981) and Catherine de Withol de Wenden (1978) were among the first scholars that focused on it. Far from denying the national state was and remains a relevant setting for political action, they started pointing to opportunities for participation at the local level. While voting in national elections is still a prerogative of citizens and this automatically excludes non citizens, there are examples of countries in which newcomers have access to vote in local elections. It is the case of Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands (Garbaye 2004). Other forms of participation can be available, including involvement in *ad hoc* consultative bodies or associations and forms of insurgent citizenship. Anderson (1990)

described consultative bodies as: '*a form of limited but guaranteed access to the political process*' (113). Opinions on their actual function and effectiveness are rather divided[50]. Bolaffi and Damiani (1996) believe they have supported the development of ethnic organisation. On the contrary, Però (2007) argues there has been a substantial failure of similar bodies, at least in southern Europe. Next I will concentrate on associations, as many authors have been describing them as a crucial resource for im-migrants' engagement. Before, however, I will make a step back to the first stage of my research, when I investigated into citizenship studies, to see how this literature has contributed to the examination of newcomers' political integration at a local level. It will also be questioned to what extent it can promote further progress in this field.

3.3.1 Citizenship studies as a risky perspective?

It was mentioned in the introduction that my first reflections on this project started from the concept of citizenship and the related literature. Next, I will report some of the main issues I followed in the debate. At the same time, I will explain the reasons why it was not felt as adequate to support my work. I stressed already it is the status of citizen that gives individuals access to the most fundamental political rights. Yet, the path to citizenship is particularly long and daunted for im-migrants, especially in Italy. Naturalisation rates are still very low compared to other countries in the EU. 90% of applications are rejected (Istat 2005 cit. Pilati). In addition, newcomers are now required to reside on the national territory for up to 10 years before they can apply for citizenship. Im-migrants can participate in various forms of political action notwithstanding, even though Pilati (2009) did notice that naturalisation does explain, as a variable, the degree of engagement by im-migrants in the receiving society. The Politis research program (Vogel and Leiprecht 2008) showed that while naturalisation was not mentioned by newcomers as a prerequisite to engage, it added

[50] The first consultative bodies were set up in Belgium, at a local level, in the late 1960s. They then evolved into different types. They started being set up also at other scales and with different raison d'etre (Vertovec 1999): as an alternative to voting rights, as a channel for im-migrants to voice their concerns, as a kind of educational step towards full participation, as a symbolic gesture to encourage integration or as a supportive mechanism to avoid alienation and resentment (Anderson 1990 and Vertovec 1999).
Bolaffi and Damiani (1996) believe consultation bodies, in Italy, have been encouraging the development of ethnic organisations. The term in itself implies the fact that immigrants can only express their opinions in an advisory fashion. They may be able to elect their representatives that can in turn express their views to policy-makers. Yet they have no formal power, nor do they always benefit from any legitimacy from the society nor im-migrants themselves. Però (2007) suggested that participation in these bodies is of greater benefit to local governments and NGO than it is to newcomers themselves. Politicians gain legitimisation for what is generally perceived as a politically correct attitude. Additionally, they see them as crucial for co-opting im-migrants' representatives, as NGO do. Arguably, this pre-empties them from any real democratic function: newcomers are often politically neutralised and excluded as a result.

stronger legitimacy to their civic participation, particularly for those among them that saw themselves as mediators between their community and the host society.

Citizenship certainly provides with an interesting framework to understand the condition of newcomers' permanence in the host society. Studies comparing cross-country levels of integration tend to attribute variations to specific national models[51]but, as widely accepted, they have a limited explanatory power, due to their normative character and the fact they do not sufficiently explain the degree of integration or exclusion of newcomers (Joppke and Morawska 2003, Penninx and Martiniello 2004). Context specific local policies do not necessarily fit into any coherent national framework. This is all the more true in Italy, where dedicated policies are shaped, to a large extent, at the local or regional level (Caponio 2006).

It was in the 1980s that citizenship emerged as an important topic of research on immigrants' integration and political participation. This specific line of inquiry developed alongside a number of developments[52] that resulted in the blurring of the (legal) distinction between aliens and citizens, thus encouraging scholars to reconsider the concept from a wider perspective. Some observers started heralding a new cosmopolitan notion in which state-bound citizenship would eventually be overcome. It was suggested there was more to citizenship than membership in a (national) political community. In a recent article that appeared in the journal of citizenship studies, Varsany (2006) brought attention to a specific body of literature focusing on the increasing tension between de jure citizenship policies and *de facto* long-term residence. A first group of scholars has been exploring the possibilities and pitfalls of global/cosmopolitan/postnational citizenship (see for example Soysal 1994, Kofman 1995 and 2002, Martiniello 2000, Ong 1999, Bauboeck 2003). While they provided with a model, they failed to put forward any real alternative for it, as they all built on the binary dialectic which distinguishes citizens from non citizens. A second group has searched the connections between city and citizenship, by seeking to remedy the neglect of this spatial dimension (Holston 1999, Isin 1999 and 2000, Douglass and Friedmann 1998, Staeheli 2003). A third group has adopted what Varsany (2006) defined an '*agency-centreed*' approach. They look at the city as the physical place and context in which

[51] An exclusionary model associated with countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland, an assimilationist model, associated with France and the Netherlands, a pluralist model associated with the US, Canada and Australia and an implicit unintentional and opaque model, which is identified with Italy (Ambrosini 2001: 24-29).

[52] To cite a few: family reunification that turned guestworkers into settled immigrants, the rights of permanent residents in major democratic receiving states that were upgraded and at times equalised to those of citizens.

residents constitute the meaning and practice of citizenship (see for example Holston 1999, Secor 2003 and 2004, Staeheli 2003).

The main merit of these authors is that of adopting a dynamic approach which casts attention on processes enacted by actors, regardless the structural constraints they encounter in the receiving societies. They consider citizenship as an institution which is constantly being challenged and reshaped by city residents through rights-claiming activities. In fact, inhabitants appropriate and create new urban spaces in which they claim their rights as valid members of the urban public, despite their legal status. While such activities are, at times, on the margins of formal citizenship, they arguably represent a constitutive part of it. Additionally, they provide with important hints for future reconfigurations of citizenship in its territorial and substantive foundation. The study of im-migrants' engagement from this perspective promised interesting insights. Personally, I started reflecting around the concept of '*active citizenship*' (Varsany 2006) and '*insurgent citizenship*' (Holston 1999, Sandercock 1998) which I thought would be worthwhile exploring given my interest in political actions beyond conventional ones. As the project progressed, I became increasingly aware that while these terms were very evocative, I could not avoid confronting with the core meaning of citizenship: that of access to a political community. This revealed two main problems: on the one side im-migrants do not enjoy the status of citizens and this cannot be stressed enough if we are concerned about power asymmetries; on the other, even though the relevant literature does acknowledge it, the risk is high to overlook the fact that citizenship is for the state to be 'regulated'. Moreover, citizenship has a strong normative nature. If I borrowed from this academic strand, I could well re-instate myself a narrative of domination, the same narrative that the perspective of insurgency tries to overcome, unless the term was pre-emptied from its original meaning and adopted in a metaphorical way. I do not wish to underestimate the work undertaken in the field of citizenship studies. As I said in the introduction, I did learn an important point from it: if we take im-migrants' engagement seriously, we need to go well beyond any formal model of citizenship to identify actual actions.

3.3.2 Immigrant associationism.

A consistent part of the literature on im-migrants' engagement can be linked to associationism. According to Caponio (2005) while they are marginalised at the national level, they might play a more relevant role in local policy networks. It should be recalled that Italian pro-immigrants associations have been dominating the institutional scene. At the same time, most im-migrants' associations have developed directly or indirectly via other third sector associations, in connection with either a political party or a trade union, or in their shadow (Danese 2001). At the moment, for example, approximately 800,000 im-migrants are members of a workers union. Yet, they mostly pay a membership rate to enjoy some form of protection. This ultimately demonstrates their very weak position. Furthermore, any effective promotion of forms of political action is, on their side, rare (Palidda 2009)

Research on associations can be broken down into three main strands which reveal a precise theoretical approach, as it will become evident: associationism and civic culture; political participation and political opportunity structures; newcomers, social capital and networks. The first contribution in the general field of immigrant associationism dates back to Breton's well-known article (1964). The author argued that a set of (individual) factors stimulate the formation of ethnic organisations. Particular attention was paid to cultural distance (with respect to the host society) and to the level of resources within im-migrant communities. Moya (2005) tested the validity of the first factor. His empirical work did not confirm the assumption by Breton[53], but he did stress the relevance of observing how cultural differences and demarcations are constructed and maintained through actors' actions. Considerable research has focused on the second factor, with reference to the '*resource mobilisation theory*'.

3.3.3.2.1 The resource mobilisation theory.

Relevant works have been carried out by social movement scholars (Diani and McAdam 2003, Morris 1981, McAdam 1982) who drew from McCarthy & Zald (1977), to whom the first formulation of the theory can be attributed. According to these authors, it is the amount of (internal) resources available to unorganised aggrieved groups that gives rise to insurgency. Even in a context offering few opportunities at the institutional level, access to

[53] He also points to the difficulty of actually differentiating among various groups of immigrants.

the political sphere can be obtained thanks to other resources, namely through organisations and social networks of which activists are part of (Diani and McAdam 2003).

What constitutes a resource? What is the source of any increase in resources? What determines these resources will necessarily be employed? Are resources necessarily used specifically for insurgent aims? Various indications of what the term resource should include have been given over time. The basic definition by McCarthy and Zald (1977) was already rather comprehensive to include anything from material resources, such as income, right to material goods and services, jobs, to nonmaterial resources, such as authority, money, facilities, etc (22). Many analysts have identified social networks as a primary resource. Different functions were ascribed to them. They were seen as both communication and interactional networks and as a source of leadership. Nonetheless, it cannot be stressed enough that resources do not dictate their use, people do (McAdam 1999). The fact of having resources does not necessarily mean that actors will use them, nor does it imply they will be channelled towards any specific insurgency aim. In addition, different factors can influence their more or less intense use. Individuals and groups, for example, might fail to exercise their time availability. This might be more attributable to a shared perception of powerlessness than to any inherent impotence of actors themselves (McAdam 1999).

3.3.2.2 The civic voluntarism model.

The civic voluntarism model has explored organisations, together with workplaces and places of worship, as intermediate structures between actors' socio-economic positions and their political participation. Verba et al. (1995) described voluntary associations as a hotbed of civic engagement. In particular, they pointed to the socialising effect they have upon their members and to the role of affiliations in sustaining the democratic process. At the individual level, belonging to groups was discussed as supporting the development of members' civic skills (Verba et al. 1995) and the improvement of capacities to facilitate access, recruitment and participation in the political sphere (Verba et al. 1995, McAdam 1982), through the sharing of information and resources of other kind (Brady et al. 1995, McClurg 2003, Diani and McAdam 2003). At a more general group level, affiliations were understood as generating a stronger sense of political efficacy alongside an increase in trust, which could ultimately spill over into trust towards political institutions – especially under circumstances in which community leaders were integrated in the political system and

members felt they were competent enough to monitor local government and act in their name.

A number of scholars[54] drew from Putnam's early formulation of social capital (1993, 2000) to state the importance of networks. They argued that increased participation in ethnic social life and a denser network of associations would result in im-migrants' increased participation in political life (Fennema and Tillie 1999, 2001, Jacobs and Tillie 2004, Fennema 2004).

In Diani's view (1997) networks can affect participation in collective action. This is not to say that individuals create connections solely on the basis of organisational memberships. They do so through participation in various types of social and cultural activities. As Della Porta and Diani (2006) highlighted, it is possible to identify social movements occurring outside social networks or despite the presence of social networks. Networks are certainly important for recruitment processes - either in private settings (family etc) or in the context of other associational activities – and as an antidote to leaving. Participation can either shake or reinforce preexisting ones, as well as facilitating the emergence of new forms of collective action. It all depends on the specific type of network and on specific circumstances. Overlapping membership can be crucial, in this sense, even though cooperation among organisations is more likely where personal contacts pre-exist among leaders or activists (Zald and McCarthy 1980).

Studying immigrant organisations certainly opens up the horizon to investigate the complex and dynamic developments which take place within their communities (Schrover and Vermeulen 2005).

[54] These include particularly scholars that contributed to the special issue on immigrant organizations published in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies, vol. 31(5), 2005.

3.3.2.3 Associations and identities.

By forming an organisation, im-migrants fence off their ethnic or national identity from others (Marquez 2001 cit. Schrover and Vermeulen 2005). Identities can be '*offensive*' - stemming from a choice of im-migrants to set themselves apart from others, or '*defensive*' - a response to exclusion. While the former will generally try and retain members' identity, the latter will put priority on the choice of precise strategic actions (Cohen 1985 cit. Schrover and Vermeulen 2005).

Scholars have largely failed to investigate on im-migrant collective identities. Little emphasis has been put on associations as places in which shared identities can be produced (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Organisations as much as collective action, may also convey a symbolic change, while claiming the recognition and legitimation of categories of identity which are not recognised by the dominant system (Melucci 1982, 1996).

It should be noticed that ethnic organisations may well support types of political participation that sustain cross-ethnic political identities, rather than homogeneous ones. This is not to say identities can only develop from within organisations. They can also be encouraged from outside through forms of symbolic categorisation. What is most important, however, is that not all boundaries have the same potential. Actors have different social positions and consequently different possibilities and chances to impose their own classification modalities. Institutions play a particular role in this sense (Lamont 1995).

It is important to examine how boundaries change, evolve, blur and organisations accordingly. As Touraine (1974) stressed, identities are never given once for all. They are the outcome of a process defined by tensions which, in turn, gives them a form of visibility (Melucci 1993). Boundaries are crucial in the analysis of contentious dynamics. In spite of the fact they might well emerge outside them, they can be actively used as an important component of struggles.

3.3.2.4 Associations and internal dynamics.

Members do not always feel represented, nor do they always feel associations are effective in putting forward their claims to local authorities and other actors. In any kind of

associations internal friction are likely to exist. Accordingly attention should also put to internal dynamics. Members do not spend all their energies on actual claim-making activities. They also meet, confront with each other, recruit other members, offer service to the community, etc. Internal disputes can derive from disagreement on a variety of issues. The immigrant population comprises various groups which are clearly bound to reproduce divisions not only along the lines of ethnicity but also those of class, centre-periphery and ideologies and these are likely to emerge in associational activities and as far as leadership is concerned (Werbner, 1991).

Members might also think that leaders spend too much time collecting money to make the organisation work rather than organising collective activities. In spite of this, the crucial role of leaders has been widely recognised by movement studies' scholars in general: exception made for very small groups, the majority of individuals that want to put forward any claim prefer to delegate them to people that are better equipped to do so Olson 1968). This is not to overestimate their function. As Piven and Cloward (1977) stressed, expecting protests to be lead by a leader, a constitution, a given program, or at least a slogan or a given identity before being recognised as such, means denying some forms of political engagement. It should be noticed that while insubordination eventually explodes it is hard even for leaders to control its direction in any way (Piven and Cloward 1977).

3.3.2.5 A few notes on im-migrants' associations in Italy.

Recently, various studies have been published on immigrant associationism in Italy (Caponio 2005, Mantovan 2007, Pizzolati 2007, Camozzi 2009). Such an interest can be understood with respect to the growing presence of im-migrants and even more with the emergence of integration related difficulties. In fact, associations have been generally acknowledged as important 'agents' in this sense.

Camozzi (2009) has sketched out the phases of immigrant associationism in Italy. She identified four of them: the first phase dates back to the end of the seventies when im-migrants' associations where mostly home-oriented; the second coincides with the arrival of immigration flows from different countries, in the 1980s, and it was characterised by associations' growing focus on host-country issues; the third emerged at the end of the eighties and it was a phase in which im-migrants' activism took off. This is hardly surprising. On the one side, several associations were supported by workers unions; on the

other, in this period, the creation of im-migrants' associations was very much encouraged by the national government[55]. It was also a period of transition in the Italian political system. New parties were founded which appeared as very hostile towards im-migrants. A fourth phase followed. An increase in the number of associations was recorded, with a slight change in their activities: more and more efforts were dedicated to culture, leisure and solidarity issues.

Nowadays, im-migrants' associations mainly support activities associated with mutual aid, interventions in their country of origin and the promotion of their own cultural practices; notable by their absence are ethnic organisations with expressly political demands, according to Mantovan (2007)[56]. Similarly, however, their Italian counterparts seem to focus on local and community issues, with scarce attention for contentious and political aims (Biorcio and Vitale 2010). The tendency has been noticed for them to act pragmatically rather than through any purpose built organisation. Rather than striving to obtain a formal citizenship status, they privilege actions focusing on the elimination of material and symbolic obstacles (Mantovan 2007) that prevent their participation in the receiving country.

In this sense their will to keep a low profile should not be confused with a lack of readiness to engage. It can rather be understood against their weak position in the society, including their lack of formal political rights and the existence of very restrictive immigration policies that have further complicated the access to a residence permit. This often leads to attitudes that come to be associated with forms linked to hostility and disillusion.
Structures are described as both formal and informal (see for example Caselli and Grandi 2009 for the Lombardy region) and as mostly 'ethnic' in their character. Leaders often lament their difficulty in attracting members and individuals who are ready to devote their energy to the support of the association, exception made for those with an activist

[55] See Italian government, 1986. Law 943, 30th December 1986: *Norme in materia di collocamento e di trattamento dei lavoratori extracomunitari immigrati e contro le immigrazioni clandestine.*
[56] If we take into consideration the migration experience in all its (geographical) dimensions, it is clear that migrants' interests and loyalties stretch well beyond national borders and scholars should account for them too. Immigrants can and do participate not only in receiving societies. Participation in 'home politics' has always been enacted, as reported in the early works by Miller (1981) as well as in more recent works on p*olitical transnationalism* (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999) and *translocal politics* (Vertovec 2004). Scholars such as Portes et. al. (1999) have even highlighted the transformative potential of migrants' political transnationalism. While I am aware of the relevance of the transnational lens, I will not focus on it[56]. In spite of the fact this was not the focus of the project, I did explore, to a minimal extent, this dimension of migrants' engagements. As far as my research field is concerned, however, it scarcely came up during interviews with actors, hence I chose to leave it in the background, while acknowledging relevant references made by migrants, as I will report in the empirical chapters.

experience to date. The fragility and discontinuity of their activities are cited among their weaknesses. Again, the same can be observed as far as Italian associations are concerned.

As Mantovan (2007) highlighted, it is important for im-migrants' associations to act autonomously. They generally reject any intermediary support by natives, in spite of the fact their knowledge of the social tissue and of administrative mechanisms tend to be rather poor. Italians, on their side, have provided im-migrants with a marginal space. So far it has mostly translated into inter-ethnic forms of alliances set up by Italians themselves. The latter have shown considerable limits in terms of representativeness.

3.3.3 The prevailing model of the political opportunity structure.

The political opportunity structure approach (POS) was developed within the field of social movements (Mc Adam 1982, Tarrow 1989, 1994, Kriesi et al. 1995, Tilly and Tarrow 2008). It builds on the resource mobilisation theory which, again, conceives of collective action as the result of actors' rational calculation of cost and benefits and of their ability to mobilise resources. Yet, it pays more systematic attention to the political and institutional environment in which social movements operate (Della Porta and Diani 2006). The POS focuses on the extent to which powerful groups, including governments, are vulnerable or receptive to claims made by groups in the political system and the extent to which such groups have access to institutions and resources.

A general lack of consensus has emerged over time on what variables are to be held relevant in the adoption of the model. Although versions differ, scholars mostly agree in saying that political opportunities refer to: '*the relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political system; the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; the presence or absence of elite allies; and the state's capacity and propensity for repression*' (McAdam 1996: 27). Lacunae and ambiguities continued appearing as scholars' work progressed in this field. They were consistently addressed by adding new variables. This expanded the explanatory power of the concept, but it also reduced its specificity, with the risk of turning it into a 'dustbin' containing a whole set of dimensions somehow relevant to the development of social movements (Della Porta and Diani 2006). In spite of it, the scope of the model has been reinstated over time: it aims at observing the characteristics of the political system that influence the growth of less institutionalised forms of collective action (Tarrow 1989) as well as the forms they take in different historical contexts (Tilly

1978). Its general thesis is that where institutional channels of access to the decision-making process are closed to challengers, the latter will resort to unconventional, extra-institutional forms of action to make their voice heard.

The approach has been widely criticised, thus producing a rich debate. It should be noticed that criticism has mainly been advanced by scholars within the same theoretical tradition and has therefore been often directed at specific variables rather than at the whole approach in itself. Goodwin and Jasper (1999) insisted that while it provides with a helpful albeit limited set of sensitising concepts for social movement research, it fails to provide with what it often implicitly promises: a causally adequate universal theory of social movements. In particular, they criticised the invariant and trans-historical nature of the model. In their view, while it has been crucial in giving way to more fluid concepts such as that of 'process', its 'hard' structural perspective has persisted. Furthermore, concepts such as 'agency' have not been accurately theorised. McAdam (1999), as other colleagues, did reinstate the relevance of collective actions as political in nature. They took distance from behaviouralist readings which understand them as inexorable responses to social strains. Having said this, actors' agency in itself, which is s clearly a core concept in the study of mobilisation, has been (implicitly) assimilated with an idea of 'active' actors, with no further specification.

An important expansion in the concept of political opportunity and threat is connected not only to the way they are enacted but also to the way they are perceived. As McAdam (1999: xx) argued, '*structural availability must be filtered through a process of 'cognitive liberation in order to unleash turmoil*'. In other words, for protests to emerge challengers must believe that an opportunity exists to bring about change (see also Giugni and Morariu 2007). Perceptions of state response may be particularly influenced by its more dramatic manifestations such as repression, causing the less visible responses such as negotiation to be overlooked (Della Porta 1996)[57]. This also means that opportunities can vary over time, alongside changing perceptions of injustice (McAdam 1999). '*At a minimum people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that acting collectively they can redress the problem*' (McAdam, 1999: x).

Conditioning the presence or absence of similar perceptions is a complex set of social psychological dynamics including collective attribution and social construction. Snow et al.

[57] Della Porta 1996 cit. Della Porta and Diani 2006.

(1986) defined them as '*framing processes*' (vedi parte prima su questo) (see also Snow and Benford 1988). In this perspective, those who mobilise are not necessarily individuals with the strongest values, but those whose interpretation of a given situation provides a clear rationale for acting, with respect both to their perception of opportunities and to the available alternatives or the emotional pressure exerted on them (Della Porta and Diani 2006). Basically, a part of the struggle involves the effort by individuals and groups to '*frame*' their activities in ways that resonate with various audiences (potential adherents, the media, policymakers, bystander publics) whom they hope to influence.

What do we mean exactly by frames? Snow et al. (1986) defined them as a '*schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large*' (464). In other words, frames allow to capture the process of attribution of meaning that lies behind the explosion of any event or conflict. The authors identified three stages of this process: diagnostic, prognostic and motivational. I will leave aside the third for now. The first refers to the appropriation of an interpretative frame which allows the conversion into a social problem of a phenomenon whose origins were previously attributed to natural factors or to individual responsibility (see also Melucci 1989, 1991). Social problems do in fact exist to the extent that certain phenomena are interpreted as such by people. They emerge, grow and disappear only to re-emerge periodically transformed to a greater or lesser extent (see also Gusfield 1963, 1981). Diagnosing a problem entails identifying the actors who are entitled to express their opinions on it, as well as those who are held responsible for the situation experienced by the aggrieved population. This is of course a highly contentious process as each actor tries to affirm and possibly impose his/her own interpretation, to the detriment of others. The prognostic step refers to the action of actively seeking solutions, thus hypothesising new social patterns, new ways of regulating relationships between groups, new articulations of consensus and of the exercise of power. A strong utopian dimension is often present in this endeavour, but it might well open up prospects for action that were previously inconceivable (Melucci 1989, 1991). Motivational frames refers to the fact that a symbolic elaboration is essential for the production of a motivation for mobilisers to act.

Some scholars pointed to the tendency of the model to rest on '*political reductionism*' (Melucci 1987, 1989 cit. Della Porta and Diani 2006): while paying too little attention to the cultural context (as opposed to the political one) in which social movements take place. Yet, this variable can be very important, as it was for many contemporary movements (of youth,

women, homosexuals, etc) (see for example Melucci 1996). Most importantly, the emphasis on the political context has obscured the role of '*discursive opportunities*'. In recent years, , some authors (Koopmans and Statham 2000, Koopmans 2004, Koopmans et al 2005, Cinalli and Giugni 2008) have been devoting increasing attention to them. The main assumption is that they are crucial for the definition of both aims and identities of collective actors, at least as much as political opportunities are. In fact, the presence of a dominant public discourse on certain controversial issues can determine which collective identities and substantive demands have a higher likelihood to gain visibility in the mass media, while resonating with the claims of other collective actors and achieving legitimacy in public discourse (Cinalli and Giugni 2008).

3.3.3.1 The political opportunity structure model in the study of im-migrants' political engagement.

The POS approach has been adopted by a growing number of scholars in the field of migration (see for example Garbaye 2000, Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2000) and, at present, it is the prevailing approach. It was explained above that the model was originally developed to study social movements. Later, Ireland (1994) appropriated it and applied it to i-migrants' political engagement, thus stressing that political opportunity structures differ among societal actors. He focused its attention on im-migrant-specific factors, such as their legal status, the social and political rights they enjoy, education, housing, labor and welfare policies, citizenship regimes. His work developed from dissatisfaction with pre-existing explanatory models based on class and ethnicity. Indeed, the latter are not mobilising factors *per sè* as their salience reflects the institutional environment that newcomers encounter. If they get organised along ethnic lines, it is primarily because the receiving society nurtured ethnicity through its policies and practices.

Bousetta (1997) added up other elements to the initial work by Ireland. The author was searching for a perspective that would move away from an idea of im-migrants as passive agents. Scholars had done so, in his opinion, by concentrating on participation as strictly connected to structural, political and institutional determinants. His formulation sketched out three levels of action: '*state's political power*', '*the political organisation*' and '*infra-political activities*' (2000: 237). The first is self explanatory. The second relates to the realm where political contention occurs. Visibility is important in this sphere and it can be observed empirically in the acceptance of control mechanisms established by the state. At this level, particular reference is made to actors that are formally organised and must comply with the

formal rules and norms set forward by governments. The third, that of infra-politics, is concerned with '*invisible*' forms of mobilisation within im-migrant groups that aim at increasing control and power over it. In the author's interpretation, collective action may only be termed an infra-political mobilisation if it involves, on the part of the actors, a certain degree of consciousness that their action is political. Traditionally, the concept has been employed as an analytical tool for understanding the politics of powerless and marginal groups. It borrowed from the work of James Scott (1985) and it accounts for political actions acted offstage by individuals and groups alike within immigrant organisations.

What is relevant about this level is that actors try and increase their power and control over community resources, networks and organisations without reference to the broader political system. Such a distinction might help explain why groups may appear to display weak level of mobilisation in relation to the general political agenda while still enacting intense levels within community associations (Bousetta 2000). The merit of such an approach is certainly that of pointing to dynamics of interaction not only between immigrant organisations and institutions, but also those within organisations themselves. nonetheless, in my opinion, it still fails to acknowledge the existence of other dispersed forms of engagement outside associational structures. Moreover, it seems to be the spheres of engagement he identified might well be more permeable than his reading allows for. My point will become clearer when I introduce the pragmatic perspective and in particular the 'regimes of engagement', in the next section.

Many immigration scholars drew from the POS model to investigate on local settings (Garbaye 2005, Caponio 2006 and Campomori 2008 in Italy). Garbaye highlighted the mutual influence of local and national contexts. He found that the combination of local party politics and local government agencies produce contrasting types of mobilisation and participation. According to him, while contextual factors clearly have a crucial influence, the latter is not given once for all. It should be analysed dynamically by taking into consideration both the local and national levels. The author carried out his research in France and UK, but his contribution is particularly significant for the Italian context too, where field policies seem to be mostly dealt with at the local level.

Needless to say, a decisive factor that specifically shape the political opportunity structure of im-migrants' engagement is related to citizenship law and naturalisation procedures.

Two are the dimensions of citizenship regimes which are reflected in individual and collective rights granted to newcomers in host countries: on the one side a formal one that refers to the requirements to acquire citizenship; on the other cultural rights that are granted to them, depending essentially on the integration model that prevails in a given country (Koopmans et al. 2005). Some authors have suggested that more light should also be cast on exclusionary policies and practices within countries. For instance, they have pointed to the ways rights are actually implemented through the measures of welfare systems, thus shaping different entitlements and benefits to individuals (Sainsbury 2006, Morissens and Sainsbury 2005).

Tiziana Caponio adopoted the POS model in her examination of im-migrants' associations in Milan, Naples and Bologna. She reported that despite the different configuration of power at the local level, similar opportunities for associations could be noticed observed. Left wing local authorities are generally expected to be more responsive to im-migrants' needs. She did confirm more concern is evident of their side. At the same time, their policies were described as rather contradictory. They have failed to consolidate im-migrants' associations in any way. Italian pro-immigrant associations were privileged as far as public contracts were involved and institutional resources to encourage associationism were found inadequate. This, together with a general distrust of newcomers deriving from frustrated expectations, resulted in associations remaining structurally weak. As for right-wing local authorities, Caponio insisted they presented immigration as a problem of public security. They completely ignored any question regarding im-migrants' political integration. According to the author, the consolidation of associations passed through some kind of informal collaboration with Italian organisations, thus paving the way to a crowding-out effect.

Koopmans et al. (2005) highlighted three major shortcomings in the use of POS for the study of im-migrants' political engagement. First of all, the model was adopted with regard to the chances of access to and influence of citizens in the decision-making processes, alongside the reactions by authorities. Identities and aims have been largely treated as pre-given, while the forms and processes of their constitution are particularly pregnant in the field of migration. It suffices to say that labels used in different national context to denote newcomers are not coincidental nor inconsequential: they indicate specific discursive contexts against which the relationship between im-migrants and the receiving nation-state are set. Second, it tends to specify POS at a level which is too general and which does not

provide with a comprehensive account of specific issue fields and collective actors. In fact, while im-migrants, as noncitizens, do not have access to the political community, they are still considerably influenced by the tradition of accommodation that characterises each country's political life. Third, the model does not provide with a sufficient appreciation of the fact that contentious politics is fundamentally interactive and dynamic. Indeed, collective actors never mobilise in a vacuum. Moreover, POS can evolve as a result of institutional change and alongside political contention.

Arguably, if we are to discuss on the political engagement of a particular group, especially one that does not enjoy full membership rights, we need to set out the possible trajectories it can follow. In between the 'cracks' of inclusionary and exclusionary modes, there might be space for action. It is reasonable to expect so particularly in a country, such as Italy, where the naturalisation process is not at all so fluid[58]. Under these circumstances, it is likely that newcomers set off to undertake contentious forms of participation (Raniolo 2002). What forms of engagement this might entail is all to be explored, however, and it cannot be merely associated with a given pre-determined set of repertories.

3.4 Dynamics of contention and contentious politics.

Analyses of collective action and social movements are inextricably linked. The experience of the latter present more than passing analogies to forms of collective action (Della Porta and Diani 2006). As a result, there have been several attempts to synthesise approaches in the field of social movements and to link them to broader theoretical and empirical concerns raised by sociologists. The most ambitious development in this sense is certainly represented by the Dynamics of Contention program (McAdam et al. 2001). Authors singled out a specific field, defined as '*contentious politics*' and tried to combine knowledge developed in this field with that elaborated on revolutions, democratisation, and ethnic conflicts. A word of caution. As Diani[59] has been stressing, social movements are a distinct social process[60] and should not be collapsed with any other form of contention. Hence,

[58] Immigrants need to reside permanently in the country for a minimum of 10 years before they can apply for citizenship. It is not to be underestimated that, according to Caritas (2008), the naturalization rate in Italy is still the lowest among member states. In 2007, 38,466 cases of citizenship acquisition were recorded, double the number of those recorded in 2004. Yet, this is still a relatively low rate: 700,000 cases were recorded in Europe, almost 2,000 per day, comprising only 100 in Italy.

[59] See for example Diani 2003.

[60] They consist of mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: (a) are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents (b) are linked by dense informal networks (c) share a distinct collective identity.

while reference will be made to them in this chapter, I am very well aware that this should be done carefully.

Contentious politics, '*implies interactions in which actors advance their claims that in turn impact on the interests of someone else and conduct coordinated initiatives to safeguard shared interests and programs and in which governments are involved as the objective of such initiatives, as detonators or simply as a third party*' ((Tilly and Tarrow 2008: 5). Three distinctive elements intersect in this definition: contention, collective action and politics. I will spend a few more words on each. Collective action refers to an activity in favour of common interests or programmes. What should be noticed is that collective action is described as manifest and coordinated. Contention has to do with claim-making that impact on the interests of somebody. They can range from issues of limited importance to more important ones resulting in requests addressed to institutions as well as direct attacks to them. Its main feature is that it always involves two parties: one formulating a claim and another to which this claim is addressed. Politics clarifies that contention takes place within the political sphere, that is to say in interaction with government agencies. It is crucial to bear this in mind as these actors might benefit from a number of advantages with respect to others. It derives that while it might not be radical, a political conflict can put their privileges at risk. At the same time, it is up to governments to define the rules that govern conflicts - who can advance what type of collective claim, through what means, with what outcome. Last but not least, it is government agencies who control the main forms of coercion. The above is not to say that government must be necessarily present as an active actor. Contention might emerge between non governmental actors first to then involve any level of government agencies.

The approach of contentious politics proposes to search for similarities and differences among various types of political conflicts. In particular, Tilly and Tarrow (2008) called for increasing attention on mechanisms and processes of contention. They suggested focusing on how similar mechanisms and processes might follow a variety of trajectories and result in diverging outcomes, in relation to actors' social base (including organisations, networks, cultural background, traditions etc) and the political context in which they operate. Let's investigate a few concepts further.

'*Mechanisms are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations*' (37). An example is '*brokerage*', whereby previously unconnected social sites are linked by a unit that mediates their relations

(McAdam et al. 2001). '*Coordination*', can be explained as the ability of one or more actors to mutually communicate intentions and to activate simultaneously contention over the same object. Alliances can result from it as well as a change in scale. This can happen through a form of direct diffusion or through mediation, depending on whether contacts are promoted by individuals or groups that were previously in contact or not at all.

'Processes are regular sequences of mechanisms' (Tilly and Tarrow 2008: 37). Two fundamental processes are '*mobilisation*' and '*de-mobilisation*'. Mobilisation refers to a process in which, at a certain moment, people that were previously inactive, start undertaking contentious actions. De-mobilisation refers to the opposite. The formers is thought to be accompanied by an increase in available resources, contrary to the latter, but if we embrace such a perspective, we are likely to adopt a deterministic vision over resources and how they are used over time. In addition, if we accept that de-mobilisation is accompanied by a decrease in resources we might be tempted to take it for granted that political engagement slowly fades away with it, while it is not necessarily so.

'*Episodes'* are an equally important concept: '*they are continuous streams of contention including collective claims-making that bears on other parties interests*' (158). Looking at episodes can be rather important because while we can learn a lot from activists themselves, both through their narratives and through what they write and declare after an episode takes place, their memories and their perceptions can be selective. Moreover, different activists can participate in some episodes and not in others. By looking at each different episode, it is possible to have a better understanding of a complex sequence of events and it might be easier to identity the actors involves in a given conflict.

It is worth recalling that the aim of the dynamics of contention program was not to identify all possible mechanisms. It was rather that of sketching out a limited list of selective ones that can help explain actors' mobilisation. While this certainly provides with a useful analytical tool, it can be somehow misleading. Contentious politics' scholars certainly embraced a fundamentally interactive perspective. Yet, there are still some rigidities in the model as it barely allows for a '*possibilistic*' (Hirschman 1980) enough reading of dynamics. To be fair, in this vision there is no search for a general model. Researchers tried to dig out explanatory mechanisms that combine differently thus producing different outcomes and political trajectories in one setting or another. Scholars did acknowledge that mechanisms and processes might well follow a different route. Yet, they 'locked' them up within a

limited set that leaves little space for any further examination of what actually happens on the field and might 'force' researchers into fit their findings into clear cut categories. Moreover, while political opportunity structures are not understood as existing fixed external threats or opportunities, they are still associated with routine interactions between governments and political actors that in turn give limit the types of contentious forms (Tilly and Tarrow 2008: 260). Not to be underestimated is the fact that actors are identified as relatively distinct oppositional categories: challengers and institutions are intended as the principal actors, in the initial 'package of hypotheses' set out by them. As I will discuss later, there is scope for an inverse movement which starts from actors' engagements to then turn back to their identification.

The approach of '*contentious politics*' does not aim at underestimating nor dismissing any other approach. Each of them is considered to be useful with respect to specific aspects of social movements and research questions. For contentious politics' researchers the main aim is that of looking at dynamics, by highlighting mechanisms, processes and episodes. The structure of political opportunity remains the main explicatory variable they adopt. Scholars also insist there is a mutual causality between POS and repertories of action. In fact, the analysis of contention has traditionally developed in parallel with that of political institutions analysts and hardly any researcher for either discipline has taken into consideration how they influence each other.

3.4.1 What form of political engagement characterises contentious politics?

While states of inequality can be taken as a constant variable, rebellion is rare, as Piven and Cloward (1977) highlighted well. There is a widespread agreement that only in exceptional circumstances do subordinate classes challenge power holders and have therefore the opportunity to put pressure for their claims to be taken into consideration.

Social movement research has shown that actors' political legitimacy can anticipate, to a large extent, the action repertoires available to them, at a given time, to enter the public domain (Kitschelt 1986, McAdam 1982, McAdam et al. 2001, Tarrow 1989, Tilly 1978). Legitimate actors do not need to use radical forms of action when addressing their demands to power holders (Koopmans et. Al, 2005: 219). According to Piven and Cloward (1977), the academic literature provides with ample accounts on the social origins of protesters, on the factors that determine the style of leadership and on the difficulties of managing organisations effectively, but it has largely ignored forms of insubordination and the circumstances in which they are expressed.

When people contend, they do not necessarily do it as a result of a stimulus-response dynamic, as McAdam (1999: xxvi) himself argued. According to Melucci (1996), the visibility of protests and demonstrations can be misleading. Scholars might attach too much importance to them, to the detriment of other types of action. Visibility is connected to only one level of movements. Well before a protest takes place and become visible, individuals get together to organise them. Other forms of actions might anticipate them or they can simply be preceded by what can be intended as a latent phase of contention. This suggests looking more into the various phases of conflicts, in order to dig out the various forms of engagements that actors undertake. It is true that some actions do not necessarily trigger a conflict in themselves, they might simply fuel its escalation. When they manage to partially free themselves from repression and discrimination black Americans started expressing their intolerance towards segregation through the use of the most institutionalised form of engagement: lawsuits (McAdam 1999). This did not immediately result in the explosion of a conflict. It triggered subsequent forms of actions.

Not to be underestimated is the fact that protests have been hardly taken into consideration in their crucial significance, that it to say as an instrument for the less privileged to obtain concessions from power holders. Some forms of protests have not been recognised as such because they were seen as too rudimental. It was so for actions that did not take the shape of an armed uprising (Piven and Cloward 1977: 39), because they were not consistent with standard forms of mobilisation and appeared as 'primitive' to the eyes of some researchers . Such an attitude is hardly sensible to the specific historical background against which movements are set (10).
Additionally, it does not allow for the fact that movements do not necessarily draw from standard doctrines nor (movement) manuals, even though they are strictly connected to historical and contextual circumstances to which they respond to and by which they are in turn constrained. This is to say that action repertoires cannot be entirely pre-determined. An example will be illuminating in this sense.

When looking at the welfare protests that took place in the US in the 1960s, Piven and Cloward (1977) reported that public welfare officers were used to a submissive public. Since they were not subjected to any kind of formal professional code of conduct, it was their discretional powers that prevailed. In face of aggressive attitudes, occasional concessions were accorded. As banal as it might seems, increasing encounters with the public contributed to eroding their discretional powers. Discriminated access to welfare

policies lead protesters to challenge not only the denial of a right for them to live on benefits, but also the well organised ritual of humiliation enacted by officers that had translated discrimination into a practice. In the same way in which the structures of everyday life guarantee the quiescience of masses, they can also (partly) determine the form that insubordination will assume when it explodes. People experience oppression in a precise context. It is therefore hardly surprising that when 'the poor' rise up against power holders they do it against 'the inspector of the poor', their landlord and not against banks or larger institutions. It is the everyday experience of people that shape the reasons of their dissent, the target of their anger and the forms of their protest.

Going back to welfare protesters, it is interesting to notice that officials repeatedly reproached them for attacking welfare officers instead of learning to do politics in the 'proper' institutional spaces provided to them. Unfortunately, it is often the case that individuals, especially marginalised ones, do not have access to any of such spaces at all. Moreover, when they attacked welfare offices, protesters were very well aware they could not be ignored, considering their increasing electoral power.

3.4.2 What happens when the conflict fades away?

Thanks to considerable advancement in the field of social movements a great deal is known about the conditions and dynamics of mobilisation. Much less is known about how actors de-mobilise. It all depends on a variety of factors, according to Tilly and Tarrow (2008), including the initial conditions of mobilisation, the strategy of political elite with respect to claims, the extent to which activists succeed in creating structures capable of support solidarity over time. Is it unavoidable for actors to de-mobilise at a certain stage? What happens exactly when this phase of contention starts? Actors might shift to more institutional forms of participation once the first phase of enthusiasm is over, as Piven and Cloward (1977) suggested.

If we look at the collection actions by prostitutes in Lyon, we can identify a number of mechanisms that accompanied de-mobilisation, to cite a few '*disenchantment'* by some actors - the overwhelming feeling of disappointment for their experienced collective action, '*defection'* - the abandonment of activism by some leaders, '*repression*', both direct and indirect and a certain degree of '*institutionalisation*' (Tilly and Tarrow 2008). According to Kriesi

(1996) another possibility resides in forms of commercialisation, when organisations transform into an organisation of services.

What is sure is that the mere fact that government might grant some concessions to protesters is not enough by itself to explain the exhaustion of any conflict. On the one side, concessions are generally rather modest, if not inconsistent, and tend to be mostly aimed to re-direct leaders towards more institutional channels (Piven and Cloward 1977); on the other they are a demonstration that protests are on-going and they can well feed into them.

It equally happens that episodes of contention progressively extinguish themselves because they do not find enough support in the society or else they die off after the first blast of enthusiasm (Tilly and Tarrow 2008). Nevertheless other mechanisms can become manifest and can help explain the continuity of contention. New boundaries can be activated or existing ones can be crystallised between challengers and the targets of protests. This can also relate to internal dynamics among collective actors: when groups fight together they might well find commonalities and redefine their identity. An external authority can demonstrated its propensity to recognise and support the existence and the claim-making ability of a political actor, thus '*certifying*' it (114). In most of cases, only a very limited number of judiciary and legislative bodies have the power to do it.

A few last remarks. How do we know whether a collective action was 'successful' at all? Piven and Cloward (1977) underlined it is rare to identity any case of success for movements. When they emerge, success seems to be rather ephemeral. In their view, however, there is a tendency for activists to underestimate their achievements. Furthermore, Tilly and Tarrow (2008) argued that little consideration is given to the impact that participation can have on the life of activists. Forms of solidarity can develop within the community, as Whittier (1995) pointed out with reference to the feminist movement. Well beyond claim-making activities, women supported each other in their everyday personal and familiar endeavours and this, in turn, fuelled forms of political engagement.

Whatever results from collective actions can only be judged on the basis of what could be possibly achieved, insisted Piven and Cloward, even though a number of factors can play an important role in this sense. If any 'success' at all is obtained by protests it probably depends on the actual pressure they manage to put on institutions and on their electoral weight.

3.5 The contribution of the French pragmatic approach in the study of im-migrants' politicisation.

The previous sections have clearly shown that im-migrants - and marginalised categories in general - do engage politically, in various ways. Blakeley and Evans (2009)[61] showed, that only a few committed individuals demonstrate regular participation, even though they did not specially refer to newcomers. Their findings endorsed the view that non-participation can be best understood as a form of personal and social alienation in coincidence with a low sense of political efficacy (see also Fennema and Tillie 1999, 2000, 2001). Triandafyllidou and Vogel (2007), on their side, analysed the low levels of organisational involvement in ethnic and mainstream associations and argued they are not necessarily in contradiction with im-migrants' forms of civic participation. According to them, involvement in associations does not necessarily translate into actual activities unless political and social conditions are favourable. Political engagement might also be confined within immigrant communities themselves.

Of course we should be careful in stressing excessively on im-migrants' political engagement when regarding them as '*an emerging political force*' (Miller 1981). I insist that other forms of engagements can be seized. In countries where newcomers do not have access to formal types of participation they can still engage and dispersed forms of actions can be tracked down. In other words, individual and collective actors are not necessarily overwhelmed by powerlessness (McAdam 1999), nor must they await for facilitative support by institutions in order to mobilise. Their actions develop out of formal and informal networks, but also out of everyday 'informal' types of engagement, as we will argue in the remaining of this chapter.

If we throw light at integration processes it is evident that two main parties are involved: newcomers and the receiving society. It is largely the interaction between the two that determines the direction and temporal outcomes of the whole process. As persistently evident in the work by Penninx and Martiniello (2004), fundamental power inequalities exist between these two actors and should be taken into due consideration. The receiving society and its institutional structure, alongside the 'treatment newcomers enjoy' to newcomers are consequently thought of as far more decisive than im-migrants' individual characteristics to explain their political and civic activism. The authors also underlined that

[61] The authors make specific reference to the Anglosaxon context, however.

the integration discourse traditionally presupposes a univocal direction from homeland to receiving country or from immigrant organisations to political parties. Diverging trajectories are hardly taken into consideration, with the result they might well escape scholars' attention. Under ordinary circumstances excluded groups such as newcomers face enormous obstacles in their efforts to advance group interests. They are indeed excluded from routine decision-making processes because their relative bargaining position, with respect to established polity members, is weak. But the set of power relations that define the political environment, at any point in time, does not constitute an immutable structure of political life, on the contrary.

It was largely explained that associations have a crucial role to support im-migrants' engagement. Unfortunately, they might not last very long. As political scientists demonstrated, the great majority of them collapse when movements come to an end (Piven and Cloward 1977). This suggests that the relevance of structures should not be overemphasised. People are often attracted by the possibility of putting forward their claims. This is why many of them leave after they have achieved their goals or reached out to some form of help (90). In spite of this, activists have tended to focus their efforts on the development of formal organisational structures. Such attention can be understood with their implicit assumption that associations encourage the coordination of groups' economic and political resources and can warrant the continuity of political mobilisation (18).

Against the review presented above, it is clear that there is space ahead for further exploration on im-migrants' politicisation. Next, I will present the French pragmatic approach and will try and show how it can promote the advancement of debates in the field.

The term 'French pragmatic approach' refers to the research program of the Groupe de sociologie politique et morale (GSMP) which was launched at the beginning of the 1980s, with the contribution of various researchers, including Luc Boltanski, in the field of sociology, Alain Desrosières, in the field of statistics, Michel Pollack, in the field of anthropology and Laurent Thévenot, in the field of economics. In 1984, the group was officially founded. Today, it brings together scholars from disciplines as diverse as sociology, political science, economics, anthropology, history and cognitive sciences, who conduct research in various parts of the world. While it is clearly an interdisciplinary group,

its members decided to define their program under the term of 'sociologie politique et morale'. This testifies the will to link up to the work of Durkheim by investigating the links between the moral and political dimensions of collective life, that is to say the political stake of moral issues. A crucial concern of the group is in fact that of dealing with the modalities in which individuals collectively produce judgements by tracing boundaries between what is just and what is not.

Although the experience of the founding members of GSMP are heterogeneous both in terms of disciplines and objects of analysis, they all collaborated with the Centre de Sociologie Europenne, coordinated by Bourdieu, during the 1970s. Prompted by the light the author's anthropological research shed on the relationship between classifications practical interventions, the group first directed its attention to the methods that statisticians, sociologists and legal scholars use to codify and to shape data. As their work progressed, Boltanski and Thévenot (1983) carried out an experimental research aimed at a deeper analysis of the comparative cognitive operations performed by non-specialists assessing profession or social class. They encountered situations in which social groups would not identify themselves in any of the proposed categories. The research brought to light the problematic nature of the process through which personal traits are related to categories of classification.

After recognising this could not be reduced to statistical questions or problems of classification they extended the scope of their study through the elaboration of two research projects: one on the conditions under which complaints of injustice are valid and the other on forms of adjustment among disparate resources in businesses. They elucidated the constraints that govern attempts to generalise a situation. It was found that participants are required to eliminate all personal references in order to behave acceptably in the process of generalising. The lawsuits which were dismissed for lack of evidence turned out to be characterised by an inadequate or unsuccessful representation of the general nature of the injustice suffered. In this sense it was understood that there is a relationship between the explicative concepts used by social scientists and the interpretative principles used by actors: the asymmetries between the forms of generality used to advance their claims.
In the research program of the GSMP this concept is central. In contrast with the structuralism of Bourdieu, whereby people's actions are determined by their habitus (1972), the GSMP believes they are more related to what actors actually do in a given situation. This is why Boltanski and Thévenot felt the need to focus on the skills demanded for

actors to shift from one pragmatic orientation to another, depending on arrangements specific to the situation. They started with acknowledging them with a '*critical capacity*': they can criticise, that it to say shift from one form of justification to another and apply them in various situations in a quasi-permanent way (Boltanski 1990a: 54). The GSMP grew aware it is not the social position that actors occupy but rather what they know that supports their operations of judgement. They recognised their capacity to reflect, identify and question categories in use.

How can we study actors' capabilities? We need to move from a '*critical sociology*' to a '*sociology of critique*' (Boltanski 1990a: 55). Efforts must be made to show how they elaborate discourses on actions (56), instead of defining them by searching for stable attributes or by endowing them with interests and dispositions inscribed in their bodies and capable of generating objective and unconscious intentions. We need to reconstruct their competence in terms of producing arguments that are acceptable for others. While a cognitive one is presupposed (59), an analysis of their agency in a given situation can help focus on the critical operations people carry out when they want to show their disagreement without resorting to violence. This opens up to a better understanding of the ways they construct, display and conclude more or less lasting agreements (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006: 7). It calls for researchers to take their claims to justice seriously (Boltanski 1990a: 57), which ultimately means acknowledging they are not always engaged in power struggles (64).

After this introduction, I will not dwell onto explaining the various hypotheses and the progress made by the group over the years, as this goes well beyond the scope of this dissertation and it could hardly be done here. I will only highlight the conceptual tools I have adopted to interpret part of the findings that emerged from the research field. This will clarify how they contributed to enriching the theoretical set up of this dissertation. Moreover, it will show how my research work benefited from contamination with the French pragmatic stance in the measure it gradually progressed from an examination of immigrants' political engagement strict to that of two specific cases of conflicts.

3.5.1 The regimes of engagement.

Researchers have long been troubled by the analysis of social action. This is a classical preoccupation of both social and political scientists. Some of them have promoted a specific model in alternative to others; some have accepted the intrinsic validity of every

approach. Let's now consider the problem by interrogating the object of research: the actual subjects of action. They are themselves confronted with a plurality of models. Some scholars did acknowledge it by looking at forms of life (Simmel 1918) and frames of actions (Goffman 1974). However, the subjects of action are not so much concerned about their classification. It is more their different '*rapports au monde*' (Thévenot 2006: 6) which troubles them. More than a difference in terms of roles, social worlds and identities, plurality for them translated into various forms of engagement. Drawing from Hirschman (1977) the GSPM elaborated on the idea of a '*plurality of regimes*' in order to investigate the different modalities of actors' engagement and the forms of coordination they need to put in place in order to address common norms. Hirschman (1982) recalled the term further to elaborate on the fluctuations between public and private life. Following his work, Thévenot and Boltanski criticised the fact that sociologists are too focused on what they intend as public action, while little attention is paid to all other '*regimes*' in which actors engage (2006).

When dealing with the classical question 'What keeps a collectivity together?', researchers have often resigned to tackle the opposition between collective and individual action, public and private sphere, macro and micro level. In our contemporary societies human beings constantly need to change the scope of their engagement, shifting along a scale between greater or lesser generality (Thévenot 2001: 57). One of the longstanding debates in social sciences insists on the distinction between macro structures and micro-sociological behaviours. This has shunned various attempts to try and integrate the two levels. Pragmatic sociology does take this preoccupation into due consideration (58) in the measure it addresses the need to distinguish between the different ways of seizing and conducting action, while integrating them into a coherent framework.

To start with, Boltanski and Thévenot focused on the pragmatic orientations which are required by public critique and justification. Thévenot's subsequent work examined pragmatic requirements as they emerge in other regimes of engagement, in order to investigate various forms of agency and how they are sustained. '*Emerging from the point of contact between the outline of the good and the format of reality engaged (…) the pragmatic regimes of engagement supply some analytical tools for a pragmatic sociology that is concerned about the conditions for realising political and moral goals in a furnished human world'* (Thévenot 2001: 71)[62]. The GSPM sketched out three regimes of action: the '*regime of familiarity*', the '*regime of regular action*', the

[62] This quotation and all those which follow have been translated from French, exception made for those drawing from Bolstanki and Thévenot (2006) which were originally in English.

'*public regime of justification*'.

The regime of familiarity '*rests on an accustomed dependency with a neighbourhood of things and people. (…) This forms of agency depends on the binding web of familiarity ties. The web of customised attachments constitutes an extension of an 'attached personality'. The entities of the regime of familiarity are not detached from the personality which appropriated them; rather they enlarge his or her surface and secure his or her maintenance. When the things we appropriate are customised, tamed, or domesticated they maintain our intimate being (68-69).* In other words, in this regime people interact within their familiar environment, in a '*community of proximity*', through their '*personal attachments*' (Thévenot 2006: 8). Engagements in this world transcend the idea of social action, in the Weberian sense, which is somehow enacted in the regime of plan instead. Sociologists would call them practices, with a difference: familiar engagements are not conform to any social order, nor can they be associated with a Bourdesian '*habitus*', as they are not embodied in individuals nor in any routine[63].

The regime of regular action '*mirrors a conception of action which is embedded in everyday language and which has been widely explored in the philosophy of action. It departs from a theoretical debate on 'intentional actions' as a general model for all human behaviour' (69).* Classical interpretation of intentional actions generally look at the planning capacity of human agents. In this regime attention is put on the fact that the environment is seized in a format of functional capacity. It introduces a perspective that elaborates both on intentional-planning agency as well as on instrumental-functional capacity. Actions take place in an intermediary world that focuses on individuals, their personal choices, decisions, projects, strategies, interests, ultimately on their autonomy and rationality. Here actors identify a range of options and then ponder them on the basis of a well weighted choice. The economic theory defines similar deliberations as a calculus. There is more to it in this regime. Actions need to be inscribed in a frame of judgement. The concept of social action heralded by Weber seems

[63] A few words need to be said on the term 'practice', as the literature often adopts this idiom in a rather uncritical way (Schatzi et al. 2001). Practice brings into view various kinds of (situated) activities. Indeed, the felicity of the concept comes from its extraordinary breadth. It points equally to agency of the most personal or intimate kind and to agency that is collective, public or institutional. The obvious cost of this extension is that it hinders the detailed clarification of differences between types of agency. According to Thévenot (2001), two basic issues are insufficiently addressed by most usages of practices. On the one hand, theories of practice generally do not provide good accounts of our dynamic confrontation with the world. On the other, the force that governs each practice is all too often replaced with concept such as interests, dispositions, values and norms, - which are supposed to be neutral and descriptive. In our contemporary societies, human beings constantly need to change the scope of their action, shifting along a scale between greater and lesser generality. For this reason he suggests replacing the term 'practice' with 'pragmatic regime of engagement'. The latter will be adopted for the scope of this paper.

to apply, again, to this regime, but agency here is not completely dependent on functional efficiency, instead.

The dynamics of the public regime of justification*'are discernible in disputes that display the kind of arguments and proofs which demand the highest degree of legitimacy. (…) Publicity puts a strain on the judgment which guides action'* (Thévenot 2001: 70). It weights on the preparation of actions which need to be qualified according to different '*orders of worth*' which constitute common forms of public evaluation grounded in a '*grammar*' of the common good. Hence '*engagements in this world imply a reflexive and judgmental stance which can be viewed in terms of the horizon of a third party*' (Thévenot 2001: 71). I will come back to this later.

By presenting these three regimes the group was far from putting forward any prescriptive model. Its aim was that of highlighting how each regime requires a specific '*competence*' on the side of actors. What is important here is that by focusing on these regimes we can move our attention well beyond the preoccupation for issues of political representation. In the view of the GSPM, actors' identities should not be dealt with as pre-constituted variable, because they can well develop and change over time. A privileged attention is accorded to their actions. By looking closely at them, researchers suspend any judgment and '*follow them and take their arguments seriously*'[64] (Boltanski 1990a: 57). Hence, they can zoom onto the path of access towards the public, by examining actors' performances '*en train de se faire*' (Thévenot 2006: 220), alongside the constraints that weigh on them to open up to a '*public arena'* [65].

3.5.2 The public regime of justification and the concept of 'orders of worth'.

The GSPM drew another crucial concept from Hirschman: that of '*publicity'* (1982). The latter states that actors move from the private to the public sphere through various gradual steps. The notion is not extrapolated from a dichotomy between public and private sphere. It encapsulates the articulation of a continuum among various levels of publicity. According to Boltanski (1990), any agreement in the public sphere can only be reached whereby actors address the quest for generality. In other words, individuals need to enact

[64] my translation

[65] Cefaï and Joseph (2002) defined it as '*a scene where, in front of some spectators, the claimants to ownership of a public problem face each other*' (my translation) (58). The author drew from work by Cooley (1909), Dewey (1927) and Park (1904) to show how the emergence of a problem is associated with the constitution of alternative descriptions of a given situation, around which contending voices confront in front of a public (Cefaï and Pasquier 2003: 20).

their critical capacity in order to be exposed to or advance a critique. They equally need to cope with a number of normative constraints weigh on each situation (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991). This is to say that actions are to be qualified through specific '*orders of worth*'. In this sense a '*moral capacity*' is recognised to individuals, in the measure they have the ability to take distance from their own particularities and interests and embrace a view of the common good which can help achieve an agreement (Boltanski 1990b: 75).

Each order of worth involves a form of public evaluation. They consist of criteria that actors need to follow in a manner which is sufficiently correct in the eyes of other actors as to allow them to confront and judge the different orders put forward in a given dispute. Their legitimacy is not arbitrary. It relates to a set of arrangements relating to the '*common good*' (Thévenot 2006), in which rules are made explicit and become institutionalised in connection to a learned grammar (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991). In fact, in the program of the GSPM, actions can be seized by looking at how individuals and groups appropriate forms of generality that can be accorded the highest degree of legitimacy by other non-specified parties.

The term '*worth*' was preferred to that of 'value' to depart from a 'sociology of values' which identifies them with actors' preferences, as deduced through their opinions (Bolstanski 1990: 80). Values are not necessarily oriented towards justice. In contrast, the term 'worth' can be associated with an ordinary sense of what is just and unjust. Importantly, the public regime of justification is not based on an a priori definition of justice, which is rather analysed through actors' claims. In turn they make specific orders of worth manifest. A variety of them was indicated by Boltanski and Thévenot in their work '*On justification*' (2006), with reference to different worlds, including the following: the inspired world, the domestic world, the world of fame, the civic world, the market world and the industrial world.

In the inspired world, '*persons may be more or less worthy inasmuch as they are all capable of experiencing the outpouring of inspiration and thus of acceding to perfection and happiness. (…) It is manifested by feelings and passions, and it is experienced as devouring, terrifying, enriching, exciting, exalting, fascinating, disturbing (…). [Inspired persons] are exempt from domestic arrangements as well; they abandon common sense in favor of extravagance and they 'make the familiar strange' (…) The worthiest persons in terms of inspiration are often despised by the world at large (…). This holds true for children (…), women, the simple-minded, and madmen, and also for poets, artists (…). [To access the*

inspired worth] one must 'break out of habits and routine', 'accept risks'. (…) The inspired person is inclined to put himself in a questioning state (…); he is inclinded to dream, to 'imagine', that is, to 'conceive what does not exist.' (159-162)

'The domestic world *'does not unfold inside the circle of family relationships alone (…). When this world unfolds, the search for what is just stresses personal relationships. The worth in the domestic world, is a function of the position one occupies in chains of personal dependence. (…) Objects are not apprehended according to their own worth (…) but essentially according to how much they contribute to establishing hierarchical relations among people. (…) It is through reference to generation, tradition and hierarchy that order can be established among beings of a domestic nature. (…) In a domestic world, beings are immediately qualified by their relationships with others. (…) This mode of understanding being is expressed in pride, respect and shame.' (164-171)*

In the world of fame, *'there are few things that can consolidate and stabilise the relations between worth, which comes exclusively from the opinion of others, and the bearer of worth, an entity (person or thing) that is not qualified by properties inscribed in its being in a lasting way. (…) In the world of fame, people may impose an order on beings and reach agreement in a just world by taking only the opinion of others into account. (…) Fame establishes worth. In the world of public opinion, worthy beings are the ones that distinguish themselves, are visible, famous, recognised: their visibility depends on their more or less attention-getting, persuasive, informative character. (…) However, arrangements of worth may include persons who are neither big names nor their fans but who serve as judges responsible for focusing attention on the worth established by fame. (…) In the world of public opinion, the relation of worth is a relation of identification. (…) The relation of inclusion among the worthy through their fame and their audience is expressed in terms of influence.' (178-182)*

The distinctive feature of the civic world is that '*it attaches primordial importance to beings that are not persons. In this world, the ones who accede to higher states of worth are not human persons but rather the collective persons that they constitute by meeting together. (…) In the civic world, the worthy beings are the masses and the collectives that assemble and organise them. Their worthiness is qualified first by their dimensions: confederate, national or international, and by the fact that they belong to public space as opposed to the 'private' world: one speaks of 'public agencies'. (…) In the civic world, one attains worth by sacrificing particular and immediate interests, by transcending oneself, by refusing to place 'individual interests ahead of collective interests. Thus militants renounce 'forms of action in which only the immediate and sometimes personal interests of workers are taken into account.' Civic worth depends first and foremost on membership. The person who becomes a member gains in stature because he breaks out of his isolation.*

(…) The principal mode of relation in this world is the association that makes it possible to turn a multitude of individuals into a single person.' (185-192)

The market world '*must not be confused with a sphere of economic relations. (...) Economic actions are based on at least two main forms of coordination, one by the marketplace, the other by an industrial order (...) In the market world, actions are motivated by the desires of individuals, which drive them to possess the same objects, rare goods whose ownership is inalienable. (...) The competition between beings placed in a state of rivalry governs their conflicts through an evaluation of market worth, the price, which expresses the importance of converging desires. Worthy objects are salable goods that have a strong position in a market. Worthy persons are rich, millionaires, and they live the high life.* ' (193-196)

The industrial world is '*the one in which technological objects and scientific methods have their place. (...) The ordering of the industrial world is based on the efficiency of beings, their performance, their productivity, and their capacity to ensure normal operations and to respond usefully to needs. (…) The quality of worthy beings, beings that are functional, operational, or (when humans are involved) professional. (…) In an industrial world, people have a professional qualification (…) related to their capability and their activity. This scale of qualification underlies a hierarchy of states of worth, a hierarchy marked by competencies and responsibilities.*' (203- 206)

By throwing light on the process of generalising about pieces of evidence, in relation to their form and congruence, one can gain access to the idea of justice in an uncustomary way. Instead of applying a transcendental rule, as scholars traditionally do, we can follow pragmatic dictates to determine the appropriateness of a set of arrangements. Again, according to the hypothesis by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), individuals' sense of justice can be seized by investigating into situations in which actors are exposed to or advance a critique. Orders of worth need to be examined carefully as their use might be easily misinterpreted, as will be explained later in the section.

Importantly, we need to treat instances of agreement reaching and critique as intimately linked to occurrences within a single continuum of action instead of minimising their specific nature with respect to other regimes of action. Indeed, if we want to take actors' affairs seriously, we need to ensure similar levels of attention are put onto different types of actions. At the same time, it is crucial to identify with precision the '*système actantiel*' (Boltanski 1990a: 26) of each dispute, that is to say efforts must be made to sketch out the list of actors that are involved in it. Both the spatial and temporal dimensions are essential.

This is why the GSPM elaborated an approach which is capable of studying actions as a process of sequences. In a similar vein, Hirschman (1994) strongly affirmed that social sciences are too detached from the sequences of conflicts and run the risk of advancing a priori statements, while failing to understand contentious dynamics.

3.5.3 The crucial notion of coordination.

The regimes of engagements are not based on a defined or reproduced order. They are based on a '*mise en ordre*' which remains doubtful and problematic. No action can be assumed to be coordinated by routines, nor rules, nor social norms. Lending again from Hirschman (1982), Bolstanski and Thévenot (2006) supported that coordination is possible only whereby a common good is recognised as such by all actors involved in a given dispute. The term '*coordination*' can wrongly suggest a mechanical or functional settlement. Both economy and sociology tend to treat agreement reaching as if it was a natural law and coordination was linked to rules, hierarchies and formal agreements. As a result, the way the latter are constructed is exempted from any analysis (Bolstanski and Thévenot 2006). Various tools and resources can be used to coordinate action and to achieve generalisation. In spite of this coordination is not always successful and this is why it can be misleading as a word. In fact, one of the limits of social sciences is that so much is about coordination. The term '*investment*' was therefore preferred, according to the GSPM. It belongs to the same family of terms such as capital, social capital, capabilities but it has a different meaning. Capital should not be intended here as a resource *per sè* because it is itself part of the investment.

The GSPM stresses the uncertain character of coordination and insists it does not necessarily refers to a third person nor to a specified coordinated plan. It is strictly associated with an understanding of other actors and their actions as part of the environment in which disputes are set. This requires a localised and personalised '*accommodation* aimed at preparing for public critique (Thévenot 2006). It is precisely the '*inquiétude*' of coordination and the difficulties it carries which interests the GSPM (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006).

Regardless the specific regime of action, coordination requires two inseparable needs: a judgment defining the contours of action, which helps identify what happens and the reconsideration of this judgment in order to recognise the new elements cannot be longer

found in the action. If actions focus on the first a rigid judgment can derive; if they focus on the latter they prevent any possible coordination at all. Having said this, individual actions require a form of coordination that is different from that of actions which involve the realisation of a plan and even more that of interactions in the public sphere. While at the public level, it is linked to a quest for legitimacy since coordination here requires an agreement on a common good, at the level of familiar engagements, '*convenience'* (Thévenot 2001) can be established on the basis of personal attachments and at the level of ordinary action, it is associated with an actual plan which is considered as seizable by other people.

3.5.4 Tests and normativity.

For people to construct effectively forms of generality, they need to face a test. The latter are devices in which actors and their actions are evaluated according to justifications they advance. The latter need to be not only legitimate but also referable to a grammar of justice that is to say to one or more orders of worth. It derives that by analysing tests we can seize public action as intrinsically equipped with a normative component. In fact, in the program of the GSPM normative orders emerge from forms of engagement that are mediated through tests (Bolstanski and Thévenot).

As a result of tests, people are attributed a precise position within a hierarchical order and are qualified and invested with tangible consequences including inclusion, exclusion, reward, access to a new position, etc. At the same time tests grant publicity to the object under evaluation.

A sense of injustice might arises when different orders of worth are confused or seem to flow into the promotion of individual subjective interests. It is the case for example when a market order of worth is extended beyond its legitimate boundary. An example by Thévenot (2006) is illuminating. The participation of unemployed and undocumented to manifestations in France has been repeatedly interpreted as an act of individual interest, even more so in relation to the fact that their basis was constituted of people who are excluded from a community (of work) and (of citizens). The author insisted such a description stems from a misrecognition of a legitimate order of worth they advanced: a market one, strongly anchored to issues of competition.

There are cases in which actors '*sneak off from tests*' (see for example Vitale 2009). This happens when individuals demonstrate their competence while failing to refer to any form of generality. Furthermore, tests can turn into mere tests of power when no actual space is granted for actors to forward their generalised claims and confront.

From the above it might seem that tests can be easily associated with a pure linguistic form of communication. There is more to them. The unity of analysis here is not the discursive interaction itself. It is the actual situation which is in turn subjected to the coordination of various actors

3.5.5 Making one's voice heard: a pragmatic reading.

As Cefaï (2007) rightly pointed out, the relationship between the anthropology and history of ordinary citizenship and the sociology of collective action has not been addressed adequately to date. The literature on citizenship has increased since the 1980s and it constitutes a field in itself but it has not questioned the link between the figures of citizenship and the forms of collective action and the modalities of public engagement. If we look at their relationship from the point of view of engagement we need to go well beyond the juridical status of individuals to explore how definitions of citizenship translate in the context of experiences and activities. Being a citizen means crossing some tests of rights and duties in actual concrete situations and to affirm the right to reclaim new rights and do their duties (Cefaï 2007).

One of the great advances of social history has consisted in including private life in its field of investigation. This does not mean that researchers have dealt with actors' capacity to change scale. Social relations and local private life have been traditionally analysed with the same categories used for social structures. The privileged model of action has been that of 'social practice', conduct has been observed with the categories of rites and social codes. Arguably, this form of action rests on the definition of agents which privileges a collective belonging. In order to seize actions relating to the most intimate spheres that resist any '*mise en commun*' (Thévenot 2006), a topological specification is not sufficient. A change in the way we look at engagements is rather needed. To start with we need to go rethink the idea that an action is social only when actors do take others into consideration. The '*proche*' is generally intended as strictly connected to individual actions and as such disconnected from collective ones and irrelevant for its understanding (221 Thévenot 2006).

This is particularly crucial because personal attachments are more and more emerging as the basis of social movements. The political engagement of people proceeds more and more often from local mobilisations that are themselves anchored in proximity (see Lafaye 2003). The existing tension between engagements of proximity and the 'montée en généralité' is among the reasons why the regime of familiarity is easily brough back to the categories of private and individual and hence mostly left unrecognised and ignored. As Cefaï and Pasquier highlighted engagements do not only '*become manifest on the barricades*'[66] (2003: 49). Actors may well join a public arena without taking up the arms. Yet, if we focus on what is traditionally intended as social practices, we fail to take into account the most intimate actions that, arguably, are just as significant as any other figure of engagement.

If we take Boltanski (1990) suggestion seriously to follow actors and we focus on their engagements as they take place in a given environment and in a set situation, we can better shed light on the thorny path they pass through to reach out to a public arena, regardless whether they make it or not. The pragmatic approach in fact allows to study both individual and collective actions without any conceptual rupture. What is interesting here is not whether they are successful or not. We do assume they have a critical competence that allows them to be exposed and put forward a critique. This sheds light on their capacity for engagement. Whether anything follows from this is left to analysis in order to prevent any a priori statement to be affirmed. Ultimately this should contribute to an effective reading of actors' political participation, while overcoming any account that often risks being, to say the least, unappreciative. It encourages overlooking identities and the related categories of analysis to open up to their potential renewal in order to investigate into the construction of militantism, as it builds up between engagements of proximity and '*montée en généralité*', and to understand the transformations required to make one's voice heard.

Such a reading of actors' political engagement carries also an important political goal with it. A double diagnosis of crisis now characterises our society: a crisis of politics and a crisis of social sciences that produce the tables of this society (Thévenot 2006: 213). Social sciences build on agents' representation forms, both individual and collective. They are still working on consolidating them. It should not be underestimated that such forms actively interfere with modes of political representation. The development of social categories has been going hand in hand with the claims of their political weight (214). An example in this sense is provided by the fact that participation to demonstrations and protests has been

[66] my translation

more and more portrayed as an individual action. These categories of people are actually considered as excluded from a community (of work or citizens). Therefore the shortage of collective engagement is considered as a claim of personal engagement. It casts doubts on militant efforts, suggesting a scenario whereby a representative democracy has been overtaken by a liberal one, with individuality overtaking any collective ideology.

Interestingly, any scientist tends to defend the tools of sociological representation stressing their objectivity. However, while they invoke a scientific truth they run the risk of promoting a politics of power, despite the fact it is the same type of politics they themselves report and claim to fight it. In order to react to this double crisis of politics and social sciences what is needed is to open up the horizon as to explore a plurality of actions and engagements, as a pragmatic stance allows to do.

3.5.5.1 What is distinctive about the pragmatic approach?

Boltanski (2002) reproaches various general theories of action for not giving enough space to contradictions and incoherences nor to the intrinsic indomitable nature of social facts. On the contrary they have the tendency to replace chaos with coherence, which is far from giving a realistic representation of actors and their actions. Differently, a pragmatic regime, after highlighted the dynamics of engagement, turns back, in an inverse movement, to look at the capacity that agents need to exercise in every regime. In this way it is possible to take distance from the theories and vocabularies of action that focus attention on actors and pre-determined power games. We can open up our perspective by looking at the different forms of engagements actors undertake while at the same time being more attentive with respect to the multiple dynamics within their environment (Thévenot 2006: 241). In fact, there cannot be any attention to 'agency' unless we look at they way in which actors engage with the world.

To be sure, the pragmatic stance is not a revival of microsociological analysis. It is rather supported that scholars should reach out to every '*scène publique*', particularly those which fall outside deliberative democracy tools. Ideally, the multiple contradictory lines of conflicts can be discerned as a result, thus demonstrating that trading off and negotiations are only the ultimate step in actors' dynamics. An epistemological turn is needed in this sense: we need to move 'from a focus on individuals acted upon to individuals acting'. What is most relevant is that the pragmatic stance helps reconstruct actors' competence,

how they produce arguments, with reference to a common good, that are acceptable for others (Boltanski, 1990). In other words, it shifts attention to the critical operations actors carry out when they want to show their disagreement without resorting to violence (Bolstanski and Thévenot, 2006, p.7). This ultimately allows to reconcile policy and politics and to analyse them in a continuum, thus recognising that any type of engagement, including familiar ones, is just as relevant as any other to open up to a public arena.

The most innovative pieces of research have been those which have used categories and hypotheses anchored to the field work, thus breaking off from grand theories. They have shifted attention from systems of representation towards the contexts of activity and actions 'en train de se faire', while diving into the pragmatic heritage of the Chicago school of sociology. In particular, the centrality of the question '*what is a public*' has encouraged to capture the emergence of new figures of intimate, private, public and political spheres (23).

The term 'public' can be interpreted in various ways, depending on whether it is treated as a noun, an adjective or a verb. As a noun, it designates an individual endowed with certain skills, including for example the capacity to deliberate and participate. As an adjective, it qualifies a multiplicity of activities which relate to the semantic of the public and private sphere. Most importantly, in its verbal form, it is used to seize the dynamic dimension of 'becoming public'. The idea of publicising implies that a public does not exist a priori: it becomes public through the publicisation of a social problem or a political measure, etc. it becomes public within the arena of multiple social conflicts (Cefaï and Pasquier 2003: 14). A public is constituted of individuals that engage in regimes of public action. It goes through the test of forming a public (16-17). Hence, a pragmatic analysis does not adopt any a priori definition of public and private. It rather follows their adventures in different social and historical contexts (18). The main question is that of understanding how specific regimes of actions are oriented by a given sense of 'public' (17). Most importantly, a reading through regimes means accepting that the '*chose publique*' (20) is by no means the monopoly of the State and that scholars should not resign to interpret every phenomenon as a system of domination. They should try and articulate the dynamics of conflicts while putting actors back on agenda, by looking at power configurations as they develop through procedures of '*mise en scene*', '*mise en arguments*'(25).

Another point is relevant, particularly if we are investigating on im-migrants' forms of engagements: the diversity that is expected to differentiate them from natives. If we focus

on actors' competence we are forced to acknowledge that diversity is not the result of a versatility inherent in actors – as a postmodern reading would have it – but rather relates to the variety of orders of worth they refer to for legitimate forms of coordination to take place (Thévenot 2006: 228). The pragmatic approach promotes pluralism without encouraging relativism: the various regimes of engagements are all related with each other; the various '*spheres of justice'* are all represented through a common grammar. We are therefore talking of plural individuals whose engagement aims to achieve power , an extended power, intended in a larger sense than that generally attached to the term. To put it simply: engagements turn a dependence into power. The dependence of an individual to a given environment requires in fact an adequate '*mise en forme*' to which all individuals have access to. Agents and their engagements can be qualified accordingly, in relation to the orders of worth they put forward. Their legitimate power rests on this qualification, which defines their sphere of participation in the definition of a common good (249).

3.5.5.2 Beyond political opportunity structures?

The pragmatic approach is in general more dynamic than the contentious politics approach as well as institutional approaches in general. The program of contentious politics tries and systematise some ancient questions and to analyse a certain number of mechanisms and processes that can be found in various types of events, predominantly by means of transnational comparison. In spite of an increasing focus on dynamics scholars still seem to be very structuralist in their endeavors. The notion of contentious politics does not allow to understand and interpret the intimate dimensions of the 'vita activa' even though it reminds us to look at mechanisms and processes. Some forms of engagements might be invisible to the public scène in spite of the fact that actors pass through it when opening up to a 'public arena'. Accordingly, attention needs to be paid to every engagement regime as well as to the sequence of arguments raised by actors, with reference to various 'orders of worth' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Furthermore, the notion of 'contestation' in itself remains one of '*rapports de force*', of interest transaction, while trading off, bargaining and negotiations are only the ultimate steps in actors' dynamics (Cefaï 2007).

An analysis on the actual experience in situ allows to understand what contention means and to dig out the actual contentious dimension and its dynamics. If we accept that collective action does not explain itself starting from a confrontation between outsiders and insiders of a political system and that is does not necessarily result in the equation actor-

opponent-conflict, the frame of the analysis transforms itself, especially if we start looking at the process of publicisation that allows not to miss out on the temporal dimension of collective actions. It obliges not to take actors as the starting point of analysis: they are rather emergent figures of the process of publicisation. It encourages to trace the history of contention, to experiment rather than fix the various trajectories of militants and their organisational careers (ibidem).

As anticipated, Hirschman was very influential on the work of the GSPM in a number of ways. First and foremost he highlighted the need to look at actions through a sequential approach, while zooming on performances '*en train de se faire*' and more specifically by observing moments of coordination among actors as well as moments in which they face a test. Contentious politics scholars do not pay enough attention to what happens on the field, they do not pay enough attention to practices '*en situation*'. Politics is mostly considered as the monopoly of the state around which forms of competition between members and challengers of the political system unravel.

Politics is more than this. According to the pragmatic stance, it is the horizon of a coordination among actors that do not exist as citizens if not in the measure in which they share common norms within a given conflict more than any actual consensus originating from a collective experience (Cefaï 2007: 710). Politics should not intended as a mere exercise of power, nor as an autonomous action, isolated from its moral dimension, but rather as a process of de-individualisation. In other words, it refers to the capacity of actors to construct a link between some parts and the whole (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). As Eliasoph (1998) says, rather than talking about politics it might be more fruitful to talk about a 'public-spirited way of talking'. By doing so she follows Hanna Pitkin who stresses the invocation of the principles of justice in order to identify a discourse which is oriented towards the public spirit. In other words with 'public spirit' she defines a discourse which is open to debate, including dissent, on a given matter and at the same time she focuses on the common good. However, in a later work, Eliasoph (2005) also noticed that actors' politicisation might actually fail to be acknowledged because they adopt a low profile and their engagement is actually not detected as a result.

Institutional scholars generally stress considerably on routines, but actors' practices cannot be equated to them. Two questions are insufficiently addressed in most usages of the term practice. On the one hand, there is a lack of '*realism*', in the sense that theories of practice

generally fail to provide a good account of actors' dynamic confrontation with the world; on the other hand, there is little concern with the moral element in practice (Thévenot 2001: 56). Sociology has heavily relied on practices viewed as habits, dispositions, routines, customs and traditions to account for static perpetuation and reproduction of social order. There are some exceptions, including for example the work by De Certeau (2005) which paved the way for a sociology of everyday life. The pragmatic approach, on its side, is not only interested in the movements of actors. It also focuses on the ways their environment responds to them and how, in turn, they take this into account. This is what Thévenot calls '*realism*'. According to him, as long as a practice is seen as regular and stable, it can hardly be understood as a realistic adjustment to a resistant, changing and transformed world (59) and its dynamic nature cannot be seized.

Such a position clearly stands in contrast with social constructivism perspectives that actually discarded the conception of a reality '*out there*' (ibidem). In fact, it supports that engagement regimes highlight variations in the relevant reality which is put to test in the dynamics of each typology of engagement. As far as the second aspect is concerned, it is the author's opinion that sociologists tend to distance themselves from ideas of good, following their rupture with political and moral philosophy. They tend to replace the concept with others, including mostly that of 'social norm'. This reduction obliterates the main tension deriving from some kind of good that governs the intervention and some sort of response that comes back to the agent from reality. Importantly, this is why Thévenot chooses the term '*engagement*': it captures the link between these two orientations. Furthermore, apart from indicating a material adjustment to the world, it carries with it a moral and political covenant (60), thus making actors' commitment to some kind of good more explicit.

A finale note of caution. The program of the GSPM and of pragmatic scholars is of course much more complex than the above account could allow for. Various issues would need to be investigated further, including for example an examination of the pragmatic approach versus ethnographic analysis and ethnomethodological approaches. There is indeed relevant literature in this sense, even though it is still not largely available in Italy and I could not get hold of it. More importantly, it went well beyond the scope and capacity of this thesis to draw up a comprehensive review of how the pragmatic approach can enlighten studies on political engagement (for a review see Cefaï 2007). Additionally, I never intended to embrace the pragmatic approach as the only theoretical 'key' that could

guide my work. I rather borrowed from it with a '*pragmatically sensitive*' attitude, in line with Cefaï et al. (2009). As the authors explained, a similar attitude can be distinguished for an overarching interest in a world in transformation, for the observation of public action through an ethnographic lens, that is to say as 'politics in action'. This ultimately requires an inquiry into operations, actors, principles as well as dispositives which are comprised within a given world, in the effort to take distance from sociological and political perspectives focused on public policies alone. As I explained in the introduction, my main was not to report on the results of collective actions *per sè, but to* elaborate on the process that accompanied them, regardless of any outcome, in the effort to try and overcome a narrative of domination that can ultimately reinstate power asymmetries. A change of perspective was needed in this sense and I do believe a pragmatically sensitive attitude helped me in this sense, as the empirical findings will show.

EMPIRICAL PART

CHAPTER 4
PHONE CENTRES AS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY.

4.1 Im-migrants and entrepreneurship.

Im-migrants are increasinly contributing to the total share of autonomous job positions in Europe, thus confirming a trend which has long emerged in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. Furthermore, this can be probably identified as the most important trend that has characterised im-migrants' participation in the job market of receiving countries in the past twenty years. Unsurprisingly, it has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars, first in the United States and then in Europe and Italy.

Most studies of immigrant entrepreneurship have focused on the business people only, in order to explain the propensities of certain groups towards entrepreneurship and to describe their paths to entrepreneurial success. According to Ambrosini (2004), immigrant entrepreneurship has been mostly explained with a limited number of factors which can be summarised in the following lines of inquiry: supply factors, demand factors, institutional factors, social embeddedness and mixed embeddedness.

The former can be largely associated with the '*theory of middleman minorities*' whose first formulations are due to Newcomer (1961) and Collins (1964). In their opinion, im-migrants opt for autonomous work opportunities as a reaction to the difficulties they experience in their path to integration, including an insufficient competence in the language of the receiving country, a poor educational background, problems in having their educational qualifications recognised and forms of discrimination in the access to the job market[67].

Another line of inquiry investigates demand factors. The well-known work by Sassen (1997) identified a social segment, made up mostly of im-migrants, that is devoted to the delivery of services essential to everyday life in the metropolis, including for example care-giving. Some authors also stress on institutional factors that can inhibit or favour the launching of im-migrants' entrepreneurial activities. In particular, they highlight racist or

[67] However this whole hypothesis has been revisited over time to account for a considerable group of im-migrants who are actually highly qualified and therefore choose to move to countries which offer the best job opportunities (see for example Marger 2001).

ethnic exclusion and blocked mobility in the mainstream labour market (for an overview see Kloosterman and Rath 2003).

Other approaches revolve around issues of '*social embeddedness*' to demonstrate how individual entrepreneurs take part in ethnically specific social networks that facilitate their business operations (see for example Portes and Borocz 1989). A few further remarks should be made in this sense.

An important resource of ethnic entrepreneurship often resides in the social capital provided by relatives and fellow countrymen who collaborate in formal or informal ways to managing the business. Moreover, community networks can play a crucial function not only in terms of launching the business but also for the resolution of business difficulties that can be encountered along the way.

While revising the approaches introduced above, Rath and Kloosterman (2000) proposed the so-called '*mixed embeddedness approach*' which is more encompassing in the measure it acknowledges the significance of im-migrants' actual embeddedness in social networks while at the same time understanding that their relations and transactions are embedded in wider economic and political-institutional structures.

Importantly, Broggi (2002) suggested that 'ethnic' entrepreneurial activities do not merely represent a job opportunity for im-migrants. They are also a vital resource which can favour the social and economic integration of both owners and their employees. In a way, they can be intended as a clear indication of the stability of the migration project (Zucchetti 2002). Ambrosini (2008), on this side, stressed the need to monitor the phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurship by suggesting the possibility for it to have an important political impact. He suggested that 'economic leaders' can emerge within entrepreneurial networks, that is to say important actors that actively promote the economic integration of fellow countrymen and relatives by employing them in their own firms or by introducing them to their networks while sharing the competence they have matured. Possibly, these leaders could well take up a growing role in both economic and political forms of immigrant associationism.

4.1.1 Im-migrants and entrepreneurship: some data on the Italian context.

In the last ten years immigrant entrepreneurship in Italy has grown to a considerable extent. Nowadays, enterprises are blossoming all throughout the country. In face of this rapid increase in immigrant entrepreneurship, Centro Studi Unioncamere (2009) argues that newcomers have become a fundamental actor for the survival of small size production activities: without their contributions, the number of micro enterprises would have diminished by more than 20,000 units.

In 2008, the total number of entrepreneurial activities launched by non-European im-migrants increased by 6,7% (Centro Studi Unioncamere 2009). This confirms the vitality of ethnic entrepreneurship, despite a decrease with respect to the previous year, when it grew by 8%. It is of course encouraging, particularly at a time of economic crisis, if we consider that no such growth has been recorded as far as their Italian counterparts are concerned. It would be also interesting to investigate this further against data on unemployment to understand whether newcomers might choose the entrepreneurial path as an alternative to precarious work conditions, particularly in northern regions.

Scholars reports that the risk for im-migrants to be unemployed is as high as for natives, at least as far as males are involved. Between 2005 and 2007, the percentage of unemployment for those arriving from countries with high migratory pressure was little higher than that of Italian citizens (6% against 5,7%)[68]. However, if we take into due consideration their unequal distribution over the national territory, aggregate data[69] show the disadvantage for them is higher in the north, where they concentrate[70]: Here the percentage of unemployment doubles that of natives (for male it corresponds to 5,9% against 2,7%).

The growth of immigrant entrepreneurship is particularly significant if we look at the period 1998-2002, which followed the introduction of the so-called Turco-Napolitano law[71], in 1998. The law had a considerable impact on the launching of im-migrants' entrepreneurial activities, both in absolute terms and with reference to the total share of

[68] Elaboration on data by Istat 2005-2006-2007 by Fullin (to be published).
[69] ibidem.
[70] Data have traditionally shown a clear negative correlation, at a regional level, between the percentage of unemployment and the percentage of im-migrants on the total population (Reyneri 2007 cit. Fullin to be published.
[71] See note 36

residents' initiatives. Infact, prior to its passing, im-migrants were severely constrained by what was known as the '*reciprocity clause'*. According to it, newcomers could only start up an activity if their country of origin had previously signed up an agreement which granted the same right to Italians living within their territory. This is not to say that im-migrants have been benefiting from a particularly favourable normative framework since.

If we turn to specific sectors, it is evident that the industrial sector has come to assume an increasing importance (50,6%). The construction sector prevails within it, followed by textile, clothing and footwear. The service sector represents 46,9% of im-migrants' entrepreneurial activities, with a prevalence of commercial activities (35,0%), that together with construction businesses amount to almost 8 out of 10 firms with a an immigrant owner. Yet, the latter are characterised by a rather high replacement rate (Caritas 2009), in the face of a reduction in the volatility of ethnic entrepreneurial activities in general[72].

As Barberis (2008) recalls, a large part of research on immigrant entrepreneurship has focused on commerce (Engelen 2001), with the exception of the textile sector, which is mostly associated with im-migrants of Chinese origins. It is beyond discussions that this is by no means the only relevant sector of ethnic entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, it is the sector which enjoys (or suffers from?) the most visibility, thus drawing scholars' intellectual curiosity (Barberis 2008). Among various activities, launderettes, food shops, beauty salons, clearing services, travel agencies, transport agencies are the most widespread. Less common are translation agencies, mediation services, phone centres and money transfers, in spite of the fact they provide im-migrants with crucial services.

As the Ethnoland report (2009) states, various pieces of research showed that the level of education of immigrant entrepreneurs is generally higher than that of im-migrants working in dependent positions, despite the fact that the latter are not negligible. Considering the difficulties im-migrants often face to have their qualifications recognised, immigrant entrepreneurs undertake specific efforts to try and enhance the highly professional skills they have acquired and that cannot be expressed in the most modest types of jobs. This is an alternative way for them to try and shrug off prejudices which present them as incapable

[72] Since 2001, the business cessation rate of immigrant entreprises is not dissimilar to that of Italian ones. They are even lower for the year 2006. This might be understood on the basis that the most risky activities were launched soon after the introduction of the Turco Napolitano law cited above. Such businesses were often started up by individuals that were looking first of all for an opportunity to regularise their permanence in the country - since it wash harder for them to do so through dependent forms of employment in general – and activated a business, at times without enough consideration for the risk they were taking.

of any professional achievement[73]. Some entrepreneurs build on the experiences matured in their country of origin, others adventure in what can be understood as a proactive choice.

4.1.1.1 Im-migrants and entrepreneurship in the 'Third Italy'.

Verona and Modena are situated at the heart of the so-called 'Third Italy'[74], which has been repeatedly proclaimed as a model of economic success based on the diffusion of small to medium sized enterprises. Unsurprisingly, this area has provided with a very attractive context for immigration waves.

With a population of more than 265,000 and 180,000 inhabitants respectively, Verona and Modena have a similar incidence of im-migrants, corresponding to roughly 13 % and 12% (Istat 2010). Both regions have been characterised by stable and consistent immigration flows for the past fifteen years. In the same period, a considerable increase has been recorded in the delivery of residence permits, with a regularisation rate which is higher than the national average (Caritas 2009).

It is here in the Third Italy that specific transformative trends , such as the growth of im-migrants' entrepreneurial activities, have been particularly visible. In recent years, newcomers residing in the north-eastern part of the country have demonstrated considerable entrepreneurial dynamism, in spite of the negative economic trend that the whole country is experiencing (Fondazione Ethnoland 2009). Data by Caritas-Migrantes (2009) confirms the existence of forms of immigrant entrepreneurial concentration in specific areas of Italy, with 80% of activities being concentrated in six regions only, including Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Lombardy, Piedmont, Tuscany and Lazio.

In absolute terms, the largest concentration was recorded in the Lombardy region (10.2%). Emilia-Romagna and Veneto follow. They occupy the fourth (9.5%) and sixth position (7.8%) respectively (ibidem) with more than 4000 enterprises at the end of June 2008 (Fondazione Ethnoland 2009). At the same time, it is Tuscany that presents the largest number of enterprises with respect to the total – including also those of native entrepreneurs (11.4%).

[73] In this sense, scholars show that their level of education hardly does not facilitate their access to the job market, whereby their penalisation in comparison to Italians increases if educational attainment is taken into account (Fullin and Reyneri 2010).
[74] See note 7

As far as the Veneto Region is concerned, the largest share of enterprises is situated in Treviso (7.6%). Verona follows (7.1%). The vast majority of entrepreneurs are employed in the construction industry (more than 48%). Commerce is also quite important (24.5%). A different picture emerges in Emilia-Romagna. More than a half of all ethnic enterprises are located in Modena, Reggio Emilia and Bologna (Caritas 2009). Commerce is the most important sector (43.76%), followed by the construction industry (27.07%) (Emilia Romagna Region 2009).

Against the background sketched above, the relative importance of the commercial sector is particular evident if we take into consideration the fact that, starting with forms of peddling, it has historically represented a fundamental source of both jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities for many im-migrants. Unfortunately, this sector suffers from a stereotypical image which associates im-migrants with the '*vu cumprà*'[75] who from the South of Italy used to move to the Adriatic coast to carry out their business there during the summer season. Yet, a full awareness has not been reached that immigrant entrepreneurs occupied in the commerce sector are mostly owners of either retail or wholesale shops (Fondazione Ethnoland 2009). At the same time, the idea of a 'useful im-migrant', functional to the labor force and somehow compatible with a solidaristic vision promoted by local subcultures clashes with that of a marginal (threatening) im-migrant.

4.2 The boom and decline of an ethnic entrepreneurial activity: phone centres in Italy.

In recent years various pieces of research have focused on the analysis of private, public and semi-public spaces which offer access to Internet and telephone services[76], with specific attention to their territorial dimension. Infact, while telecommunication networks carry with them the opportunity to overcome spatial constraints and to abolish any form of distance, the local dimension still represents a crucial factor in the sense that it can influence both the uses and meanings of similar spaces. Having said this, it is evident that people go to multimedia spaces, internet cafés and phone centres with different purposes.

[75] This is a neologism which spread in Italy in the 1990s to refer to, often in a negative way, peddlars of African origins. It i san onomatopeic word which imitates the distorted pronounciation of the sentence 'vuoi comprare?' – which stands for 'would you like to buy anything?' by immigrants with a poor knowledge of the Italian language.

[76] For a review see for example Scospi 2004 on télé and cyber boutiques in Paris and Hampton and Gupta 2008 on wi-fi cafés in the US.

The work presented here has focused on the so-called phone centres, that is to say those commercial spaces, in Italy, that generally offer internet and telephone services. In Spain they are known as locutorios, in France as télé boutiques et cyber boutiques. The first phone centres, in Italy, were opened more than ten years ago, all over the country. A considerable boom was recorded at the beginning of the new millennium, at least as far a Verona and Modena are concerned[77]: it was then these activities became more visible.

There are about 18 phone centres in Verona and 17 in Modena[78]. To the authors' knowledge, more than 40 phone centres existed in Verona in 2006, including both phone centres and mixed businesses[79]. Two phone centres were closed following a considerable increase in the rental rate, which owners[80] could no longer afford, one gave up on phone centre services while continuing running the food store business. Unfortunately, no more precise data is available on the mortality rate of phone centres and on reasons for it.

According to narrative evidence they mostly closed due to business difficulties deriving from a combination of factors: the crisis of the sector, an increase in rental rates as well as the newly introduced regulations. As far as the latter are concerned, owners particularly complained about the consistent and unjustified[81] fines they have often had to pay and the choice they have had to make between the provision of Internet or telephone services[82]. All of these contributed to a considerable reduction in owners' income, thus obliging many of them to close down, as they could no longer afford to pay their rent, nor other bills. In Modena, the number of phone centres decreased from 39 (including both phone centres and mixed businesses), in 2006, to 17. Ten shops, that is to say almost a half of the shops that closed, chose to opt for the food store business. The other 12, that is to say approximately a third of all 39 shops, closed down.

The majority of phone centres are located in central parts of the city or close to it, as well as in areas where the percentage of immigrant residents is considerably higher with respect to the rest of town. This is hardly surprising if we consider im-migrants make up, by far,

[77] Narratives by owners and police officers alike confirmed that from less than ten they increased to over 50 in both cities, in the first years of the new millennium.
[78] Data for Verona dates back to May 2009, for Modena to January 2009.
[79] These include shops whereby phone centre services are associated with other services such as food store, dvd store, etc.)
[80] The expression phone centre-owner is used to refer to the owners of the actual activity, that is to say the licence to operate the business.
[81] An imprecise number of appeals by owners is still pending.
[82] Following the introduction of both regional and local regulations, phone centre-owners in Verona and Modena have had to choose what activity they would continue carrying out (see sections 6.2.2; 6.2.3)

the largest and most important share of customers. This is not to say that phone centres do not have other customers, on the contrary. Depending on the area where they are located, the customer base can change considerably: for phone centres located in university areas students are an important clientele, for those located in the centre of town it is tourists who substantially contribute to the business earning. It should also be noticed that phone centres often opened in parts of town whereby natives progressively abandoned their handicraft shops.

Phone centres are generally a family-run business that provides a living for one or more family units. The shops are managed almost entirely by immigrant residents[83]. Most of them have been in the country for a minimum of 6 years and have relevant work experience to date (see also Castagnone and Gasparetti 2008). The vast majority of owners in Modena come from Bangladesh, others come from India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Perù, Morocco. In Verona the majority come from Bangladesh, Senegal, Nigeria, a few of them come from Ghana, Pakistan, China. It should be also pointed out that while there were a few Italian owners in Verona till 2005, there is none left now. In Modena, on the contrary, there is still one.

Apart from a very few exceptions, particularly in Modena, owners are male. Various cases were also found in which it is their wives who actually run the shop on an everyday basis, while the former are employed in a second job. This might explain why Castagnone and Gasparetti (2008) identified a growing number of women as taking part in this business. As for their age, owners are between 25 and 40 years old.

Initially, phone centres' business centred around telephone and internet services only. Over the years, due to insisting requests by customers as well as an entrepreneurial attitude by owners, new services such as video rental and the sale of retail products, such as phone cards, food and drinks, handicraft goods, etc. were also introduced. Another vital service provided for by these shops is money transfer. Needless to say, most im-migrants regularly support their family in their country of origin by sending remittances [84](Abi and Cespi 2008). What is most interesting is that 52% of im-migrants prefer sending money through

83 In Verona, all of them are managed by immigrants,. In Modena two were managed by Italians, till last December, while now there is only one Italian owner.

84 Just to give a few data, in the period 2004-2006 10.9 billion euro were sent by immigrants in various countries. Remittances are a primary need for all immigrants irrespectively of their nationality: 78% of them send some to their country. On average they send about 1.900 euro per year and they keep sending money regardless of the number of years they have lived in Italy (Abi and Cespi 2008).

money transfer agencies – whose services are also operated by phone centres, while only 25% use informal channels and 23% banks.

Furthermore, many phone centres have started offering support - often free of charge - to fill in and translate paper and electronic documents relating to im-migrants' residence permits, family reunions or other types of bureaucratic procedures. It is worth noticing that while municipalities do have specific offices that carry out similar duties and offer support to im-migrants, they can hardly provide with an effective assistance due to the considerable amount of work they constantly have to cope with. Moreover, there is hardly any general service to help im-migrants when they first arrive in Italy (see also Camozzi 2009), with the partial exception of the Ufficio Stranieri, in Modena, and of various trade unions which mostly deals with residents permits strict.

In this sense, therefore, phone centres somehow substitute the Local Authority whereby it does not succeed in reaching out to all residents. This suggests some specific characteristics of phone centres might have evolved as a form of adaptation, of both owners and customers, with respect to practical needs, in a context that fails to address them sufficiently (Alietti and Agustoni 2009). Not to be underestimated is also the curious fact that some of these shops provide both (immigrant and native) residents and tourists with services that public spaces might be short of and yet might be essential, such as toilets.

Importantly, Broggi (2002) suggested that 'ethnic' entrepreneurial activities do not merely represent a job opportunity for im-migrants. They are also a vital resource which can favour the social and economic integration of both owners and their employees. In a way, they can be intended as a clear indication of the stability of the migration project (Zucchetti 2002). Ambrosini (2008), on this side, stressed the need to monitor the phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurship by suggesting the possibility for it to have an important political impact. Importantly, the ultimate aim of many owners was to redeem their right to be considered as legitimate citizens and to find a safer 'professional haven' for an easier renewal of their permit to stay[85] This is an alternative way for them to try and shrug off prejudices which present them as incapable of any professional achievement.

85 According to the requirements of Law 189/2002, known as Bossi-Fini, the permit to stay needs to be renewed every 5 years. One of the main problems lies in the fact that in order for it to be renewed applicants must have a job. At the same time, if their contract is over, they can hardly get one without a permit to stay. Interestingly, a short telephone interview with an officer of the Chamber of Commerce in Verona (March 18th 2010) revealed that most of the to-be phone centre-owners that asked him information on how to launch

The increasing diversification which has characterised the business of phone centres could have arguably been crucial for their survival. After an initial boom at the beginning of the new millennium, things have changed. Mobile operators introduced convenient international phone tariffs, thus causing a severe loss of profits in the past four to five years[86]. Global mobile-originated traffic grew from 28% of total originated traffic, in 2006, to 32%, in 2007. At the same time, computer voice communications have conquered a growing share in the international voice market: according to estimates, skype generated approximately 22 billion minutes of international skype-to-skype traffic, in 2007, and more than 31 billion minutes of traffic in 2008 (Telegeography 2008). This might be good news for phone centres, because their customers do not necessary have a personal computer at home.

Many observers agree in saying that the business of phone centres is bound to disappear over time, considering the severe competition they have been suffering from mobile operators and computer voice communications. Others believe that phone centres will still be crucial not so much for those who have migrated, but rather for their relatives at home. In fact, there are cases in which the latter do not have a telephone. Therefore, it becomes important for them to go to phone centres and to be able to arrange an appointment for their relatives to be called in a phone centre in the country of residence, so that the cost of the call can be cheaper. In my view, while phone centres are unlikely to be a dynamic entrepreneurial activity in themselves in the future, an interesting business opportunity might lie ahead for owners whereby they manage to rethink their business and to transform their shop into a multiservice centre for im-migrants. Additionally, I believe any international city needs to count on an easy access to Internet and ancillary services - such as photocopying, fax, etc. – and phone centres could occupy this niche market, as Internet point are already doing in some other countries, such as the UK and France.

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an entrepreneurial activity made it clear that they urgently needed to do so because their residence permit was expiring.

[86] Castagnone and Gasparetti (2008) observed the trend of phone centres in Turin. Similarly to trends in Verona and Modena, they noticed that the business has been undergoing a phase of decline, following the boom that was recorded in the period 2000-2006. National data confirm the trend too. More generally, a decrease of 33.6% was recorded in the telecommunication sector, which among other activities includes phone centres (Caritas 2007).

4.2.1 Can phone centres be considered as a public space?

Since the opening of phone centres, everyday cheap international telephone calls have served as a kind of '*social glue*' (Vertovec 2004) that accounts for one of the main sources of connection among a multiplicity of global social networks, in spite of the great array of communications options available to newcomers. They have represented one of the most significant (and yet under-researched) modes of transnational practice affecting newcomers' lives, by impacting on domestic and community life, inter-generational and gender relations, religious and cultural practices, as well as local economic development in both sending and receiving countries. In other words, transnational connectivity has been at the heart of their lives, in the measure that it has provided a form of sociality (Vertovec 2004).

As an owner in Modena reported:

'It is a place where caregivers often meet on their day off, where friends meet and chat (...) [and a place that] provides access to social networks: when newcomers first arrive they look for housing and job information and it is often here that they find them. (…). It is here that immigrants get help to fill in and translate their documents. It is here they find some comfort and reassurance' (December 9th 2008, Modena) *(extract 1 - appendices)*

The social function of phone centre emerged in all interviews undertaken with owners in both Modena and Verona. Interestingly, also local and police officers as well as policy-makers manifested an awareness in this sense. Contrary to the expectations of most observers and to trends in other countries (see for example Scopsi 2004 for France), individual shops are not always identified with a specific ethnicity. In most of cases immigrant customers choose to go to a given phone centre not because their fellow countrymen/women go there nor because the owner has the same ethnic origin. They rather choose the shop which is situated within walking distance from their house or workplace. At the same time, there are cases in which phone centres become an alternative meeting place for a specific group of im-migrants. For example, a phone centre in Modena has recently become well-known as the meeting place of caregivers. While for a number of years they used to meet in a nearby park, they started hanging around this phone centre, because they were growing tired of having the police inspecting them constantly. Not to be underestimated is the fact that this shop is not far from a local church where they generally attend services.

Another interesting example is that of a phone centre in Verona where im-migrants of different ethnic origin who shared their religious belief used to meet in a phone centre as

the owner provided them with a dedicated space for praying. This point to an apparent shortage of meeting spaces, as Vianello (2006) also noticed: when im-migrants cannot benefit from a sufficiently comfortable home space nor from adequate dedicated social spaces, they tend to hang around parks, public squares, as well as shops that offer specific services for them where they can meet fellow im-migrants. Unfortunately, the expression of similar forms of sociality has long been abandoned by Italian people. Unsurprisingly, similar behaviours are therefore not easily accepted as legitimate, as will be better discussed later, in spite of the fact they are well evident in other contexts, such as those of wi-fi coffee shops in the US[87].

While referring to the French case, and in particular to téléboutiques in the neighbourhood of Chateau-Rouge in Paris, Scopsi ((2004) argues it is regretful that associations and governments have not supported their development in this direction. Interestingly, policy-makers in Veneto and Emilia-Romagna have recalled this specific property of phone centres to explain that they can be understood as public spaces and ultimately to justify specific requirements they introduced in the regional and local normative frameworks to regulate them accordingly. I will come back to this point later.

It is not worth spending a few words to explore the concept of public space, as to frame the discussion that will be developed later. Phone centres are first and foremost a commercial, hence semi-private space. Their specific social function, however, make them resemble public spaces. When talking about public space, urban planners and sociologists typically refer to a 'city's street, its parks, its places of public accommodation. Public space tends to be defined in opposition to private space. The former is intended as the territory of strangers which is in principle accessible to anyone - even though it is difficult to make the argument that any space has ever held such a status; the latter is characterised by ties of intimacy and personal networks and access to it may be normally restricted on a legal basis (Lofland 1998).

It should be noticed that Oldenburg (1989) introduced a peculiar definition for specific spaces such as coffee shops, bookshops and hair salons. He defined them as '*semi-public*

[87] When reporting on an exploratory ethnographic study of how wi-fi was used and influenced social interactions in the various cities in the US cities, Hampton and Gupta (2008) found contrasting uses and competing implications for community. Two types of practices, typified in the behaviours of 'true mobiles' and 'placemakers', offer divergent futures for how wireless internet use may influence social relationships. In contrast to true mobiles, the primary activity of 'place makers' was 'not to engage in paid work.' They came to Wi-Fi coffee shops to 'hang-out.' For the place maker, the café was drawn by what one subject described as the 'inherently casual sociability' of the physical setting.

third spaces'. By using this expression he intended to differentiate them both from work and home spaces, while at the same time pointing to the important role they play in the social life of Americans. He also stressed on how they contrast with a restriction of the public sphere: among other things they can nourish relationships and social ties, they can help create a sense of place and community, they can promote companionship and most of all they can encourage sociability instead of isolation, while enriching public life and democracy. Similarly, Habermas (1989) recalled the social function of some places. It drew from French history, by looking at cafés in 1848 France, which Agulhon (1977) emphasised as a vital resources in the development of a public sphere for cultural and political debate[88]. If we investigate the contemporary literature on social movements, it is interesting to notice that we similarly come across what Poletta (1999) described as '*free spaces*', that is to say 'small scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups and which are voluntary participated in, while generating the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilisation' (1)[89].

Far from pushing the discussion as far as to state that phone centres are public spaces, semi-public third spaces or free spaces, which goes well beyond the scope of this thesis, I have recalled a few questions around the complex debate on the definition of spaces, which arguably will be useful to look at phone centres from a different angle than that of mere commercial spaces. In addition, this will help frame the discussion on the practices and meanings these places have come to embody. As various authors have pointed out, there has been a tendency to look at spaces from a normative perspective, that is to say what they should be like, as if an ideal space could be easily sketched out. The risk is of course for discussions to be constrained within mere analytical considerations.

Of course the main idea around public space remains that of keeping it as open as possible, but other questions should be addressed such as: who should manage it? Who should have the right to decide to what extend accessibility to it should be kept open or limited? Does it need to be somehow regulated? Spaces have no inherent property that makes them into a public space. They are not geographically rooted, they are '*not the consequence of some immutable*

[88] It was Agulhon (1977) who first revisited the relevant literature. He discussed they represented a certain stage in French history in the measure they can be associated with the modernisation of sociability. Cafés were mostly intended in opposition to bourgeois circles (we would call it a club but that term has been foreclosed by political associations). From the circle of courtiers which gathered around the monarch through the social intercourse of private salons they provided with a convenient meeting place where friends could associate. Most importantly they opened access to social practices which were generally reserved to a few, thus turning a private privilege into public convenience.

[89] The author drew from Evans' work (1979) '*Personal politics*'.

culturally or legally given designation' (Lofland 1998: 10). As such they breed no consensus. Whether they are considered as private, public, semi-public, etc. is always a matter of conflict and negotiation. Lofland (1998) and Sennett (2000) did highlight the fact that they are fluid, while at the same time acknowledging their characteristics are socially defined.

In other words, spaces do not exist outside actual actions, despite the fact they tend to be investigated within clear-cut diverging typologies. Any meaningful definition can only stem from an observation of actors themselves and their engagements within a given environment (Breviglieri and Trom 2003).

CHAPTER 5
THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF VERONA AND MODENA.

Modena and Verona have been traditionally associated with different political subcultures. The former has been associated with the '*red zone*', characterised by a local politics of an integrative type, whereby political parties are the engine of local political participation and the local government assumes an interventionist approach. The latter has been associated with the '*white zone*', characterised by a local politics of an aggregative type, whereby private solutions, based on predominantly catholic values, are emphasised, alongside an anti-state localism. The tendency has been that of limiting politics to essentially negative activities, such as the defence of property against the power of the national state, and to let the pressure of social demands fall onto a dense associational network (Messina 2001).

5.1 Verona

The Veneto Region was mostly governed by Christian Democrats for over 40 years. The party catalysed the catholic consensus in what can be described as a centre/periphery system made up of ecclesiastical hierarchies, lobbies, associations. They connected local actors to the national political élite by means of a privileged relationship (Franzina 1984, Diamanti 2003). At the beginning of the 1990s, the rules of the game changed. Following substantial transformations in productive classes and their interests, the withdrawal of the ecclesiastical support for the Catholics' main party, alongside various socio-economic transformations, it was increasingly hard for the party to support the requests of all its voters. Over time it lost ground, in terms of political representativeness. This became all the more evident with the entry and gradual success of new parties (Diamanti 2003).

In parallel with changes in party politics, local entrepreneurs have become more and more important political actors, with lobbying activities capable of influencing the existing equilibrium. They are not new protagonists of the political scene. They have traditionally promoted territorial interventions aimed at social control and the catalysation of consensus (Franzina 1990). Over the last decade they have come to represent an increasingly important electoral basis for the extreme-right party Lega Nord. The latter, on its side, has made a considerable effort to be increasingly present on the territory, through the opening of new local branches.

Another crucial actor can be identified with the Church. In fact, while its religious function has shrunk, it still holds a vital social role (Pace 2002). Together with trade unions it still fills the vacuum which is often left by local government agencies. The immigration policy field is a case in point. In this context, an ambivalent attitude has been prevailing, with local institutions stressing on the functionality of im-migrants as a labor force, while at the same time manifesting their preoccupation for the socio-cultural impact of migration. Ultimately, this has translated in interventions characterised by forms of solidarity, which are typical of the catholic approach, alongside forms of identitarian localism, which, particularly as far as the Lega Nord is concerned, have often assumed a xenophobic character (Dal Lago 1999).

Going back to party politics, a centre-right Forza Italia coalition appeared in Verona at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1994, it won the election with the candidate Mayor Michela Sironi (58% of votes)[1] who was re-elected in 1998 (58.3% of votes)[90]. During a centre-left Ulivo coalition spell[91], the extreme-right party Lega Nord started gaining consensus. The then Assessore Regionale alla Sanità was presented as its candidate for the 2007 elections. He won with 60.69% of votes. The new coalition opened up the way to an identitarian approach to local politics (see also Diamanti 1996) insisting on the fact that the native population should be the primary beneficiary of local policies:

'*Our guiding philosophy is clearly that of privileging the Italian citizens who live in Verona, which does not necessarily translate into an a priori form of ghettoisation of foreigners. We are interested in a concept which was already expressed in an editorial of the 'Corriere della Sera' written by Magdi Allam[92]. He writes: 'The models of social cohabitation in Europe have not failed because Muslims were not allowed to affirm their identity, but rather because they were not asked to respect the rules and share the values that constitute the basis of a common identity. The fault lies in the fact that Europe has a culture of rights but not a culture of duties and has merely lavished rights without demanding to comply with duties in return.'* [93]

The entire electoral campaign of the winning coalition, as well as the program that followed, was built on a securitarian stance. This represented a clear shift from the approach of the Mayor that governed the city from 2002 to 2007: the program of the then centre-left Ulivo coalition hardly made any specific reference to safety issues, if not in the

[90] All electoral data presented in this dissertation were retrieved from the website of the Ministry of Interior. Available at: http://amministrative.interno.it (Accessed on 5 June 2009).
[91] This represented an exception due to specific circumstances, whereby Michela Sironi, who had been governing the city in the previous mandate, decided to support the centre-left Ulivo candidate because she did not manage to find an agreement with the centre-right coalition that had been supporting her.
[92] Magdi Allam is an Egyptian journalist. A few years ago he obtained Italian citizenship. He converted from Islam to Roman Catholicism during the Vatican's 2008 Easter Vigil service presided over by Pope Benedict XVI. He is a political leader and he is particularly well-known in Italy for his criticism of Islamic Extremism, his defence of the Judeo-christian roots of Europe and the West, and his articles on the relations between Western culture and the Islamic world. Allam converted from Islam to Roman Catholicism.
[93] my translation

context of a larger social policy framework[94]. Since the new Mayor started his mandate, safety was officially defined as priority number one in both official documents[95] and in communication to residents[96].

Actions undertaken have included an increasing patrolling of the territory, in coordination with the local police and the military force, the improvement of the video surveillance system, the intensification of inspections and repression of street vendors. Furthermore, a number of ordinances and measures have been passed with the aim to tackle anti-social behaviour issues through a spatial control approach: unfriendly parch benches were installed, fines were introduced for customers to eradicate the phenomenon of street vendors and prostitutions, the consumption of drinks and food was forbidden in specific places, including first and foremost the areas around historical monuments.
Phone centres were also specifically indicated as a target of interventions:

'*This [promoting a culture whereby duties are complied with] is the goal we intend to achieve also through the constant monitoring of those gathering spaces - as kebab shops and phone centres – that can be considered at risk and that create that halo of negativity in public opinion.'* [97]

From this quotation it is evident that both kebab shops and phone centres are considered as places '*at risk*', without any specific reference to what is actually risky about them, and as places that '*can create a halo of negativity in public opinion*', without any specific reference to what should contribute to the creation of such a halo and to what characterises it in the first instance.
From being an unknown politician, the current Mayor of Verona has gained increasing visibility both in the press and on TV. Last year's opinion polls made him into the most beloved Mayor in Italy. Similar results were confirmed in this year's polls. He came to be very popular, nation-wide, for various anti-social behaviour ordinances he put forward, similarly to other colleagues in the north of Italy. Flavio Tosi is equally well-known for his

[94] A case in point is provided by the project '*Veronetta sicura*', which included a participatory project aimed at addressing residents' perceptions of unsafety.
[95] Comune di Verona, 2007. Linee programmatiche di governo per il quinquennio 2007-2012. Session 24th October 2007 n 79. Available at: http://portale.comune.verona.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=9229 accessed on January 10th 2009 [accessed on 1 January 2008].
[96] See for example Comune di Verona' Newsletter, March 2009.
[97] (my translation) 'E' questo l'obiettivo che intendiamo raggiungere, anche attraverso il costante controllo di quei centri di aggregazione - come laboratori di kebab e phone centre - che possono essere considerati a rischio e che creano quell'alone di negatività nell'opinione pubblica che poi reca danno, in primis, proprio a quegli extracomunitari regolari che invece hanno accettato un'integrazione totale (e quindi anche la consapevolezza che ci sono dei doveri) sul territorio italiano e veronese in particolare' (Comune di Verona 2007).

anti-immigrants attitude. As narrative evidence by a few lawyers testifies, ASGI[98] presented a few interrogations to the European Commission in relation to some of the policies he promoted. Moreover, in 2009, after a long trial, he was eventually found guilty, together with other representatives of the Lega Nord party, for instigation of racial hatred. Back in 2005, they led a discriminatory campaign aimed at expelling a group of Roma from town.

Not to be underestimated is the attitude he had towards the newly constituted Consulta degli Immigrati[99]. Upon the request of a few representatives to meet him, he refused to receive them, claiming the body is not representative of im-migrants. According to narratives, this strongly resulted in members losing hope, with the result that while the body is still in existence it does no longer operate.

5.2 Modena

Modena is one of the hotspots of the Italian Communist tradition. Since post-war times, this political party has been able to catalyse consensus, till very recently. The '*red political subculture*' has been in fact characterised by a considerable level of stability which explains how it resisted to the growing discontent that emerged in the 1990s (Diamanti 2003). The local branches set up by the Communist party had a crucial role in this sense, both from the political and the social point of view.

Since the 1980s, the local government started facing new challenges: from drug addiction, to an aging population, long-term unemployment and non-European immigration waves. Against these mutations, the governing party grew increasingly unprepared. It started loosing consensus, while new actors, that were previously unknown to the local political subculture, appeared on the scene. I am referring to catholic associations and neighbourhood committees.

In spite of these difficulties, Modena emerged as an example of a successful model: in 1996 the CNEL defined it as a 'national laboratory of migration policies'. Nonantola, a town situated in the provincial area of Modena, was the first Municipality, in 1994, to experiment

[98] Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione (Association for Judicial Studies on Immigration)
[99] A consultation body composed of representatives of immigrant communities that was set up in 2007 shortly before the last elections.

with the '*Consigliere Aggiunto*'[100] (De la Pierre 2004 cit. Barberis 2008). It might be hardly surprising to encounter such a scenario in what is known as the heart of the Communist tradition. In fact, left-wing parties are assumed to be particularly tolerant. According to Però (2007), however, there has been a reinforcement of ethnicism, over time, alongside the legitimating of exclusionary practices, whereby discourses by left-wing parties are not qualitative different from that of right-wing parties.

Immigration policies have certainly suffered from a fragmented approach as well as a considerable lack of coordination among actors (Giardini 2003). Trade unions have played an important role in this sense, by organising events on immigration and by urging local governments to do something about it (Aurighi 1997 cit. Barberis 2008). Something similar can be said for catholic associations, despite the fact the catholic subculture is not predominant in Modena. Towards the mid 1990s, political actors start regaining consensus. Nonetheless, the necessity to demonstrate an unchanged capacity by the Local Authority to govern and control the territory started translated into either symbolic or repressive forms of policies. It was then that urban safety entered the local political agenda. The shortage of adequates spaces for actors to give vent to their concerns resulted in chaotic forms of mobilisation. Urban safet committees represent an excellent example in this sense (Poletti 2003).

The electoral program of the centre-left Pds, Verdi, Patto dei democratici, Popolari coalition focused, among other issues, on safety. It recognised an increasing preoccupation on the side of institutions for the perception of unsafety manifested by citizens, thus insisting that many of the problems connected to urban unsafety are linked to a variety of issues relating to urban planning, maintenance, transport, social policies and the reception of foreign workers.

In 1995, in the attempt to respond to new emerging demands, the newly elected Mayor of Modena, approved the project '*Città Sicure*', with the aim of rethinking urban safety policies. It was the first time in Italy that a Consiglio Comunale created an urban safety partnership with the prefecture. Modena as a laboratory of urban safety policies.

[100] Some municipalities have given immigrants the possibility of electing a representative of their communities. This representative is known as 'Consigliere aggiunto'. He/she does not have any voting right, but is invited to municipal sessions and can express his/her opinions on any matter on agenda.

This first phase of urban safety policies was characterised by the adoption of an approach based on a mix of spatial control and mediation. Initiatives included the opening of an office responsible for the collection of their complaints, the introduction of community police officers to patrol the territory and of ordinances to contrast the phenomena of begging and prostitution. At the same time, the approach of the Consiglio Comunale stood in sharp contrast with that proposed by the oppositional party Lega Nord which proposed, for example, the patrolling of the territory by the military force, as the Mayor stated (Pighi 2006).

With the beginning of the new millennium, the Mayor started focusing more on the latter and on situational prevention. In 2004, a new mayor was elected (63.8% of votes), with the support of the same coalition. He continued operating along the lines of his predecessor, with an increasing pressure from oppositional parties, particularly as far as urban safety is concerned. He was eventually re-elected in April 2009 (50.10% of votes).

CHAPTER 6
THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK OF PHONE CENTRES BETWEEN REGULATION AND POLITICS.

6.1 The emergence of phone centres trouble.

6.1.1 Narratives: residents, police officers, policy-makers and phone centre-owners.

Any analysis of a '*public problem*' (Cefaï 1996) can only start with the investigation of of a problematic situation (Dewey 1927 cit. Cefaï 2002), which can relate to various factors as highlithted above (see note...)

The narrative of actors can help sketching out a first picture of the situation. As confirmed by residents, policemen and local officers alike, the trouble with phone centres gradually emerged through residents' complaints. The latter mostly pointed to the disturbance caused by groups of newcomers hanging around these shops:

'*There are groups of jobless idler immigrants who constantly hang around phone centres and talk very loud. They indulge in drinking alcohol, they abandon empty bottles on the pavement and they often use the latter as a toilet (...) and, maybe, they even carry out illegal stuff, such as drug dealing.*' (resident, July 2nd 2008, Verona) *(extract 2 - appendices)*

*'Every night they group up there, they piss in people's garden, they leave beer bottles on the pavement, they listen to loud music. (…) Many undocumented hang around here, particularly those who used to hang around the park, until the police started inspecting it regularly.' (*resident, December 4th 2008, Modena) *(extract 3 - appendices)*

From the extracts it is evident that interpretations are closely linked to a grammar of '*irregularity*'[101]. In this first extract, the interviewee stresses on the (alleged) irregular employment status of im-migrants gathering outside phone centres. He describes (what he perceives as) '*deviant*' activities, possibly with respect to an accepted '*moral order*' (Durkheim 1963), similarly to the interviewee of the second extract. The former also suggests newcomers might carry out '*illegal*' forms of business, without providing with any proof in this sense. In general, both interviews recalled Bifulco (2000), when stressing that

[101] The concept of grammar has been adopted by various social scientists with different purposes. Here the notion refers to situations in which common rules are made explicit and institutionalized, as Boltanski and Thévenot (1991) would say. In other words, according to the GSPM, a grammar is a set of rules that need to be following in order to act in a way which can be considered as sufficiently legitimate in the eyes of third parties. This idea clearly underlines the fact that depending on the individual acting and on the situation in which she/he acts, the level of legitimacy can apply.

residents, at times, draw borders to 'cut off' the '*illegal*' from the '*legal*' city. Clearly, notions of legality, illegality as well as irregularity can be associated mostly with residents' perception. Furthermore, they are not necessarily linked to specific activities in themselves, but rather to the actual subjects that carry them out.

Various police officers and policy-makers[102] confirmed that a considerable number of residents sent them letters or called them to complain on disturbances caused by the so-called '*bar fracassoni*'[103] where (mostly) young native people hang around, particularly in the week-end. This suggests that residents' claims can be hardly justified in light of a progressive diversification in the use of urban space (Martinotti 1993). In fact, young people tend to meet, chat and drink outside pubs in the same way that im-migrants do in front of phone centres.

When specifically asked about them, residents could easily recall youngsters hanging around pubs until very late at night, drinking and talking loudly and they did complain about them being very noisy. This is particularly true for Veronese residents living in Veronetta and for Modenese ones living around the area of Via Gallucci. It should be specified that Veronetta is a neighbourhood just off the centre of Verona. The main site of the university campus is situated here. At the same time, over the past decade, the neighbourhood has been renamed as '*Negronetta*', due to its high concentration of immigrant residents and the high visibility of immigrant shops[104]. As for Via Gallucci this is an area just off the centre of Modena which has become well-known as the centre of the Modenese *movida*. Im-migrants opened some food stores in the area, even though the highest concentration of shops, according to narrative evidence, is in the centre of town. Against this background, it is worth saying that complaints about disturbance by the bar fracassoni, in both areas, have increased considerably over time and are still ongoing.
On the contrary, complaints about phone centres have decreased over the past year[105]. Interestingly, in the case of Modena, some of the letters of complaint sent to the local

[102] See for example (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008,Verona; Local Police Inspector in Modena, April 24th 2009)
[103] This is a popular expression to refer to pubs and local cafès that tend to be very noisy.
[104] According to the most recent data, the neighbourhood has the highest absolute percentage of immigrant residents in town (Comune di Verona 2007) and, according to narrative evidence, the highest concentration of immigrant businesses. Interestingly, however, the highest relative percentage of immigrant residents was recorded in the neighbourhood of Borgo Trento (ibidem), where newcomers, as workers, are relatively invisible: this is the neighbourhood in which a lot of caregivers work.
[105] In the case of Verona, complaints decreased both in the city in general and in Veronetta, over the past

police office and the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana[106] include medical certificates[107] that testify how much residents have been suffering from disturbances. Yet, no grammar of irregularity was made explicit in any of them as far as (regular) customers' behaviour is concerned. Additionally, it is only im-migrants, and phone centres in particular, that seem to stir up forms of '*moral panic*' (Dal Lago 1998, Palidda 1998, Maneri 2001), as testified by the press review that will be introduced later.

Another issue was raised by the second interviewee: the alleged presence of undocumented in and around phone centres. It was not clear how this translated into an actual problem for residents. The interviewee waffled around when asked about it and ended up saying: '*Well, there is plenty of them everywhere in town and they are not supposed to be in the country at all!*'[108] While undocumented cannot be identified by residents, unless they personally know them - nor by police forces unless they ask them for a document! - , their alleged presence is perceived as rather threatening. This has carried with it a number of non-negligible consequences, as we will see later. For the time being it suffices to say that a particular attention on undocumented has grown out of what has come to be a well-established urban safety '*frame*' (Snow and Benford 1988) which has been spreading over the country over recent years.

In the words of a shopkeeper, in Verona, and of a resident, in Modena, the actual concentration of phone centres is a crucial variable that makes them problematic.

'*I have been accused of being racist (…) but I think that Veronetta is a beautiful neighbourhood and I would like it to be always beautiful! When we wander around a neighbourhood we always watch around at 'eye level', therefore what we see are the shops located on the ground floor and it is important that they present themselves well. The same should apply for the shops of immigrants. And then it should be avoided to have all their shops clustered together in the same area so that problems would be solved in the first place.*' (shopkeeper, May 28th 2009, Verona) *(extract 5 - appendices)*

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decade (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona). In Modena they have decreased considerably in general, while only a few complaints have been put forward over the past years for immigrant shops located in the area of Via Gallucci, as suggested by the Local Police Inspector in Modena (April 24th 2009).

[106] A non-systematic analysis of complaint letters received by the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana was carried out for the period June 2005- December 2009). For more information on the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana see glossary.

[107] This emerged explicitly in a legal motion presented by a resident, in the name of a group of residents of Via Gallucci, to the Municipality of Modena. In the motion the resident asked the mayor : to review and, if necessary, modify or withdraw the commercial licence delivered to (some of) the pubs, to anticipate their closing time, to apply fines if they do not respect the Municipalities' prescriptions (reference to which will not be made in respect of privacy)

[108] (resident, December 4th 2008, Verona) (extract 4 - appendices)

'*I cannot understand how you can have three phone centres so close to each other, particularly if you consider the number of immigrants living in this area. There are three apartment buildings full [of them], but I cannot understand why there are two phone centres and then another one close to them. (…) All of them have been somehow problematic anyway. Many Moldovians go the the one in Via (…), which is situated in rather hidden spot, therefore unless the police passes by… there … They actually stay there, they do whatever they please and whoever lives there is not very happy. (…) And then the problem is alcohol, alcohol, alcohol… they drink so much*! *The police should come round much more often!'* (resident, December 12th 2008, Modena) *(extract 6 - appendices)*

Apart from arguing that phone centres should not concentrate in a given area, the second interviewee focuses on blaming their customers for shameful behaviour, as other residents did. While his complaints were rather general all throughout the interview, in this extract he points to a specific deviant behaviour, drinking alchol, and he associates with a specific ethnic group: Moldovians - narrative evidence by both native and immigrant residents (of other ethnic origins) provided with similar comments. He also proposed a solution: an increased presence of the police so that the territory can be patrolled.

The first interviewee is a woman who has been the (informal) representative of shopkeepers in Veronetta where, as I anticipated above, phone centres[109] and shops are particularly visible. She did insist on issues relating to '*aesthetic acceptability*' (Millie 2008). Furthermore, during the interview, she suggested im-migrants need to be taught how to behave, while explaining how she has been trying to do her part in this sense. For example, she proudly admitted she had been advising the owner of a halal butcher's as well as the the owners of other shops close to her's on how to keep them more clean and make them more welcoming and inviting for potential customers. Arguably, such a '*pedagogic attitude*' (Alietti and Agustoni 2009) can be understood as the (sometimes paternalistc) willingness of a native to teach im-migrants how they should behave in the host country.

For some residents it is not only a question of teaching them how to behave, nor of calling the police. They should rather respect laws in the first place, as the Italian 'counter-parties' do:

'*The problem is that they need to respect the law… and the same applies to kebab shops! Either they sell one thing or another. They cannot sell alcoholic drinks in a phone centre and maybe even open an hairdresser's in the basement. This is a general rule for everyone: when there is a law it must be respected (…). The first rule one needs to comply with to live in any country and be accepted is to accept rules unless he/she wants to be marginalised. No Vodaphone nor Tim*[110] *shop would ever even dream of selling beer or doing drug dealing or launching a hairdresser's service in their shop! In phone centres it happens instead! Before claiming any right, duties must be respected….*' (resident and Consigliere of the Circoscrizione, November 30th 2009, Verona) *(extract 7 - appendices)*

[109] The majority of phone centres in town were and are still concentrated in this area.
[110] Both Vodaphone and Tim are mobile operators.

In spite of the evidence provided, after reading the above extracts, we might still be tempted to think that there are some peculiarities that make phone centre particularly troublesome. To be fair the femal shopkeeper whose narrative was reported above did refer to other immigrant shops to report on similar problems and other interviewees reported on kebab shops as being equally problematic. Let's see what the Vice Comandante of the Local Police of Verona said in this regard:

'*Safety, the fight against unsafety and decay (…) it is in this perspective, I would say (…) that these shops are brought to our attention [phone centres]. They are brought to our attention because they opened in spaces that were left empty, they replaced small [hand craft] shops that were no longer attractive because in the meantime supermarkets spread (…). These are fragile urban contexts because these shops might open in an apartment building [on the ground floor] (…) and then spaces are limited, narrow, people gather outside and a place where people go to make a phone call becomes a meeting place because people [immigrants] meet there in the evening, at the end of their working day (…). I do suppose there are a lot of extracomunitari*[111] *that are excellent people, in spite of a good part of statistics demonstrating there is also criminals among them (…) but among a 100 quiet customers (…) there comes even a drunk one who lives in poor conditionsand drinks even more than we [native] do and then maybe he even stops in front of the apartment building, there comes a young 18 years old girl, in the evening, I mean… there are situations that, if we talk about perceived unsafety, have created a considerable level of tension.'* (November 21st 2008, Verona) *(extract 8 - appendices)*

According to this officer, (some) phone centres are located in what can be defined as 'fragile' locations. This helps us understand a bit more what can make them problematic: customers that hang around till late at night, while chatting and drinking, can be indeed the source of considerable disturbance in residential areas. It should also be recalled, however, that phone centres were often opened in shops sold by natives, in cases in which their handicraft activity was not remunerative anymore: while these locations might have not been effectively the best to prevent disturbances, the Local Authority in Verona - as the one in Modena - failed to take this issue into due consideration, alongside problems it might cause and invariably delivered them an authorisation to open the shop. A similar case was reported for Via Sarpi in Milan (Cologna 2008), where a failure on the side of the Municipality to address urban planning and traffic issues, when Chinese shops first opened, contributed to the emergence of a conflict which, among other things, was apparently caused by its lassez-faire attitude.

The Veronese police officer also insisted that im-migrants are particularly noisy, at least as far as residents' perceptions are involved. When looking at actual data provided by the

[111] This is a popular expression used to refer to non-European immigrants. It was first used in legal terms with the aim to refer to immigrants coming from outside the EU. Over time however the term has spread in popular language and has come to acquire a negative meaning.

Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana (2009) for the period 2004-2009 some very interesting remarks can be made in this sense. I will come back to this in section 6.1.2.

The next extract reminds us that the 'affair of phone centres' stretched well over the election period. Unsurprisingly, this carried with it some consequences, which are particularly evident in the case of Verona, as will be shown later. As for Modena, the officer whose narrative was introduced above admitted that news on phone centres have fuelled forms of alarm, whereby their presence is described as rather problematic:

'*Now that the election period has started anything can be used in a direction or another, the perceptions reported in the press are very confusing and then they create forms of alarm (…). For the time being we are not having major difficulties [with phone centres]. In some parts of town there is a higher concentration and we have some problems but we are still in what can be pretty considered as an ordinary situation (…). In this very moment we are receiving some complaints for phone centres located in very critical positions (…) Their location is crucial! In this street (…) [recalling a specific case] they had the brilliant idea to open a phone centre in the open hall of an apartment building… it is situated under three apartment buildings characterised by a high density of immigrant residents: this phone centre manages to create problems even when it is closed!*' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena) *(extract 9 - appendices)*

So far we have focussed on the narratives of residents, shop keepers and police officers, by highlighting the problematic aspects of phone centres – and in some cases of immigrant shops in general. What do phone centre-owners think about the troubles they themselves are described as being responsible for? The majority of them are indeed aware of these narratives, to start with.

'Some years ago when phone centres were first opened, they also represented a meeting point (…) now it is different and anyway we have tried to make sure it would be like this. I have tried to manage this activity while avoiding to have too many people hanging around, considering what happened to me [she got a fine because undocumented immigrants were found in her shop] … and anyway I do not like when people group up because then there is mess and people living upstairs complain for disturbance, therefore the more quickly they [customers] leave the shop the better it is so that problems with neighbours can be prevented because in Modena it is neighbours that have mostly blamed these activities. In Modena, where safety committees have been created, ethnic shops and phone centres have been 'destroyed'. We [the actual interviewee who is the owner of the shop she is talking about and her employee] have never had any such problem. Initially, when the people who live in the apartment building [above the shop] found out that a phone centre would open here, I found out in an indirect way - I was not told directly – that they organised a meeting to discuss on what was to be done in this regards. But then when they found out I am Italian (…) they have actually done nothing (…). We try and do our best to make sure that the neighbours do not complain. We clean up papers left from phone top-up-cards and we do our best to ensure everything is quiet and to avoid creating any problem because we do understand them [the neighbours]….' (phone centre-owner, November 18th, Modena) *(extract 10 - appendices)*

'It is Arabs and Moroccans and Tunisians that create problems in phone centres and because of them the Municipality has introduced a regulation. And anyway phone centres are not always problematic, it also depends on their location. The Municipality should find an agreement with phone centre-owners and ask them to report to them if there is any problem. It should not punish the owners because we are not policemen! Cafés and pubs also have problems but the Municipality does not do anything about them. They distinguish between immigrants and Italians

and this is why all this happens! And this is not only in Modena but also in Italy!' (phone centre-owner, December 11th, Modena) *(extract 11 - appendices)*

In the first extract, the phone centre-owner, one of the Italians that opened such a shop in Modena[112], recalled the social function of phone centres. She stressed that while they were a meeting point when they first opened, they are no longer so due to a number of factors including also the fact that they, at least as far as her employees and herself are concerned, try and make sure that people do not stop outside after leaving the shop. This points to an evolution in the nature of phone centres, as further evidence will show later. At the same time she argued these specific shops have been 'destroyed', referring to the fact they have been the target of insisting complaints by residents and safety committees which ultimately affecting the business in a number of negative ways, exception made for her, being an Italian.

Interestingly, in the second extract this owner provides with a suggestion on how to deal with complaints. Most importantly, he called for the Municipality to collaborate with them. In general, various interviewees have confirmed over time their readiness to confront the Municipality and to find possible solutions to cope with complaints. Another interesting remark to be made relates to the fact that this interviewee blames specific ethnic communities for disturbance, similarly to some of his colleagues in Verona. Even though it is an im-migrant who speaks here, his narrative recalls those of other native residents who, as reported in the some of the above extracts, adopted a grammar of irregularity. A similar comment was made by the owner of one of the few Internet points[113] in Modena. He expressed his intention to discuss with the Mayor how they could possibly regulate phone centres while leaving along Internet points, since it is only the former that are a source of trouble. In fact, the Municipality passed a specific regulation for phone centres and Internet point, which will be introduced later.

Having said this, a number of residents that I met during my field research were rather surprised when I asked them specific questions about phone centres. Some of them live close to a phone centre and have not experienced any problem, others do not have any phone centre close to them and do not necessarily have a negative perception about them, regardless of press coverage on these businesses. In other words, dynamics of co-habitation

[112] Since December 2009 she is the only Italian left in the business in Modena.
[113] Internet points are shops that provide with Internet access. Differently from phone centres they are generally managed by Italians and they do not share the same characteristics of phone centres (for example they have never really been meeting points).

(with phone centres) have not been merely negative. Furthermore, in some cases it is a specific category of residents that have particularly pointed to phone centres to describe them as a cause of disturbance. I am referring to (native) shopkeepers, as both owners in Verona and Modena suggested. In their opinion, police officers have been repeatedly asked to carry out inspections:

'There are some people [neighbours and shopkeepers] close to me [to my shop] that feel uncomfortable hence they call for police inspections. They say the shop is a source of disturbance because immigrants arrive here. I have told them that: 'it's OK, it is not only here that they arrive, but all throughout the country. But these people have made a bit of mess. They always call the local police. It is because of them that they come around for inspections. I have explained them that I send away all the customers that do not behave well, I have explained it to them two or three times but they do not want to understand it. Of course it is not all of them, but only a few.' (phone centre-owner, December 2nd 2008, Modena) *(extract 12 - appendices)*

Later in the interview, after the voice recorder had been switched off, the owner provided me with one of the possible explanations why shopkeepers and residents repeatedly called for police inspections, as other owners in Verona did: '*They think phone centres are under-regulated, with special opening hours.*'[114] Confrontations with shopkeepers highlighted in turn another aspect: these immigrant shops have stirred up forms of mistrust because they offer a whole mix of services, including the transfer of large amounts of money (see also Castagnone and Gasparetti 2008). Furthermore, they can hardly believe they have managed to survive in spite of the fierce competition of mobile operators.

I do believe that there has been more to residents' complaints than a mere expression of the frustrations of irrational or even racist actors. The evidence above has showed it clearly that difficulties of cohabitation are undeniable and should be taken seriously as such. A few more remarks should be made in this sense. A first superficial analysis suggested that residents' claims were circumscribed to the (undesired) '*public visibility*' (Debauge 2003) of im-migrants. In fact, they go well beyond it. They actually revolve around the definition of a '*common good*' (Thévenot and Bolstanki, 1991), the neighbourhood.

Most residents described their neighbourhood as a space requiring '*discretion and sobriety*' (Pharo 2001). On the contrary, im-migrants have often appropriated it in a way that was identified as deviant, thus highlighting their '*irreconcilably different ways of living*' (Breviglieri, 2007), while producing a sense of discontinuity clashing with what they what had been perceiving as a '*familiar and predictable*' (Kearns and Parkinson 2001) space. To be more precise, what residents feel 'under attack' here is quietness and emptiness in what is

[114] (phone centre owner, November 17th 2008, Verona) (extract 13 - appendices)

understood as a public space - I am referring to the area/street immediately outside phone centres. This suggests the trouble emerged out of a competition over a certain use of that space (Park et. al. 1925), whereby only one was considered as legitimate and it was not that of newcomers. The reasons attached to such an interpretation remain a bit unclear. They would deserve further research to shed light on why natives have such perceptions. This is all the more true if we consider that similar habits were rather popular among Italians till a few decades ago, before a progressive 'retreat' from public space became evident, with the result that less and less people seem to be hanging around in streets, with the exception, maybe, of youngsters. In this context, it equally seems paradoxical in light of the fact that 'peopled' places are generally claimed to be safety places, as a human presence in public spaces is reassuring for many people, and the presence and activity of latter will often attract more.

6.1.2 Between (hard) data and perceptions[115].

Since 2005, the Modenese Municipality has been carrying out a project consisting in the development and implementation of a survey and monitoring system aimed to the management of urban conflicts. Over the year, this has become a veritable governance tool which has helped the Municipality deal with relating issues[116]. Constant monitoring activities helped the Municipality identify a range of conflicts as characterising urban life in Modena. The three main types are the following: conflicts relating to youngsters, '*pubblici esercizi*' (a term mostly used for pubs, cafés, restaurants and hotels) and immigrant shops/clubs.

It was in 2006 that the highest number of conflicts was recorded. In the following years, all types of conflicts gradually slowed down. If we now look at statistics, for the period 2005-

[115] All data reported next, as far as the Modenese context is concerned, draw from the following documents published by the Municipality of Modena, in collaboration with the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana: *Dall' Ordine Pubblico all'Ordine nel Pubblico* (2006), *Le politiche di sicurezza urbana a Modena 2004-2009* (2009).

[116] The project was titled 'Dall'ordine pubblico all'ordine nel pubblico', it lasted for three years to be completed at the end of October 2006 and it has been co-financed by the Emilia-Romagna Region.The idea grew out of the awareness that many complaints were being reported to a number of municipal offices in relation to various types of conflicts. Against this background, the need was felt for a coordinated and inter-sectorial intervention involving all the relevant actors, including administrative wards, the Local Police, the Infobus (a service introduced to development contacts between municipal offices and young people), Punto d'Accordo (an office dealing with conflicts mediation), the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Ubana and residents. As indicated in the relevant publication, the main objectives of this project were the following: to carry out an analysis of the contingent and structural cause of conflicts in order to identify the needs of all relevant actors/groups and to define diversified types of intervention with the ultimate scope to overcome contentious situations; to develop survey tools and tools for the analysis of such phenomena; to activate projects that would contribute to relevant actors in taking up responsibility for the management and resolution of conflicts and to encourage them to test and consolidate an adequate methodology in this sense.

2008, conflicts relating to youngsters amount to 53% of the total, followed by those relating to pubblici esercizi (32%) and, in a minor percentage, phone centres and immigrant shops (15%). These data clearly demonstrate that while phone centres – and immigrant shops in general – have indeed represented a source of conflict, they have by no means represented the main one, nor, arguably, an alarming one, at least as far as both absolute and relative percentages can testify.

In particular, as far as the former, conflicts relating to youngsters, are concerned, the trend shows a considerable decrease over the years. Conflicts relating to phone centres and immigrant shops/clubs peaked in 2006 and 2007, but decreased considerably in the following year, with figures resembling those recorded in 2005. According to the interpretation given by the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana, this can be mostly understood as an impact of the local regulation. More information about this later. Conflicts relating to pubblici esercizi, on their side, increased in 2006. Two years later, in 2008, another slight increase was recorded, with respect to the previous year.

It has already been stressed that safety perceptions can actually play a more crucial role than the crimes themselves in terms of fostering residents' fears and the resulting complaints. In this sense, it is interesting to look at the data provided by the Municipality as it emerged from opinion surveys, whereby specific questions were asked to seize residents' perceptions of urban conflicts[117].

Apparently, perceptions of conflicts attributable to youngsters decreased from 28.5% in 2003 to 19.4% in 2008 - with a considerable drop in 2006 (21.5%);t hose attributable to pubblici esercizi decreased from 22.9% in 2003 to 21.7% in 2008 - with a considerable drop in 2006 (15.2%). Finally, perceptions of conflicts attributable to immigrant shops increased from 47% in 2003 to 51% in 2008, with a considerable increase of 10 percentage points from 2007 to 2008. In general, residents perceive conflicts as relating mostly to immigrant shops. 'Hard data' - as reported above – seems to be discordant.

Zooming on conflicts attributed to immigrant shops, it emerges that, in the period 2005-2008, 69% of complaints were made on phone centres, 28% on (other) immigrant shops and 3% immigrant clubs, thus pointing to the fact that phone centres have been identified

[117] Surveys have been carried out, every year, in the month of December, since 1996. They consist of semi-structured telephone interviews for a total sample of 1000 residents.

as particularly problematic, as partly confirmed by interviewees during the fieldwork. At the same time, problems associated with phone centres seem to be a relatively recent phenomena that actually 'faded off' rather quickly.

The most problematic issues raised by residents relate to the presence of regular customers hanging around outside shops thus causing noise (51%), to acts of vandalism (45%). A remaining 4% is represented by problems connected with public order or commercial shops' commercial license. In other words, data confirm what emerged from the fieldwork: problems mostly relate to people meeting outside, to the supply of alcoholic drinks and drug abuse. Complaints equally report on noise and forms of discomfort deriving from people's gathering, stopping in the middle of the street and parking. The latter in turn are said to produce a strong sense of unsafety as residents feel illegal activities might be carried out in the area.

It is worth stressing on a few other points, by comparing data with that of esercizi pubblici. The largest percentage of problems relating to the latter point to noise and disturbance (75%), while 25% of complaints reported on acts of vandalismo. Interestingly, 18% of all complaints relate to administrative problems, such as the (alleged) irregularity of commercial licenses instead. This curiously suggests that residents' have a much higher perception of irregularity among pubblici esercizi than immigrant shops and clubs. The latter seem to be much more a cause of concern as far as problems associated with esercizi pubblici are concerned.

No precise data could be collected either through the Local Police or the Municipality of Verona as far as residents' complaints are concerned. However, when explicitly asked about it, both the Vice Comandante of the Local Police and the Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona pointed to the fact that some of the most frequent complaints relate to the so-called 'bar fracassoni'. At the same time they stressed that while relevant problems are similar to those lamented for phone centres, the bar fracassoni are by far more problematic:

'*The problem connected to disturbance comes from phone centres but they are certainly less troublesome than the bar fracassoni. (…) The difference possibly relates also to the fact they are somehow related to something which is unknown, to foreigners, because the regular customers of phone centres are more worrisome (…) because maybe foreigners are not dressed well, I mean, to be honest… they have different features but phone centres are among those activities that can contribute to creating phenomena of disturbance, accidents, unless they are sited within adequate*

premises. But bar fracassoni do not cause any less trouble.' (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona) *(extract 14 - appendices)*

'*We have received no complaints about phone centres to be honest. We receive a lot on bar fracassoni. Residents contact us. Some have complained about some hand craft activities, such as kebab shops and 'piadinerie'. In any case phone centre-owners are very much careful with their customers as they know they are a target of inspections*.'(Dirigente C.d.R. Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona, February 3rd 2010) *(extract 15 - appendices)*

From the first extract, it is evident that, in the opinion of the Vice Comandante of the Local Police, phone centres are mostly perceived as problematic because of the presence of foreigners. The Dirigente C.d.R. Commercio e Attività Produttive, on her side, stresses that the great majority of complaints that have been sent to her office in the past few years relate to bar fracassoni, while a few residents have reported on kebab shop and 'piadinerie' too[118]. She also argues that phone centre-owners are more careful with their customers as they know that are at the centre of the Local Police's attention.

Unfortunately, the rich variety of longitudinal data collected in Modena is not available for the Veronese context. To my knowledge[119], almost no data has been collected at all in the last decade, as far as contentious episodes and relating perceptions are concerned, with one exception. I am referring to data retrieved, from a limited number of interviews with residents, as part of specific projects coordinated by the Studio Guglielma, a local social co-operative. In particular, a research project and an action research project were carried out in Veronetta, in 2003 and 2005. Both were promoted by the Municipality of Verona (by the centre-left coalition whose mandate ended in 2007 before the election of the current Mayor). They focused specifically on neighbourhood needs and on safety issues. It suffices to say that the research work undertaken in 2003, highlighted a few interesting aspects. Findings mostly confirmed the narratives reported in the previous section. Various long-term residents insisted that too much attention has been placed onto alleged problems caused by the presence of im-migrants, to the detriment of other issues, relating to the neighbourhood in general, that in turn have been scarcely taken into consideration. For example, one of the issues which has been barely dealt with is the increasing perceived worsening of young people's and students' behaviour when hanging around pubs in the evenings.

[118] Small take-away food stores which sells 'piadine', a special type of Italian flatbread
[119] This was also confirmed by interviews with various police bodies members and by narrative evidence provided by political actors that also work in the third sector in projects relating to immigration and social policy.

A few months ago, on January 21st 2010, I had the opportunity to interview the Comandante of the Local Police. This was very enlightening in a number of ways. Interestingly, it showed the importance that the Local Police attaches to residents' perceptions, in general. Thus the remaining of this section will be mostly built on information gathered during this interview. It should be specified that the Comandante has been occupying this position for five years. Prior to 2005, he worked as Vicequestore Aggiunto di Polizia[120]. Therefore, he can reasonably be considered as a privileged witness as far as safety issues in the Veronese context are concerned.

'*I believe this city is 'assetata di sicurezza' (this city is really looking for safety) and with this term I refer to the fact that, but in this sense I would need to talk for a week to explain what I mean exactly, I refer to the concept of perception (…). 'Assetata di sicurezza' not in a negative sense, but in the sense that they perceive it as a priority. Safety is not only about urban safety, it is also about road safety, it is about safety in the workplace.* (…) *If I did not respond to any request I do not think residents would ask for my help [not only because they would not know whom to contact] but also because this Municipal Administration tells me: 'You must solve this problem, if you do it well we must tell residents how we have solved it (…) if you do not manage to solve it you must tell me why you have not solved it. We are working a lot because this is a concept that I like… [that of perception]. I often speak with my staff and I tell them that even residents reporting on a broken bench or on grass that needs mowing in parks are important, as it is the neighbourhood committee that asks to install a CCTV camera. In fact, over time I have observed that if I get the grass cut (…) that problem will be solved and residents will be grateful (…). Their perception is really important because if you look at data on criminality it might emerge that no snatch nor any other type of crime has been committeed.(…) But 'safety' is often connected to press news. Why do residents have an higher perception of unsafety in comparison to twenty years ago? At that time, there were now news on TV which reported 50% of information on… this person was snatched, here a robbery was carried out! At that time news reported on current events, they were presented by the local reporter but they were not reported by the most popular national newspapers. News were about politics or cultural issues. Now it is all about current events and in every part of the country, but especially in the North, when a negative piece of news is published residents start believing that in that territory or in that urban or peripherical area there is a safety problem.*' (Comandante of the Local Police, January 21st 2010, Verona) *(extract 16 - appendices)*

The Comandante seems to take residents' perceptions very seriously. He clearly demonstrates an awareness of how they build up. Most interestingly, he stresses on the (negative) role of the press. At the same time, he insists on the importance of communicating residents when a problem is solved. As he explained later in the interview, a specific office was created, as part of the the Local Police structure, to deal with 'External Relations' that is to say all types of information that should be communicated 'outside' either to residents and other actors or the press, so that the Local Police can generate rather than be subjected to news. Interestingly, while communicating that 'something has been done' should in principle 'calm residents down', similar operations might in fact work in the opposite direction.

[120] This is a title used within the National Police. It corresponds to the military rank of lieutenant-colonel.

As the narrative evidence showed, residents' perceptions do not necessarily benefit from being constantly informed by the Local Police. In fact, the mere fact that they do a job, it makes them feel that something needed doing and possibly still needs their intervention. Additionally, as the Comandante says, residents in Verona are '*assetati di sicurezza*', they know that safety is a priority issue, they are becoming accustomed to hearing something about it once the job has been done. Paradoxically, as a result, it is more likely for them to put forward requests accordingly, as they believe they will somehow be addressed.

How does the Local Police retrieve information on residents' perceptions? As the Comandante reported, everyday direct contacts with them provide with the best source of information and they have plenty of channels in this sense:

'We have various forms of communication [direct communication with residents] including a website and an email inbox which is always active, then we have a telephone number with an automatic answering machine, actually an Operational Unit which functions on a 24h basis (…) which is a very good tool that gives us the possibility of helping our operators. The communication channel which is mostly used is the telephone. People call our green number. Then we have a front officer where about a hundred people come every morning. If we didn't have all the other channels it would be hard for us to manage all of this! (…) We have the URP office that works well, actually it works even too well because they send us a lot of requests. (…) And then we talk to many other actors and we are happy about this. I do really believe in networks And I am not just talking about institutional networks, but about other actors that operate on the territory too. Therefore we talk to associations, to workers unions, etc.' (ibidem) *(extract 17 - appendices)*

When I asked whether things have changed since the arrival of the new Mayor the answer was 'absolutely yes!' Since this new Mayor took up office, he is directly responsible for urban safety and people have noticed it indeed:

'*The Mayor created his own Secretary and they send us anything which is relevant for our work and he expects requests to be dealt with. One of the strengths of this Mayor is that of responding to requests (…) by fax, email, SMS, he generally gives at least a quick response. (…) I mean, it is no longer as before when [with the previous Municipal Administration] residents used to say: 'I have received no reply anymore, they do not care. (…) 'I think we have even too many channels. (…) residents call here, they call the Secretary of the Mayor and this is the best feedback that we can have [on their perceptions] Research work can leave some issues unexplored but we know immediately [what happens] We perceive people's mood.'* (ibidem) *(extract 18 - appendices)*

Going back to the Modenese case, complaints have been received by various municipal offices, including first and foremost the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana. As Spector and Kitsuse (2000) argued the establishment of an agency authorised to deal with certain conditions generates dissatisfactions among populations about conditions that previously were unseen or routinely accommodated. This possibly creates dissatisfaction in the first place.

6.2 The complex normative framework for the regulation of phone centres in Italy.

6.2.1 The national framework: the Code of Communication, the Anti-terrorism Law and the 'Pacchetto Sicurezza'.

Before the introduction of the Anti-terrorism Decree, the sector of phone centres was regulated by the Code of Communication[121]. Owners had to be granted a specific authorisation by the Ministry of Communication before opening their shop. In addition, in order to comply with municipal regulations, they had to fill in the so-call DiA[122] form, that is to say a document whereby they declared they were launching a business. The same type of requirements applied, and still apply, to other types of shops falling under the category of handcraft activities, such as takeaway pizzerias.

Following investigations on terror attacks in London and Madrid, the Italian government passed Anti-terrorism Decree 144/2005[123]. Among other things, new requirements were introduced to regulate the business of phone centres. The actual shops had been identified as potential '*loci of terror*'. In fact, latent terrorist cells had used them for communication purposes. Hence, the need was felt to monitor their business adequately. According to the interpretation of various police officers[124], the government was mostly concerned on checking upon web surfing, rather than telephone calls: terrorists had claimed responsibility for attacks through Internet websites, in an anonymous, unmonitored way.

As set forth in article 7 (1)[125], prospective and existing entrepreneurs, including phone centre- and Internet point-owners, now need to apply for a police authorisation before they can start operating their business. More details on this later. In addition, they are now required to register customers prior to their access to telephone and Internet services. They are also subjected to other obligations. In particular, article 7 (4) spelt out that a range of measures had to be defined to monitor customers' operations[126]. They were eventually

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121 Legislative Decree 259, 1st August 2003 '*Code of Electronic Communication*'.
122 DiA stands for 'Modulo di denuncia di inizio attività'
123 Italian Government Legislative Decree 144, July 27th 2005: *Misure urgenti per il contrasto del terrorismo internazionale.*
124 See for example the interview with the Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona and with the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa, December 16th 2008,Verona.
December 16th 2008, Verona; Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena.
125 According to article 7,1 '*Integrazione della disciplina amministrativa degli esercizi pubblici di telefonia e internet* ' of the Italian Government Legislative Decree 144, July 27th 2005.
126 This was decided in derogation of the personal data protection law. See articles 122(1) and 123(3) in Italian Government Legislative Decree 196, June 30th 2003: *Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali.*

specified in Decree 190/2005[127], including the compilation of a dedicated electronic registry and the storage of customers' personal data for an undefined period of time[128].

Opinions on the Anti-terrorism Decree were rather mixed. Police officers and officials generally agreed in claiming that the approval of the Anti-terrorism Decree was crucial as it provided them with preventive tools. The majority of phone centre-owners, on their side, stressed the importance of this piece of legislation, as they recognise it as a Parliament piece of legislation, that is to say an overarching norm set up by the national government. They also stressed it legitimately deals with a national issue of utmost relevance: safety.

Many of them repeatedly declared themselves ready to do their part in this sense, by suggesting a collaboration should be established with police forces. At the same time, all of them reported that the Decree has been creating an overburden for them. Since its introduction, they have been faced with a lot of responsibility towards their customers. The President of Internet Point & Phone centre associati[129], as well as other interviewees, insisted on the fact that only phone centres in Italy have such a requirement:

'*I have no competence in this sense, I am not a lawyer, but even if we look at Israel – I mean, I'm talking about Israel! There is no such Anti-terrorism requirement … there is nothing like this! When I talked to someone I know, a man from Senegal that has contacts with Israel and works in the filed of information technology he laughed about this. Unfortunately Italy is the only country in the whole world in which people need to be identified before they use terminal devices! Many of our members have got contacts in other European countries and they never heard of anything similar there.'* (November 6th 2008, Modena) *(extract 19 - appendices)*

Last year, the Italian government introduced the '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law). A new requirement was introduced for phone centres: they now also need to register customers before they proceed with money transfer. What is most important is that, with this new legislative tool, a strong anti-immigrants, and particularly anti-undocumented stance, was further promoted through a mechanism of '*certification*' (Tarrow and Tilly 2008). In other words, by passing the '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*', government agencies have somehow recognised and legitimised campaigns and actions against im-migrants and undocumented.

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[127] Ministry of Interior Decree 190, 16th August 2005: *Misure di preventive acquisizione di dati anagrafici. dei soggetti che utilizzano postazioni pubbliche non vigilate per comunicazioni telematiche ovvero punti di accesso ad Internet utilzzando tecnologia senza fili.*

[128] The decree required them to store data for two years, till December 31st 2007. As the decree was renewed at the end of 2007, it was made necessary for data to be stored till the decree would lapse. To date it has been renewed for three times, on December 31st 2007, 2008 and 2009.

[129] An association of phone centre-owners and Internet points in Modena (see section 7.1.3)

6.2.2 The regional laws.

A year after the approval of Anti-terrorism Law, new pieces of legislation were put forward, at a regional level, to regulate the business of phone centres. Examples include Emilia-Romagna Regional Law 6/2007[130] and Veneto Regional Law 32/2007[131]. Both drew from Lombardy Regional Law6/2006[132], at least as far as their basic principle is concerned, that is to say the fact of equating phone centres with commercial activities. Interestingly, while commercial licenses, in general, have become more flexible after the introduction of the so-called '*Pacchetto Bersani*'[133], which provides for an ample de-regularisation, those of phone centres were, conversely, regulated further.

Clearly, the laws that will be presented next relate to the sphere of commerce. In spite of this, as various policy-makers and police officers explained, they were meant to encapsulate a wider safety framework. Their ultimate aim was to address increasing complaints by residents for the alleged disturbances caused by phone centres and their customers. Furthermore, they somehow addressed, more or less implicitly the securing of public space.

Both laws spelt out that phone centres could only operate upon delivery of a licence by the Local Authority, which would be in turn subjected to compliance with the specific requirements set forth in the relevant regional law. Some differences exist between the Veneto and Emilia-Romagna Region. In the former no specific law was drawn up for phone centres. Policy-makers drew up a more general piece of legislation with normative principles relating to commercial activities. The specific discipline of phone centres is dealt with in one of its sections, including article 5 to 7[134]. It mainly provides municipalities with a framework to regulate the sector, by setting out a list of issues around which Municipality can work to define requirements to be complied with by the 'centri di telefonia', the so-called 'phone centres'[135]: hygienic and structural requirements; measures necessary to

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130 Emilia-Romagna Region, 2007. Regional Law 6, 21st May 2007: *Disposizioni in materia di distribuzione commerciale.*

131 Veneto Region, 2007. Regional Law 32, 30th November 2007: *Regolamentazione dell'attività dei centri di telefonia in sede fissa (phone centre).*

132 Lombardia Region 2006. Regional Law 6, 3rd March 2006: *Norme per l'insediamento e la gestione di centri di telefonia in sede fissa.*

133 Italian Government. Legislative decree 223/ 2006 '*Disposizioni urgenti per il rilancio economico e sociale, per il contenimento e la razionalizzazione della spesa pubblica, nonché' interventi in materia di entrate e di contrasto all'evasione fiscale'.*

134 Capo II: Disciplina dei centri di telefonia - art 5-7

135 The law uses the term 'centri di telefonia' to then specify it refers to the so-called 'phone centres', that is to say shops that provide with telephones, personal computers or other types of telematic equipments that can be used to access telephone or telematic services. However, the more general term 'centri di telefonia' can be

prevent the breach of the peace as well as to promote good quality of life in the areas around phone centres; limitations with respect to the type of activities that can be carried out by phone centre-owners. Importantly, article 6 indicates that Municipality must consult the representatives of all interested parties, before any requirement is set. In addition, article 7 specifies that municipalities can decide, under specific circumstances, that a given phone centres can continue operating without complying with the set requirements.

In Veneto, a specific law was drawn for phone centres only. Article 3 spells out the 'moral' subjective requirements that phone centre-owners need to comply with, in order to be considered 'suitable to run the business'[136]. In fact, compliance in this sense had already been confirmed for all phone centres well before the regional law was passed. The same requirements had been introduced a few years earlier by the Anti-terrorism Decree, whereby the delivery of the police authorisation necessary to operate the business was subjected to compliance with them. In other words, article 3 provides a duplication of the authorisation process introduced by the Decree. At the same time, however, should the latter lapse – as it is meant to do sooner or later, considering it is not a permanent piece of legislation – this requirement would not.

Other articles, including art 6 to 9, defined a number of issues to be regulated: opening and closing times (6-7), urban planning requirements (8) and hygienic requirements (9). Here the law indicates it is for the competent regional authorities to set forth, within a three-month period, specific requirements. It has not happened yet.

6.2.3 The local framework: between regulations and ordinances.

Almost in parallel with the introduction of the regional laws, ordinances and local regulations were approved in various cities. They spelt out the implementation measures to be adopted for the regulation of phone centres and Internet points. Modena local regulation 188/2007[137] and Verona ordinance 19/2009[138] are a case in point. They mainly established restrictions on shops' commercial licenses and indicated permission would only

discussably used to refer to other types of shops including for example the so-called Internet points that generally provide with Internet services only.

136 These mostly refer to the fact of having a clean record and no relationship with any criminal network.

137 Comune di Modena, 2007. Local regulation 188, 17 December 2007: Regolamento Comunale sui centri di telefonia e comunicazione.

138 Comune di Verona, 2009. *Municipality of Verona Ordinance 18/2009 17 March 2009: Disciplina degli orari di apertura e chiusura dei phone centres.*

be granted for the provision of telephone and Internet access, while excluding any other type of ancillary services.

As anticipated, the specific hygienic and urban planning requirements to be complied with by owners in the Veneto Region were never actually defined by the competent regional authorities. Differently, in Modena, precise principles were set out by the Municipality, as indicated by the regional law. For example, phone centre-owners were forbidden to run shops smaller than 10 square meter, they had to create a waiting space for customers, including a number of chairs corresponding to the number of Internet workspaces and telephone cabins, and a toilet of 0,6 meter squares minimum. All shops had to be inspected and certified by the ASL[139] in relation to compliance with hygienic-sanitarian requirements, despite the fact that they had already done so when the shops first opened, as phone centre-owners pointed out. Apparently, this is due to the fact that hygienic-sanitarian requirements for them changed over time. The Veronese ordinance is much more general and mostly defined opening and closing times.

6.3 Zooming on legislation processes: policy instruments, techniques and tools.

As Lascoumes and Le Galès (2009) rightly pointed out, sociology has long been interested in government technologies, but little attention has been paid to the actual instruments of public action. Only in rare cases has this aspect been brought to the centre of analysis. The choice of instruments is often explained as a residual variable that operates according to a functional logic (Sabatier 2000). In spite of this, the latter can open up the analysis as to shed light on power equilibria. They cannot be intended as a neutral device invariably available to political actors in a framework of mere technical rationality (Pillon and Vatin 2003). In fact, they carry with them a specific interpretation of the social world[140].

If we apply it in the field of politics and public action, the term '*instrument*' can be defined as follows: '*a broad-spectrum technical device which carries with it a concrete idea of the relationship between politics and society and which is characterised by a specific idea of the act of regulating*' (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2009: 4)[141]. In this context, various levels of observation can be identified,

[139] The competent Health authority, at a local level.
[140] A similar approach can be found in the field of strategic management. Karl Weick (1979) showed how, beyond the apparent inherent rationality of government instruments there lie '*certain social games*'. Scholars in the field have tried to understand the tacit rules that lie beneath management instruments as well as their meaning in terms of power and the diffusion of management models (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2008).
[141] my translation

including not only the actual instrument, that is to say a type of social institution (such as a census, a piece of regulation, etc.), but also its '*techniques*' and '*tools*', whereby the former are actual devices that make the respective instruments operational (such as a specific type of decree or law) and the latter are micro-devices internal to techniques (such as a statistical category, the specific requirement of a piece of legislation).

In order to better understand the function of instruments in the context of government technologies, Lascoumes and Le Galès (ibidem) identified five main models[142]: legislative and regulation instruments, economic and fiscal instruments and another three types that are less dirigist in character (such as best practice and information instruments). The former borrow from standard legal forms, intended as an embodiment of state interventionism. They carry out first and foremost a symbolic function in the measure they make legitimate power manifest, while drawing their strength from the decision-making process that precedes them. Not to be underestimated is the fact they also carry an assiological function by stating the values and interests granted by public authorities. In other words, they have a pragmatic role in terms of orienting social behaviours (24-25).

Going back to the regulation of phone centres in Italy, it is legislative and regulation instruments that were adopted at a national, regional and local level. I have introduced them above. Next, I will focus on the regional and local level, by revisiting the process that led up to the approval of four pieces of legislation: Veneto Regional Law 32/2007, Emilia-Romagna Regional Law 6/2007, Modena local regulation 188/2007 and Verona ordinance 19/2009. This will be done through an analysis of documents relating to the relevant public sessions of the Veneto and Emilia-Romagna Consiglio Regionale and to the public sessions of the Giunta and Consiglio Comunale of Modena[143]. No such information is available for Verona, as the decision-making process unravelled in an internal procedure which mainly involved the Mayor and the Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive, as she explained herself during the interview.

The choice of lingering onto the analysis of such documents might surprise the reader as an unnecessary effort irrelevant to the analysis of im-migrants' political engagement.

[142] These typologies draw, in part, from those elaborated by Christopher Hood (2007) cit. Lascoumes and Le Galès 2008), based on resources employed by public institutions, including modality, authority, pressure and institution.

[143] For the Veneto Region see http://www.consiglioveneto.it, for the Emilia-Romagna Region see http://burer.regione.emilia-romagna.it and http://assemblealegislativa.regione.emilia-romagna.it, for Modena Municipality see http://www.comune.modena.it/consigliocomunale/ [accessed on August 25th 2009].

However, as discussed above, instruments can give a precious contribution in opening up the way to the analysis of power games. In addition, the author takes the suggestion by Francis Chateauraynaud (2008) seriously, whereby he insists for researchers to 'enrich' the object of their analysis, by bringing together a whole range of sources, including, among other things, newspaper articles and the proceedings of legislative processes. In fact, whereby reference is made by actors to such sources, they equally need to be taken seriously, in the same way that actors and their 'voices' are, as they embody their ideas of justice and show how they are subjected to '*tests of worth*' (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006).

6.3.1 The Veneto Region.

Two law proposals were put forward at a regional level to regulate the sector of phone centres. The first was proposed by representatives of the right-wing party Alleanza Nazionale[144], the other by representatives of the extreme-right party Lega Nord[145]. The main signatory was the current Mayor of Verona, who, at the time, was the Assessore Regionale alla Sanità. The law that was eventually passed drew from both, but a whole series of amendments have accompanied what can be described as a very much heated political debate.

The first proposal was motivated on the basis that phone centres represent a source of disturbance for citizens and hence need regulating. In addition, concerns were expressed, in line with the Anti-terrorism Decree, that such businesses might be characterised by an illegal conduct and provide with a cover activity to hide and support illegal ones. The second was very much similar, even though stress was put on the lack of an adequate regulatory framework and on market issues, ranging from the disloyal competition between phone centres and other commercial businesses[146], to the 'commercial desertification' and depreciation of areas in which phone centres are concentrated, thus associating them with 'damaging activities'.

[144] Proposta di legge 68/2005 : *Norme per la regolamentazione dell'attività di phone centre presentata in regione.* Presented on August 10th 2005.
[145] Proposta di legge 119/ 2006: *Regolamentazione dell'attività dei centri di telefonia in sede fissa (phone centre).* Presented on Febrary 8th 2006.
[146] as the former had longer opening times and were not subjected to any normative framework.

If we now analyse the proceedings of the relevant public sessions[147], similar issues to those reported by residents emerge from the narratives of the Consiglieri Regionali, particularly those of the leading coalition[148], thus pointing to a civic order of worth: disturbance, people gathering and the presence of undocumented im-migrants. Interestingly, the Consigliere Achille Variati (Ulivo-Partito Democratico Veneto) recalled the time, in the 1950s, when it was Italians that actually went downtown to use the public phone, thus highlighting that while they do create some forms of disturbance and hence need regulating adequately, phone centres represent first and foremost a (public) service, thus advancing both an industrial and civic form of worth. Andrea Causin (L'Ulivo-Partito Democratico Veneto), on his side, argued that the issue has been framed along the (residual) line of public safety, as no sufficient understanding of the phenomenon had been achieved that could help approach it in the appropriate way. This testifies a general trend that has seen political attention, not only in Italy, shifting more and more towards deviant behaviours, as it can be observed in the considerable amount of legislative instruments adopted to tackle it. It also recalls Bricocoli (2005): anything that is problematic seems to end up in the 'container' of safety. Unfortunately, it can be interpreted as a missed opportunity to reflect on a new emerging type of business, while advancing innovative forms of regulation. Eventually this provided this and other Consiglieri Regionali with the main motivation to abstain from voting the final version of the law.

Repeated references were made to other types of businesses that cause similar problems, such as pubs, etc. Yet they were rejected by representatives of the leading coalition as irrelevant and connected to problems of a different weight. Arguably, the law under examination here had the main aim to secure urban space by '*domesticating*' (Atkinson 2003)[149] (perceived) deviant behaviours. In fact, Diego Cancian (Progetto Nord Est) suggested it represented a first step to make sure phone centres would be only phone centres, referring to the fact that their 'social function' would be discouraged. Is this a first sign that phone centres, as a space, were going to change? Or is it a first sign of an overarching will 'to repress any form of socialising' (Nicola Atalmi C.I.) or as Smith (1996) would say it an attempt to 'remove' (perceived) dangerous others, in an on-going management of residents' anxieties?

[147] Consiglio Regionale del Veneto, seduta pubblica 93, 24 Ottobre 2007, seduta pubblica 94, 25 Ottobre 2007 and seduta pubblica 95, 7 Novembre 2007.
[148] This was made up of the centre-right party Unione di Centro and the following right-wing parties: Forza Italia, Lega Nord, Alleanza Nazionale, Nuovo Partito Socialista Italiano (50.5% of seats).
[149] Atkinson uses this term by drawing from Zukin (1998) to describe examples of revitalisation and design-led strategies in New York, such as that of the Port Authority bus terminal in Manhattan where waiting rooms were created to 'civilise' users.

Various Consiglieri judged the legislative set up as far too strict. Some of them advanced another order of worth: a market one. Igino Michieletto (L'Ulivo-Partito Democratico Veneto) and Pettenò (Rifondazione Comunista – Sinistra Europea) for example, supported that while there has been a trend to promote entrepreneurialism in Italy, the regional law tended to weigh down the bureaucratic burden of phone centres. This was one of the main motivations that resulted in most Consiglieri from the main oppositional coalition (42.4 % of seats)[150] to opt for an abstention vote.

Having said this, a long debate went on before the approval of the regional law. Various articles, which were considered as dictating too strict, if not even discriminating requirements, were amended, including particularly article 8 and 9. They both included specific 'tools' (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2009) to further regulate the sector of phone centres through the introduction of urban planning and hygienic-sanitarian requirements[151]. It soon became evident that while attention was focused on similar technicalities, a more general discussion on social justice was missing. In various parts of the debate the Consiglieri ended up '*running after regulatory tools'* (12) while leaving aside more crucial issues relating to citizenship, that is to say: 'who will benefit from this regulation? Who will it make resources available to?' In other words, the overarching effect of discussing these tools was that of de-politicising the debate (ibidem).

Another theme, strictly linked to the above, emerged from the proceedings: the need to provide local authorities with adequate instruments to cope with phone centres at a local level, where their impact is actually felt by residents. This type of argument was advanced by the leading coalition and in particular by representatives of Alleanza Nazionale and Unione di Centro. Attention was put here on the supposed effectiveness of the regional law, only to the extent it could provide mayors with a framework with precise strict requirements to be respected, as put forward in the law proposals. Clearly, it is an industrial order of worth that prevailed in this debate. Representatives of both L'Ulivo-Partito Democratico Veneto and Rifondazione Comunista-Sinistra Europea countered this argument by stating that 'laws and ordinances cannot solve it all' and that other normative

[150] This was made up of two right-wing parties, the Liga Fronte Veneto and the Unione Democratici per l'Europa and of the following left-wing parties: Uniti nell'Ulivo, Per il Veneto, Rifondazione Comunista, Verdi, Partito dei Comunisti Italiani, Verdi, L'Italia dei valori, Lista Consumatori, Unione Democratici per l'Europa.

[151] In particular, article 8 spelt out there should be a minium distance of 500 meters between a phone centre and another in any urban neighbourhood, while article 9 spelt out a range of very specific sanitarian requirements, including for example the need for phone centre-owners to provide with one or two toilets for customers - depending on the shop dimensions - and with a telephone cabin accessible to disabled people.

instruments are available for securing public spaces, where necessary, such as the intervention of police forces.

Article 8 eventually did not spell out precise requirements. It was left for mayors to legislate further. Provision was made for them to define, the areas in which phone centres could open or not, on the basis of criterias indicated by the regional authority. Two years after the law was passed, the Constitutional Court declared this article was illegitimate[152] as incompatible with the principle of free competition. It should be noticed that, a year earlier, the Constitutional Court had ruled against Lombardy Regional Law 3/2006[153] for similar reasons. However, the appeal had been done with reference to more articles. Since they were all linked to each other in a complex legislative structure, it was the whole law to be declared unconstitutional[154]. Eventually Regional Law 32 was passed, on November 30th 2007. Almost a third of the Consiglieri abstained from voting (15), 1 voted against it, the remaining 37 voted in favour.

6.3.2 The Emilia-Romagna Region.

Similarly to the Veneto Region, two law proposals were put forward in Emilia-Romagna to regulate phone centres. The first was proposed by a representative of the right-wing party Forza Italia[155], the other by representatives of the extreme-right party Lega Nord[156]. Moreover, the Consiglio Regionale[157] put forward a third proposal[158].

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[152] Sentence 25/2009

[153] Sentence 350/2008

[154] The sentence was passed on the grounds that this law set out for an unduly aggressive enforcement of this type of businesses. Without going into details, among the main point: (1) phone centres are a communication activity that should be regulated by national not regional nor local authorities; (2) the law stands in sharp contrast to EU regulations on the 'freedom to communicate' and it introduces a duplication with respect to the existing system; (3) the hygienic, sanitarian, structural requirements introduced are considered as too strict.

[155] Proposta di legge 883/ 2005: *Nuove norme per l'insediamento e la gestione di centri di telefonia nelle aree urbane*. Presented on December 15th 2005.

[156] Proposta di legge 1164/ 2006: *Norme per l'insediamento e la gestione di centri di telefonia*. Presented on March 6th 2006.

[157] Its leading coalition was made up of one right-wing party, Unione Democratici per l'Europa, and the following left-wing parties: Uniti nell'Ulivo, Rifondazione Comunista, Partito dei Comunisti Italiani, Verdi, L'Italia dei valori (62.7% of seats).

[158] Proposta di legge 1974/2006: *Disposizioni in materia di distribuzione commerciale*. Presented on November 24th 2006.

The decision-making process that resulted in the approval of Regional Law 6/2007 can be analysed on the basis of the two main sessions of the Commission for Economic Policy[159] and of the final session of the Regional Assembly[160] which summarises particularly the positions formulated by the main oppositional coalition[161]. The whole debate was mainly constructed within the frame of safety, as in the Veneto Region. Various Consiglieri Regionali highlighted disturbances suffered by residents, with reference to a civic order of worth. The actual law proposals derived from increasing pressure by various municipalities to provide with a framework to deal with similar problems[162]. Concerns over phone centres and their potential attractiveness for undocumented was also expressed by some Consiglieri of the oppositional coalition (see for example Filippi, Forza Italia).

While a general agreement is evident on the need to regulate phone centres, disagreement emerged, as in the Veneto Region, on some specific tools introduced in law proposals 883/2005 and 1164/ 2006, with the main aim of making the normative more strict. Reference was made to an industrial order of worth. The actual explicit goal of the proposed tools was to ensure that a part of phone centres would close down (see for example Leoni, Forza Italia). The final version of law was, however, very general. It included three articles only, supported as it was by the argument that some flexibility should be granted for phone centres to keep operating, in a free market, without too many restrictions being imposed on them. Here a market order of worth was introduced. Most importantly, contrary to the Veneto Region, at least to a certain extent, the law resulted in regulatory powers being devolved to mayors. Yet, oppositional Consiglieri argued fiercely it was far too short and imprecise to be effective at all in regulating phone centres. This is why they voted against it.

A total of ten amendments were presented by the oppositional coalition to try and counteract this limit, by introducing more precise regulatory tools, including for example the definition of the None of them was approved. Eventually Regional Law 6/2007 was passed (27 votes in favour, 9 against, 14 voters missing).

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[159] Seduta Commissione Politiche Economiche , April 4th 2007. Udienza conoscitiva sui seguenti oggetti: progetto di legge 1974/2006, 883/2005, 1164/2006; Seduta Commissione Politiche Economiche, March 8th 2007. Udienza conoscitiva sui seguenti oggetti: progetto di legge 1974/2006, 883/2005 and 1164/2006.

[160] Assemblea legislativa, 72 seduta, 16 maggio 2007. Progetto di legge: disposizioni in materia di distribuzione commerciale.

[161] This was made up of a centre-right party, the Unione di Centro, and of the following right-wing parties: Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale, Lega Nord and Nuove Partito Socialista Italiano (35.2% of seats).

[162] Interview with a Funzionario Servizio Programmazione e Distribuzione Commerciale of Emilia-Romagna (this is an Official of the Emilia-Romagna responsible for the Commercial Activities. He followed the legislative process which resulted in the approval of the Regional Law (May 5th 2009).

Was any space allowed within the process for phone centre-owners to raise their voice? The Emilia-Romagna Law did provided for mayors to consult with interested parties if regulating their business further (art 6(2)). To be true, the importance of consultation was also brought forward, by representatives of the oppositional coalition in the Veneto Region. They actually pointed to the fact that plenty of auditions are generally organised when cafés, pubs and shopping centres are the object of regulations. Also, they cited as an example of good practice the Emilia-Romagna Law.

To sum up, as it happened in the Veneto Region, increasing complaints around phone centres resulted in the emergence of an urban conflict. This was eventually transformed into a policy issue to be regulated as an economic phenomenon, even though discussions mostly centred on urban safety. Arguably, various law proposals provided the occasion to politicise the issue of phone centres. Nonetheless, while they contributed to its problematisation, such instruments eventually lead to its de-politicisation instead, with actors focusing on the rationality of their tools (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2009). Furthremore, the latter came to embody a representation of phone centre conflicts as strictly linked to the regulation of the activity itself, thus paradoxically producing an explicative system of the phenomenon (ibidem). This is not say that no alternative vision could possibly emerge. In fact it did.

A representative of Confesercenti[163] Emilia-Romagna, who took part in one of the relevant sessions of the Commission for Economic Policy, suggested it would be desirable to rethink phone centres as an actual public service. Similarly to a colleague of the Veneto Consiglio Regionale, he recalled that, some fifty years ago, it was Italians who needed a place to make calls. Policy-makers failed to address this issue explicitly. They also failed to revisit this newly emerging activity as a possible combination of businesses. Possibly, an opportunity was missed to bring about a real policy innovation, contrary to what was highlighted by Allasino et al. (2000) in the case of Turin. The reader might recall how the conflict actually paved the path to policy innovation: a wealth of policies and resources actually existed already but the conflict itself contributed to their activation and their implementation as part of an integrated vision which allowed for safety as well as urban planning and social issues to be taken into due consideration.

[163] Italian Confederation for the Commercial, Tourist and Service sectors

Back to the policy process in the Emilia-Romagna region. In spite of suggestions by the representative of Confesercenti, ost of the Consiglieri stressed the novelty a phone centre regulation could carry with it. Their appraisal, however, seemed to recall a symbolic political gesture, capable of making their power manifest while demonstrating the resolution of a deadlock and the breakaway from the apparent immobilism of institutions in face of an apparent policy vacuum (ibidem). No test could be passed against this background. It actually took the shape of a 'test of power', whereby no space was provided in the first instance for any issue to make it through the debate, regardless of any legitimate order of worth advanced by any of the parties. The overarching preoccupation was with safety and the regulation of phone centres, as to 'solve' disturbances lamented by residents. A very similar comment can be equally made as far as the policy process in the Veneto region is concerned.

6.3.3 The Municipality of Modena.

The first step towards the regulation of phone centres, in Modena, is represented by a first deliberation by the Giunta Comunale, which focused on the definition of their opening and closing times. It was passed in 2005[164], with the following resolutions: on the one side phone centre-owners were granted the possibility of operating a mixed business, including phone centre, Internet as well as other services (such as those connected to food stores)[165]. On the other side, specific opening and closing times were defined for phone centres (equated to any other commercial activity) and for mixed businesses (equated to food stores). A couple of years later, a legislative process started which led up to a new deliberation[166] by the Consiglio Comunale[167]: a specific local regulation for phone centres[168] was eventually approved.

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[164] Deliberazione Giunta Comunale 639, October 5th 2005: *Esercizi pubblici di telefonia, internet e fax – definizione orari.*

[165] As explained during the session, such a decision was taken in compliance with the principle of free business competition and at the same time with existing sector-based norms and conformity with the urban and building regulations.

[166] Deliberazione Consiglio Comunale 88, December 17th 2007: *Esercizi pubblici di telefonia, internet e fax – definizione orari*

[167] The leading coalition in Modena was made up of the civic list 'la Rosa per Modena' and of the following left-wing parties: Partito Democratico, Sinistra per Modena, Comunisti Italiani, Federazione dei Verdi, Socialisti-Laici-Riformisti (50,1% of seats). The oppositional coalitons included the following: the lista civica Pellacani per Modena and the right-wing party Partito delle libertà coalition (23,2% of seats); the Lega nord coalition (10,9% of seats); the left-wing Italia dei valori coalition (5 % of seats), the centre-right party Unione di Centro and Lista Civica Modena a Colori coalition (4,1 of seats); the Lista Civica Beppegrillo.it coalition (3,5% of seats) and the Rifondazione Comunista coalition (1,9% of seats).

[168] 26 votes pro and 8 against (for a total of 34 voters)

As the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici (October 10th 2008) explained, during an interview, the regulation was meant to deal with a plethora of problems that emerged through residents' complaints. It was also going to address issues relating to what was understood as a new type of activity, phone centres. Against this background, it is reasonable to expect that tensions and disagreements could emerge among policy-makers, while specific political objectives were to be achieved. In particular, a sign had to be given that citizens' concerns were being addressed:

[We were given] the objective to understand what the actual situation was like in order to try and understand the actual problems it brought with it and the possible objective, that actually was implicit to be honest (…) to define a precise path that was subjected to citizens' requests, emerging problems etc. (…), the constant increase in the number of phone centres, the emergence of phone centres combined with other commercial activities. Therefore we also had to cope with a new type of activity (…). Clearly this involved all the tensions relating to diverging opinions [of policy-makers] (…). Let's be frank: 'Some policy-makers would like to close all of them with a magic key, right away, other policy-makers rather say: 'They are fine like this'. (…) In between we have tried to think about it and understand what these activities were like and what kind of impact a regulation could carry with it. (…) One of the difficulties (…) was to try and find a transversal solution as problems required the intervention of various deparments (…).[It required us] an integration of various competencies and a multidisciplinary intervention (…) a process which is not always easy to undertake in a complex organisational structure (…). We work in public administration and we rightly need to deal with objectives that aim at simplification as far as the quality of services is concerned ecc ecc. and I do share this idea, but at the same time we are asked to carry out interventions, again it is rightly so, that require the exact opposite of de-regulation (…) the truth probably lies in the middle (…).' (Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici of the Municipality of Modena, October 10th 2008, Modena) *(extract 20 - appendices)*

As the above extract clearly testifies, policy-makers did not fail to consider the impacts that a regulatory measure could have on the actual businesses. Their underlying goal was to draw up a piece of legislation that would neither under-regulate, nor over-regulate the sector. To start with, in 2006, a monitoring activity was set up by the Municipality with the precise intention to establish a first contact with phone centre-owners and to better understand the sector they were operating in. On their side, owners were favourably surprised: they had an official interlocutor to express their concerns to. Their opinion changed over time. More about this in a later chapter.

The policy-makers interviewed supported that all efforts had been made to sketch out a multisciplinary solution to regulate phone centres. When reading through the proceedings of the relevant municipal sessions, this is evident, at least in part, but urban safety emerged as the primary concern. This explains why some Consiglieri Comunali (Tesauro, Verdi) insisted that a very different approach had been adopted to cope with similar problems, when connected with shops run by Italians. The example of Via Gallucci was brought forward. As mentioned in previous sections, this area became very problematic because of

disturbances caused by the so-called 'bar fracassoni'. In this case, the Municipality did not introduce a regulatory framework for pubs. It rather launched the '*steward di strada*' project, a mediation intervention (Responsabile Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana, April 8th 2008), while leaving police forces with the task of inspecting pubs upon receipt of any complaint by residents. Some Consiglieri from oppositional parties (Mazzi, Forza Italia), on their side, kept stressing the need to regulate phone centres, thus highlighting that rules were still more favourable for immigrant shops who could benefit from longer opening hours. Whether it resulted from their pressure or not, it can hardly be proved. In any case, in December 2008, a new ordinance was put in force to further restrict phone centres opening times[169].

Considerable disagreement emerged as far as the service of money transfer was concerned. Following heated discussions, it was decided that phone centres could offer it. The service, in fact, was described as crucial for im-migrants to send their remittances and for owners to keep operating an (economically) sustainable business. Both a civic and market orders of worth were advanced here, as they were during regional debates. It should be noticed that the initial version of the regulation banned money transfer. To be precise, this was decided after Internet Point & phone centre associati confronted with the Assessore alle Attività Economiche, thus asking him to revisit the issue. Owners eventually succeeded in their endavour. In turn, some of the Consiglieri Comunali that intervened in municipal debates (Mazzi, Forza Italia) suggested that too much pressure had been placed by owners, adding that counter parties are generally not even consulted (Flori, Modena a colori).

Some of the Consiglieri of the leading coalition agreed themselves that money transfer services should be vigilated upon. Yet, they were content with the proposal, by the Assessore alle Attività Economiche, to leave discussions aside and to reconsider them only if problems emerged (Artioli, Partito Democratico). This decision was still not welcomed by some Consiglieri of oppositional parties though (Mazzi, Forza Italia): they were willing to pass a strict regulation to prevent public order problems from manifesting. Interestingly, no specific example of any problem was made, a part from a passing reference to the fact that thieves might be attracted by shops where large amount of money circulates (Mazzi, Forza Italia) and terrorists cells could use them to support their activities[170]. This was

[169] Comune di Modena, 2008. Orario attività, chiusure settimanali e straordinarie dei Centri di Telefonia e Comunicazione ai sensi del Regolamento Comunale approvato con Delibera del Consiglio Comunale 8 del 17 Dicembre 2007.

[170] Manfredini, Group Lead of the Lega Nord both within the Municipality at the Regional Authority as

among the reasons why they did not vote in favour of the local regulation, which was considered as far too soft to be effective. In other words, it was an industrial order of worth which further supported their argument.

In parallel with the municipal one, another debate has been evolving in Modena around phone centres: a press debate. It took place outside the official institutional scene, but all Consiglieri seemed to be very well aware of it. Various of their statements and comments drew from articles. Not only did they draw from residents' reports. They also referred to the 'war' declared by Internet Point & phone centre associati against the Municipality and the regulation it proposed. As anticipated above, owners managed to make their voice heard through the press on a variety of issues, including for example the newly required shop dimensions: they stressed that many of their shops were too small to comply with it in the first place, thus re-problematising a debate that had been focusing on the mere technicalities of specific instruments and tools, with no consideration of the consequences they could bring about for (some) people.

All the relevant sessions of the Giunta and the Consiglio Comunale were attended not only by Consiglieri. The President of the Consulta degli Stranieri, a consultation body that represents im-migrants in Modena joined too[171]. He briefly expressed his point of view - only once in fact - to highlight that phone centres provide im-migrants with an important job opportunity. While he initially advanced a market order of worth, recalling the need for a free market, he then shifted the debate towards a more general discussion on integration and the need for the Consiglio Comunale not to act on the basis of residents' emotional outburst. Thus, he 'sneaked off the test', that is to say he failed to advance a precise and legitimate order. Nonetheless, no Consigliere followed up on his speech. Importantly, when I asked phone centre-owners on their relationships with the Consulta degli Stranieri they all confirmed no contact had been going on between them, thus suggesting, to say the least, a fragmentation of the system of im-migrants' representation in Modena. In fact, phone centre-owners hardly knew this body even existed.

Most Consiglieri of the leading coalition eventually voted in favour of the regulation, stating it would improve phone centre services. Attention was very much put on the actual

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well as first signatory of the 1164/2006 Regional Law proposal

[171] Unfortunately the interview I wanted to carry out with the President or a member of the Consulta degli Stranieri could never be done, hence details on this body are missing. Yet, it should be noticed that, according to narratives, the Municipality has been planning to close it down.

fruition by customers (Montorsi, Sinistra Democratica, Rifondazione Comunista). Little discussion was carried out on people proper. According to Morandi (Forza Italia) they ought not to be meeting places to start with. Curiously enough, the decision was taken to introduce a requirement for phone centre-owners to create a large enough waiting room, as to provide customers with the possibility of hanging around and chatting more comfortably (art. 4, 2(e)). Other efforts were made to improve the quality of phone centres services. As part of a project that was financed by the Regional Authority, in 2006-2008, a vademecum was drafted for shopkeepers. It was thought for all shopkeepers, including those of immigrant origins, hence translated in three languages. According to the Assessore alle Attività Economiche, the idea had emerged from the need expressed by various shopkeepers to be better informed and better equipped to run a commercial activity. At the same time, policy-makers thought it represented a good idea to collaborate with them in preventing forms of urban blight from developing. It was also another opportunity to be in contact with them and monitor their activities[172]. In fact, the vademecum was distributed to all shopkeepers with the support of cultural mediators, in spite of disagreement by some Consiglieri of the main oppositional coalition (Leoni, Forza Italia). They interpreted the vademecum as a way to institutionalise im-migrants' scarce knowledge of the Italian language and ultimately a chance to obstruct their path to integration.

The local regulation became effective at the end of December 2008. Shortly after, in January 2009, Massamba (Gruppi Indipendenti di Sinitra) presented an Interrogation[173]. According to narratives, the President of Internet Point & phone centre associati had contacted directly this Consigliere, who was known to be open with respect to im-migrants' related issues. She punctually reported the difficulties experienced by phone centre-owners to try and comply with the new requirements, considering also the economic hardship they were suffering due to the economic crisis. During the municipal debate, she suggested to put a hold on the regulation in order to wait for the TAR Bologna to pronounce its sentence on the appeal presented by Internet Point & phone centre associati[174]. Her proposal was rejected, because they Municipality did not want to deceive residents' expectations (the regulation was to be passed) nor that of phone centre-owners that had actually already complied with the regulation. Apparently, other Consiglieri of the leading

[172] Interrogazione Consigliere Leoni, November 24th 2008: *Guida in arabo per commercianti. La giunta pighi istituzionalizza la mancata conoscenza della lingua italiana*. Trasformata in interpellanza.
[173] Interrogazione Consigliere Massamba, January 26th 2009: *Regolamento phone centre*. Trasformata in interpellanza.
[174] An appeal was presented by the association in relation to the strict nature of the regulation. More about it later.

coalition had advanced the proposal to postpone the regulation or at least revise it, but '*everything had to be done quickly* [by the Municipality]' (Tesauro, Verdi). The election period was about to start, in the meantime.

A last point. Massamba also asked the Assessore alle Attività Economiche to be updated on the contacts he had had, in the past months, with phone centre-owners, and on the difficulties they had expressed. By doing so, she tried to bring the informal debate back into the official sites of the political arena. It worked out, even though it took the shape of a mere information update. No discussion followed on the heavy consequences that phone centre-owners had to bear with.

6.3.4 The Municipality of Verona.

While it did not define officially defined them as public spaces, the Veronese ordinance 'treated' phone centres as such:

'[They] do not have the characteristic of a meeting place and yet they create opportunities for meeting and favour the constitution of true meeting points for consistent groups of people, who can disturb people who live nearby, by simply talking loudly during the time for rest.' [175]

Accordingly, it defined restricted opening hours and it ruled for owners not to sell any drinks. Similar types of interventions have been adopted for the general management of urban public space in Verona[176]. They actually stem from an urban safety approach which privileges forms of spatial control over prevention and mediation-types of activities. Little can be said in this regard through official documents. As anticipated, the legislative process in Verona unravelled in a web of internal contacts between the Mayor and the Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive, as she explained herself during an interview (February 3rd 2010, Verona). Hence, I will now focus on narratives collected during an interview with the Dirigente herself.

Ordinance 19/2009 spelt out that phone centre-owners could no longer provide any service other than phone or Internet services. This resulted out of the Mayor's own

[175] my translation
[176] References to similar ordinances can be found in the following link: http://portale.comune.verona.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=9229 accessed on January 10th 2009 [Last accessed on April 10th 2010]

interpretation of the Regional Law, which in turn differed from that of policy-makers, police officers and phone centre-owners themselves:

'*Phone centre-owners had understood that the regional law permitted them to provide both with Internet and telephone services, but the municipal administration said no. (…) Wherever there is a margin of discretionality political interest can take over you know, with clear objectives… even the Questura*[177] *thought it made sense because phone centres are subjected to a double authorisation (…). We confronted with police officers and they themselves could not see how it could be interpreted otherwise and the same goes for the Chamber of Commerce. In fact, they keep a unique list [of commercial activities] for both phone centres and Internet points. (…) I wrote a letter for the Giunta where I expressed my disagreement, in the sense that I gave my technical opinion. I thought it was rather necessary to find the right formula to make sure that Internet could be used only to make phone calls, that is to say by permitting access to skype and voip*' (Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona, February 3rd 2010, Verona) *(extract 21- appendices)*

The Dirigente stated that 'where there is a margin of discretionality, political interest can take over'. She did not explain this point further, when explicitly asked about it. Clearly, it was a rather delicate issue to tackle. On the basis of her account, it is reasonable to assert that the choice of impeding phone centre-owners to provide both Internet and telephone services was political in nature. This is further suggested by the fact that other policy-makers and police officers actually disagreed in this regard, as common sense suggested them so (see also Vice Comandante of the Local Police (November 21st 2008, Verona). The Dirigente did express her opinion in writing, by means of a report she sent to the Giunta Comunale. However, it was never debated nor even addressed in any municipal session. It remained 'locked up' within municipal offices. Phone centre-owners literally 'invaded' the office of the Dirigente, in search as they were for definite indications on how to interpret the regional law. I will come back to this point in a later chapter.

The regulatory efforts of the Local Authority are still on-going. Regional law proposals have tried to deal with some specific issues including, among others, urban planning requirements. As anticipated, the Constitutional Court judged it as illegitimate for the Regional Authority to define the areas in which phone centres could open. In this sense, mayors were short of a regulatory measure. The Municipality of Verona is now trying to deal with this vacuum, by working on another policy area. Phone centres are again the object of their regulatory efforts, but they are not alone. Other shops are now at the centre of their attention:

[177]Police officers of the local headquarter of the National Police

'*The Municipality would have been happy to plan that is to say to prevent ten phone centres from opening in two streets of the same neighbourhood, but it was judged illegitimate from the constitutional point of view. Now we are trying to make use of another norm, let's say 'to calm down', to limit new settlements at least in historical areas and in those that are historical urban areas. In this case we are no longer working in the framework of safety, because of the legislative decisions mentioned above [reference is made here to the Constitutional Court's sentence], but we are working in the framework of (urban) decorum, that is to say we take it for granted that these shops should be subjected to a policy relating to …it is known as 'commercial fronts' policy [reference is made here to a policy which regulates shop fronts and shop windows]. I am referring to Regional Law 15/2004 that gives Municipalities the power to define urban planning requirements to prevent any ruination commercial activities might cause to historical areas [due to esthetic decay] (…) which in turn have a [negative] impact on the overall image of the city (…). We are now starting to plan meetings in this sense (…) This is clearly an extreme attempt… you understand when I tell you that if a norm stops us from doing something we try and find the instruments that will allow to go forward in another way? So if it will be approved by the Consiglio, because it will have to go through a long procedure, we will eventually say that various activities are banned [in these areas], including also other shops such as sexy shops (…) Phone centres will be included [in the list of activities banned] (…) With this disciplinary measure we are trying to demonstrate that some shops cause esthetic decay (…) they are ugly when you look at them, because they do not manage them properly, they do not have the taste necessary to make them nice, they actually do not care at all (…) Then it seems these are forms of racism but…*' (ibidem) *(extract 22 - appendices)*

From the above extract, it is again evident that the Municipality has embraced a spatial control type of approach in relation to urban space management and it seems likely to continue doing so. In spite of the fact it will move away from an explicit urban safety framework, it will still adopt regulatory instruments and tools, thus concentrating its policy-making efforts around technicalities that will allow to bring its plans forward.

The Dirigente stressed that phone centres are not their only concern, nor immigrant shops in general, in spite of the fact that my attention was repeatedly brought to them.
This suggests that immigrant shops and related norms have so far been used as an exemplary policy practice to legitimise the Municipality's approach. Before this, phone centres have undergone a process of categorisation which has guided actors' strategies by transposing ways of classifying social reality into social practices of distinction (Lamont and Molnar 2002, Epstein 2007, Bourdieu 1984 cit. in Pilati 2009) and by producing forms of divisions of social space as well as clear-cut social boundaries (Tilly 2004: 214).

Not all boundaries generated through symbolic categorisation have the same potential to produce social divisions, hierarchies and inequalities. Not all of actors have equal chances to produce or impose their own classification modality. Institutions have a strong role in this context (Lamont 1995). Through migration policies, several ethnic boundaries can be produced, defined and negotiated (Nagel 1994, Bail 2008) since ethnicity (with nationality or race), is the foremost and most conventional way of categorising im-migrants. In the cases under analysis, an indirect category was produced: both policy-makers and residents do identity phone centre-owners as im-migrants, but they always refer to them as an 'evil'

category of workers[178]. The regulatory framework has arguably contributed to the institutionalisation of this identity by proceeding with a strict regulation which was clearly explained as an attempt to solve the trouble these shops cause.

Citizens' fears and insecurities have ultimately justified practices of power that blend prohibitionism, protectionism and authoritarianism. Ultimately they have struck the weakest segments of society, but similar practices seem to be spreading further to target other groups of urban dwellers. As Thomson (2009) highlighted, many classic studies in urban politics have discussed race. However, this dimension has not been theoretically central to the field of urban politics. It tends to be considered as a false diversion from 'real' social and economic issues. By paying more attention to how local actors conceive and manage racial tensions, urban theorists can possibly provide new insights into the role of race in cities. In fact, critical appraisals of its role does not only sharpen empirical inquiry. Such appraisals also introduce a host of analytical and strategic questions that differ from conventional urban political studies. As far as the case studies under analysis are concerned the first evident question in this sense is: who is next in the safety agenda?

[178] Interestingly, none of the residents interviewed consider phone centre-owners as entrepreneurs that consciously invested their money into what was understood as a promising business activity. They are considered as 'mere' workers. It would be worth investigating further on similar perceptions to understand whether they can be also associated with other commercial categories of activities, included those which are more popular among natives.

CHAPTER 7:
PHONE CENTRE-OWNERS ENGAGING.

7.1 Phone centre-owners between formal and informal organisational structures.

7.1.1 The Comitato gestori phone centre in Verona.

The Comitato is an informal structure comprising, among the most active members, about fifteen phone centre-owners of different immigrant origins. According to some authors (Ambrosini 2000), informal organisations are often the only resource that newcomers can activate, in Italy, against a scenario characterised by a rather weak 'ethnic' associationism. Various such examples have been highlighted in the Milanese context, for example (Caselli and Grandi 2009). On the contrary, most interviewees stated they simply did not feel the need to give the Comitato a formal status. Their main aim was that of ensuring the active participation of all members. Additionally, the strong necessity was expressed to act autonomously. This prevailed over any will 'to publicise' their status (Mamadou, June 6th , November 20th 2008).

As inspections translated into an everyday routine, in summer 2007, phone centre-owners started meeting regularly, at the Coordinamento Migranti (from now onwards Coordinamento). More about this organisation in the next section. They met once every two weeks or even more. *Ad hoc* meetings were organised following particularly harsh inspections. Among other things, they were an occasion for them to give vent to their frustrations and to call for the support of Marco[179], an Italian lawyer. A Ghanaian owner, Derek had contacted him even earlier, at the end of 2006, when his phone centre was in the spotlight. Apparently, the Municipality wanted to give an example, to phone centre-owners and residents, on how it was going to deal with related complaints. The next section will specifically focus on this case, which will be set aside for the moment.

Another owner of Ivorian origin, Rudy (Silvain), had reported to the Coordinamento. His shop had become another target of inspections. Sidy and Mamadou, on their side, had not experienced major difficulties, not as much as their colleagues, but 'they'd got something

[179] All the names reported in this section are invented.

cooking'. The most fundamental role in the creation of the Comitato gestori di phone centre[180] (from now onwards Comitato) can be attributed to them: two Senegalese owners. Mamadou is one of the founding members of the Coordinamento and the Senegalese Association in Verona. Sidy, his cousin, has been mostly active in the latter. They have been living in the country for more than ten years now and so have Rudy and Derek. As it can be expected, their permanence has been long enough for them to be (at least relatively) settled. Unfortunately, they are no longer sure that this is the country in which they want to live. Nor are they sure that it is here they want their children to be educated.

Undoubtedly, the first motivation that encouraged phone centre-owners to group up and form the Comitato can be associated with increasing runs of inspections which impacted on their business: customers were more and more reluctant in taking advantage of the shops' services. Another preoccupation was at the centre of their effort: the precarious position of some colleagues who run the risk of losing their residence permit[181]. Similarly to Mamadou and Sidy, not all members had been experiencing any difficulty. Some of them simply got involved to support their colleagues and to reflect on the situation as they were growing worried.

A few members had been gathering since 2006, in the effort to define a(n) (informal) commercial code for their business, while imploring the lurking risk of a fierce competition among them. No explicit political goal is evident in this first form of engagement, even though it is ultimately linked to an inherently political scope: the will to integrate. Paradoxically, this involved 'regulating' an emerging economic sector in which newcomers were acting more and more as the main protagonists.

A lack of space for their activities was lamented repeatedly (see also Mantovan 2007). Apart from the Coordinamento's office, phone centres provided with a solution in this sense. Owners generally gathered in the most spacious ones, or in the shops of the most politically active, not without consequences for the latter:

[180] The Comitato never really had an official name. The members always referred to it as the Comitato gestori phone centre and so did the press the one time it wrote about it.
[181] As pointed out in section 4.2, phone centres provided a crucial employment opportunity for owners and their employees, not only in terms of income, but also in the measure it granted them an easier renewal of their residence permit. It is enough for owners to be found in mis-compliance with the Anti-terrorism Decree more than two times for their license to be withdrawn (see section 7.4.2) and the renewal of their residence permit be therefore at risk. In other words, owners are subjected to a double threat.

'And then maybe also the fact that I'm a militant. They [phone centre-owners and other immigrants] have always used my shop as a place to meet and plan mobilisation activities. It is here we have drawn up letters to be sent to the Questura and maybe this has carried with it some consequences in terms of inspections. At the beginning we met here with phone centre-owners as I tried to involve them (…). Then when they realised inspections were increasing we have tried to get organised even better.' (Rudy, May 2nd 2008) *(extract 23 - appendices)*

According to Rudy, being a militant has not played in his favour, to the contrary. In his view, when the police became familiar with him and realised he was a militant too, inspections to his shop grew in intensity. Light could not be shed to ground his opinion further, but drawing from his experience he suggested that neither Italian authorities nor Veronese ones were positively inclined to immigrants' political participation.

7.1.2 The Coordinamento Migranti.

The Coordinamento was founded at the beginning of the new millenium, in coincidence with the approval of the 2001 immigration quotas. At the time, it was not very clear how 'this machine' worked. This was a stimulus for newcomers to get organised. A group of Senegalese im-migrants, with the impetus of Pape, found the Coordinamento. Pape had just resigned from his position at a local trade union[182]. He was appointed Secretary of the Coordinamento.

The main scope of this association has been that of offering assistance to im-migrants for legal and bureaucratic procedures relating to the delivery and renewal of residence permits. The work was mostly delegated to an Italian lawyer, Marco, who was later appointed as legal representative. Some of the members of the Comitato believe his ultimate aim was that of making a business out of im-migrants' needs. A few of them resigned to ask local trade unions for extra help as they grew distrustful with respect to his professional competence. Various trade unionists are very critical about the forms of activism he has promoted among newcomers:

'The Coordinamento has always had this attitude: they scream loud but what for? Politics, politics, politics, that's all they do without really helping migrants nor supporting them. They have deceived them and sooner or later they will understand it! They have put them in the fore front of battles without even wondering what the consequences can derive from it.' (April 22nd 2009) *(extract 24 - appendices)*

The judgement of some third sector organisations is equally harsh. Some recalled a few cases in which im-migrants suffered from heavy consequences due to his irresponsible

[182] Narrative evidence reported he was actually laid off from his job for unspecified forms of professional misconduct.

attitude. To cite an example, the involvement of a group of Roma in a local protest resulted in their expulsion from Italy. Having said this, opinions differ and some positive comments were heard about him.

Undeniably, Marco has been very active in encouraging im-migrants 'to take up arms' and put forward their claims. He also took charge of various appeals against housing evictions, in what was often described as a rather personalistic attitude: he turned up during evictions and confronted police officers directly. Apparently, such an approach granted him considerable visibility, to the detriment of the Coordinamento. As he stated himself, the Municipality never really considered it as an actual political actor, nor as an association which effectively represents im-migrants.

In December 2008, Marco was eventually expelled from the organisation. Details in this sense are missing and they are not relevant to the case under analysis. It suffices to say that a new association was founded by the Secretary who moved to other premises. Marco, on his side, continued dealing with appeals and other legal practices in what was no longer the Coordinamento's office.

7.1.3 Internet Point & Phone Centre Associati in Modena.

As its statute spells out, Internet Point & Phone centre Associati (from now onwards IP Associati) has solidaristic goals only. Its main aim is the legal guardianship of phone centres and Internet points in Modena. The association was created in 2006 in the attempt to support phone centre-owners in raising their voice, in coincidence with increasing inspections and a pending normative framework to regulate the sector. The decision to constitute a formal organisation derived from the conviction it was important to give it an official status. In the President's view, it could give an extra chance for their claims to be heard. As for members, it endowed them with a stronger sense of political efficacy.

The association comprises approximately forty members, including phone centre-owners with shops in Modena and its provincial area. The most active ones are about fifteen: a President, three executive board members and a group of ordinary members. In spite of differences in roles, they all have the same decisional power. An association rate was introduced for members to join. Many of them never paid for it, as some colleagues lamented. Yet, they were still allowed to participate in meetings and contribute to activities.

When IP Associati was founded, a letter was immediately sent to the Mayor of Modena and various police forces, in order to inform them accordingly. Initially, members were meeting on a regular basis. In the first months, they mostly met once every two weeks, either in phone centres or in a seminar room that Lapam[183] had made available to them. This venue was particularly used for official appointments, such as those with police officers.

How did the members get together? As the Secretary of Lapam commented, the founding of the association was kind of accidental:

'*Something rather accidental happened in this case… it was a crazy individual who had worked at a local branch of CGIL [a trade union]. After having dismissed, he decided to buy a phone centre. Another Italian, a young girl, had just opened a phone centre like him. I'm not sure why among so many professions they could chose they actually opted for this one, but they automatically became the leaders among phone centres.'* (March 4th 2009, Modena) *(extract 25 - appendices)*

In spite of the casual dynamic which lead to the creation of IP Associati, members did not group up casually. They had started communicating, confronting and meeting more than a year earlier, as I will explain next.

7.1.4 Before Internet Point & Phone centre Associati.

Before IP Associati came into being, an informal network of Modenese phone centre-owners had gradually formed. Initially, it developed from business activities. Jalil, a Nigerian who owned a phone centre, had a second job: he was a phone line agent and various owners entered into business with him. As time passed, their relationship evolved along different lines:

'As phone centre-owners we began with getting organised to try and avoid the drawbacks of competition. I explained to colleagues that it would be important to agree on prices. Then, we had some meetings with the Prefecture and the Questura and we all realised they did not care at all. We even went and talked to the Mayor. (…) If you set off to get organised here in Italy, if you raise your voice they will fight back even harder. We organised a meeting with the Questore and he said: 'Do come along, there is no problem', but the problem is that we have no rights here and therefore we cannot put our claims forward. It is hard [for Italians]to see foreigners working, you know? In Sassuolo, we had a meeting with the Mayor and we asked two questions to him and he could not even reply. (…) We were told that there is this piece of regulation and that it aims to regulate phone centres. They had already decided it was to be so. (…) Let me be honest with you, you cannot do anything about it because it is the politicians who decide. I'm not saying you should change job because God recognises honest people but leave it really...' (April 28th 2009) *(extract 26 - appendices)*

[183] This is a federation of local associations that represents all various entrepreneurial sectors in Modena.

From the above extracts it is evident that phone centre-owners got engaged in a variety of activities since they first grouped up. Jalil paved the way for the definition of a common commercial code that could prevent the drawbacks of competition. Two fellow owners helped him in the effort to sensitise colleagues in this sense. They visited phone centres both in Modena and in its provincial area to get to know them better and build up relationships based on trust. Another pressing need emerged quickly in confrontations with them: that of dealing with increasing inspections. They contacted the Prefecture and the Questura in Modena as well as the Mayor in Sassuolo - a town located in its provincial area, who had passed a very strict regulation for the sector. None of these actions was successful. Neither any answer was given to their questions, nor any discussion took place. They gradually grew convinced they were faced with constrained political opportunities.

Owners' actions have been multiple and fragmented. They cannot be classified as inexorable responses to power structures, nor can they be interpreted in a straightforward stimulus-response dynamic. They got organised well before any problem emerged around phone centres. It was only at a second stage that they started responding to police and local authorities, thus planning both reactive and proactive actions, as will be discussed later. So did owners in Verona, even though none of them could count on any material resource, but an existing network. As for Veronese owners, the Coordinamento had served, at a minimum, to facilitate the progress of their activities, by providing a space to meet and legal support for owners. Having said this, the actual Comitato was born out of phone centre-owners' initiative.

Following unsuccessful confrontation with police forces and the Mayor in Sassuolo, Jalil, with a few fellow owners, started collecting money to join a non specified association. It is unclear how contacts unraveled. Apparently, some alleged representatives had offered their legal support to appeal against the Anti-terrorism Decree. Eventually, they disappeared and no trace was left of them. The informal association in Modena eventually 'eclipsed'. In the opinion of some phone centre-owners (see for example December 11th 2008), Jalil and his colleagues did not live up to the standards of their expectations. They failed to build up the trust of a large enough group of people as they had poor communication skills and could hardly get members to agree on any given issue. Furthermore, they left a halo of mistrust behind, on the side of owners, as some money had been collected from them to join a non specified association, while no action had been effectively carried out in their support.

Owners did underestimate a fact: this experience opened the way to a new formal structure: IP Associati.

Little attention has been devoted to the fact that associations are environments in which identities can be shared and 'culturally oriented efforts' can be produced (Polletta & Jasper 2001: 287). Both in Modena and Verona, a phone centre-related identity emerged among owners. Their respective associations, regardless of their more or less formal status, certainly contributed to the development of political identities (see also Pilati 2009), based on cross-ethnic traits and even more on other shared characteristics relating to their actual job position.

Importantly, what defines actors is not only their position, nor their function within the society or a given community. They are also defined by the tensions, conflicts, cultural transformation and the social relations they experience (Touraine 1997). In other words, the evolution of collective action produces and encourages continuous re-elaboration of identity (Fantasia 1988, Hirsch 1990, Melucci 1995, Bernstein 1997, Goodwin et al 2001, etc), through the definition of boundaries between actors engaged in a given conflict. As stressed in section 6.3, the legislative process that lead up to the approval of regional and local pieces of regulation went hand in hand with the emergence of a specific commercial category: that of phone centres. As we will see later, the imposition of this identitarian structure has resulted in mobilisation efforts taking up specific traits. Phone centre-owners have hardly protested as im-migrants. They have done so as phone centre-owners, at least as far as Modena is concerned. In a similar line, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago developed a form of Latino ethnicity as a response to urban programs focused on Hispanics (Padilla 2985).

So far this chapter has introduced the associational forms that have developed around phone centres in Verona and Modena. Associations can take many different forms, as we have seen in the preceding pages. They can have similar objectives and experience similar difficulties. Most importantly, regardless of their existence, mobilisation efforts can take various directions and the same applies to their members and non-members. While individuals might identify themselves with a given association and participate in its activities, or even just some of them, they might equally carry out actions extraneous to any association. In general, collective action tends to be fragmented and spread over different institutional and non institutional scenes at different temporal intervals. It is disseminated

with uncertainty but this opens up the way to possibilistic unexpected outcomes (Hirschman 1980). I will try and account for them next. Before a few more details need to be discussed relating to the above mentioned associations as far as leadership is concerned.

7.2 Between strong leadership and tentative coordination.

The President of IP Associati is an Italian. His professional background is characterised by many years of experience in local trade unions. During an interview (November 6th 2008), it was mostly his disappointment and disillusion that emerged. He invested good part of his life in this professional environment. Vanni[184] dedicated considerable energy to support the weakest segments of society. In the last years of his career he suffered mobbing. This is how his unionist experience ended. What happened exactly is not clear, nor relevant for this work. What is sure is that his whole background did influence the steps he was to take. When he left his job, Vanni bumped into the phone centre business, almost by chance. He was looking for an entrepreneurial opportunity and set off to invest in this sector which seemed to be promising. He bought a phone centre from a man of immigrant origins who had opted for a change in business. It was the year when the Anti-terrorism Decree was introduced, 2005, but the effects it carried with it were far from evident at that time.

In coincidence with his new start-up, the young man, in his fifties, started a second related activity: the sale of phone lines. This job required him to visit phone centres and familiarise with owners. In the meantime, the first runs of inspections were implemented. Owners discussed with him, confronted, argued, tried to define possible avenues to protect their business, which contributed to feeding entire family units. He was the only Italian in the sector - apart from another female owner - and was soon recognised as the best possible representative. Vanni gladly accepted to take up the challenge. It was an occasion for him to revive his mobilizing ideals and somehow recover from professional disappointment. Needless to say, he had also a personal economic interest in organising collective action as he had a phone centre himself. Some actors, particularly policy-makers and neighbourhood committees, affirmed this provided him with the overwhelming motivation to act. It might be well so. However, his commitment has never come to a stop, not even after a couple of years, when he resigned to sell the shop, due to family reasons and the unceasing pressures on the business of phone centres.

[184] This is his actual name. It is reported because local and police officers and journalists all know him as the President of IP Associati.

Scholars generally agree it is first and foremost the biographical background of immigrant activists that encourages them into collective action and possibly into leadership roles. In particular, the political experience they mature in their home country as well as during their migratory path seem to provide the basis for their commitment. This was the case for Mamadou. He is the person that created a dedicated mailing list, kept everyone informed about relevant news and insisted on the need to meet and act, in Verona. All owners confirmed this, especially those who have been mostly involved in the Comitato.

Mamadou has been very active since his arrival in town, in spite of work and family commitments. He believes it is important to get involved in politics and to claim one's own rights:

'I always get to the heart of things, even though I'm not sure it will all go in the right direction… I've always been like this! It is now fourteen years I have been here in Verona and I have always been active in various associations… it is us [immigrants] that founded them. (…) In the evenings, when I was still employed as a factory worker I met with fellow immigrants to get organised. I'm part of the Senegalese Association in Verona. (…) This is why my wife is not very happy! It keeps me very busy. But she knows that I like to get to the heart of things, to have the right… This is me! If I am not granted a given right I do my best to claim it. I have always been like this. Whenever something is organised by immigrants I go and join them…' (June 6th 2008) *(extract 27 - appendices)*

During summer 2008, when I was well into my field work in Verona, I managed to attend a couple of meetings of the Comitato. They took place at the Coordinamento. Owners had to take some decisions on what to do next. A voice emerged above all others: that of Marco. Initially, I took it for granted he was the leader of the Comitato, as he was 'screaming louder'. He was not, he never was. This is not to deny the important role he had: phone centre-owners privileged legal actions and he was a resource at hand to go down this path.

Mamodou, on the contrary, assumed a leading role, or better a coordinating one, with the help of his cousin, Sidy. He was never officially voted to occupy this position, nor was he co-opted. Yet, it legitimately occupied it with the tacit consensus of phone centre-owners, who appreciated his capacity to 'hold things together'. This was somehow reconfirmed every time he visited a phone centre to bring owners up to date on the latest, thus following up on the emails he regularly sent while stressing the importance of meeting and mobilising. It is not to say that decisions rested with him. He has certainly been the most active promoter of any action by the Comitato. Nevertheless, no decision has been taken without a substantial consensus by members, at least the most active ones. This suggests the association has hardly been governed by a hierarchical structure.

As it can be expected, it has proved hard for Mamadou to keep constantly in touch with all phone centre-owners. Their shops are spread all over the city. Adding to this, he has not managed to develop a privileged relationship with all colleagues, but the effort was done to try and reach out as many of them as possible, with the help of Sidy and other owners. An informal system was slowly adopted whereby the latter helped spread the voice. In some cases it was owners that acted already as community leaders; in others it was owners that voluntarily offered to inform colleagues operating in the same neighbourhood (see for example June 15th and December 13th 2008).

The motivation to act has been mostly filtered through Mamadou. It has been no easy job. According to him, it has been hardly successful at all:

'We got organised almost a year ago but it is not… we are not very strong yet because other phone centre-owners do not believe in it hard enough. Everyone stays in their own corner. It is not easy to get immigrants organised. They do not believe they can do something because a person that gets a lot of… how can I explain you… they come and inspect your shop and give you fines (…). They do not carry out their job in compliance with legal requirements (…) and immigrans on their side start believing that tomorrow and they day after they [the police forces and the local authorities] will come again and harass you in yet another way… and myself, I do understand very well why they believe that very little can be done… but it is different for me…' (June 14th 2008) *(extract 28 - appendices)*

'*It is not easy to get immigrants organised:* this is the opinion of Mamadou. According to him, '*everyone stays in his/her little corner*'. No mention is made of why they do so. This will become clearer later. Similarly to Mamadou, Vanni lamented the difficulty of motivating im-migrants. During an informal conversation, in early January 2009, he recalled a similar experience, at local trade unions, and he admitted it is always a hard work that absorbs lots of energy. The fact should not go unsaid that this conversation took place in a phase in which many members of IP Associati had lost faith that anything could be done to have their claims taken into consideration. The same (mostly) applied to Vanni. He was also suffering from the burden of a perceived failure in getting phone centre-owners together. '*Laxity, selfishness and fear: these are they keywords in Modena*', he said[185].

'*The mobilisation of immigrants mostly depends on their cultural background*', he re-affirmed repeatedly, since I first interviewed him on October 31st 2008. He was strongly convinced that im-migrants do not necessarily have a '*culture of collective action*', unless they happen to have matured one in their country of origin. This suggests there is hardly any (positive) cross-contamination with Italian activists. Language fluency, in his view, plays a limited influence instead. This is consistent with the findings of the Politis research program

[185] From an email exchange on January 3rd 2009.

(Vogel and Leiprecht 2008) which highlighted that while fluency in the receiving country's language was intended as a crucial resource, limited competence did not prevent newcomers from engaging in the first place.

It is more other factors that affect their level of mobilisation, including membership to trade unions. While saying this, Vanni provided the example of phone centre-owners who live and work in the provincial area of Modena. He specifically referred to the Jalil and his colleagues and to the starting up of the informal association that anticipated IP Associati. At the same time, he highlighted the expectations that immigrant members pour onto individuals they entrust as a leader:

'What they want is someone who is always ready to solve their problems. They, as individuals, do not have any collective spirit. They do not have the spirit to say: 'Together we are strong.' This is why they say: 'I delegate it all onto someone and he/she will solve my problems.' (November 6th 2008) *(extract 29 - appendices)*

Members chose Vanni as the President because they thought he would be capable of interacting with authorities adequately, due to his professional background and most importantly his language fluency:

'We chose him especially for the language. In a way of another this is an advantage. We can even speak Italian quite well but we never lose the accent…' (phone centre-owner, December 9th 2008) *(extract 30 - appendices)*

As the above interviewee explained, he does not only speak the language correctly, he speaks it with a distinctive Italian accent. Hence, he can be automatically associated with natives, that is to say citizens with a concrete right to claim.

There is another side to the picture. Some forms of mistrust towards him lurked behind the words of some phone centre-owners. Apparently, they derived more from the memory of past experiences with Jalil. Overall, a general appreciation was shown, even though a few issues are still unresolved:

'Not all of us see Vanni regularly. Those who know him well, do so because he goes regularly to their shop to load voip stunt.' (phone centre-owner, December 30th 2008) *(extract 31 - appendices)*

'Owners like Vanni because he is not patronising but… in Bologna things work better because there is someone in charge. It is not that everyone is in charge there. Here in Modena we are all in charge, do you understand? If anyone is more senior [in relation to his/her arrival in Italy] and can understand things well and can speak Italian well enough it is him/her that wants to be in charge maybe. In Bologna, if one of my fellow countrymen is in charge everyone respects him/her. Here, on the contrary. If someone is in charge, someone else will say: 'I am more senior than you.' In Bologna they manage to make some steps forward. Here, whenever Vanni says: 'Let's do this', one

says: 'Ok, I'm with you', someone else will say: 'Vanni, who is Vanni?' (phone centre-owner, April 28th 2009) *(extract 32 - appendices)*

First, it was lamented that the President had a privileged contact with some colleagues he was in business with. Vanni was well aware of it, as much as the other female Italian owner. She helped him out when the association was first set up. As she explained, on the one hand, it was vital to keep visiting all phone centres, especially in periods when the spirit was low; on the other, it was hardly possible to fit it into a dense weekly agenda (phone centre-owner, November 18th 2008). Second, while Vanni is very much appreciated for his non-patronising attitude, he fails to be considered as representative of im-migrants at all. As a result, some members have been reluctant in welcoming any proposals put forward by him – regardless of whom had elaborated it in the first place, thus slowing down the decision-making process. Most importantly, a sort of internal 'fight' developed around leadership (phone centre-owner, April 28th 2009). According to a few, the leader had to be an immigrant owner and the choice could only fall onto the most senior one, with respect to his/her date of arrival in Italy. Because it was not so, some members restrained from participating in activities.

7.3 Between familiar and public forms of engagements, political and pragmatic goals.

States of inequality can be taken as a constant variable. Rebellion is rare, as Piven and Cloward (1977) supported. Subordinate classed do challenge power holders, they do put forward their claims and press for them to be addressed, but only in very exceptional circumstances do they manage to actually do so. Cases are even more rare in which they do so successfully, at least in the view of activists and leaders. Of course, it all depends on expectations too. Collective actions can only be weighed against a reasonable enough definition of what goals could be achieved in the first place.

Political opportunity structures do represent an important explicatory variable. Scholars agree on a general thesis: when the institutional channels of access to the decision-making process are closed to challengers, the latter will resort to unconventional, extra-institutional forms of action to make their voice heard. If we look at the national level, it is evident that institutionalal channels are certainly closed for phone centre-owners – as for im-migrants in general: they do not have the right to vote. Nor are discursive opportunity structures favourable at all for them, as we anticipated in section 3.3.3.1 and will further explore later.

Political opportunity structures, at a local level, remain yet relatively unexplored, in the academic literature.

Considering its political subculture and its reputation as a laboratory for integration polices, Modena can be expected to be a hotbed of civic engagement also for non-citizens. A specific body was set up for newcomers to be represented and consulted, in spite of the fact it holds no decision-making powers; a Centro Stranieri was created, as part of the Department for Social and Sanitarian Policies, with the main aim of favoring the socio-cultural integration of im-migrants and their families[186]; mediation services[187] have been developed to cope with neighbourhood conflicts including, among others, those relating to the presence of 'ethnic shops'. Furthermore, while in the context of safety im-migrants tend to occupy the mere role of victims or scapegoats, a specific survey was conducted in Modena in which they have acted as protagonists. For once, it has been asked to them who and what is to blame for unsafety. A rather different scenario emerges in Verona. Immediately after the last elections, in 2007, a number of measures were passed: they were clearly of a discriminatory nature with respect to im-migrants. Against this scenario, it is rather unsurprising that no effort was made to specifically address their needs, nor to facilitate their integration. A similar task might be in fact carried out by other 'general' offices. It is not.

Similarly to Modena, a consultation body was formed. As we will see, the body is still in existence and yet it is hardly operational. In short, it is in Modena, where institutional channels seemed more open to them, that owners mostly managed to make their voice heard. Nevertheless, I do insist a much more complex picture lies ahead. Other factors need to be considered in order to explore the political opportunity structure of the two cases under analysis. I am referring on the one side to alliances with influential actors and on the other to potential levels of repression or facilitation of collective claim-making activities by institutions. All throughout the chapter, and particularly in sections 7.6 and 7.7, I will report on 'successful' and 'missed' alliances between phone centre-owners and more or less influential actors. As for the repression or facilitation of collective claim-making activities, it cannot go unnoticed that in Modena a participatory process was specifically set up to discuss with phone centre-owners on the local regulation which was to be passed. On

[186] It provides them with support with respect to health issues, job insertion but also bureaucratic procedures. In addition it organizes intercultural activities and it supports the Consulta, the local immigrants' consultation body.
[187] In cooperation with Punto d'Accordo (see section 8.1.1)

the contrary, in Verona, the whole process that lead up to the definition of the local ordinance was closed up within the institutional 'ivory tower'.

There is no doubt that actors' political legitimacy can anticipate, to a large extent, the action repertoires available to them to enter the public domain (see for example McAdam et al 2001, Tilly and Tarrow 2008). Legitimate actors do not need to use radical forms of action when addressing their demands to power holders (Koopmans et. Al, 2005: 219). The cases under analysis do demonstrate that phone centre-owners have adopted various such forms, against a background in which they were relatively powerless. Nonetheless, it will become evident that the choice of a given repertoire does not only depend on the actual chances available to mobilisers, but also on their perceptions of whether any chance exist at all. Adding to this, as banal as it might seem, actors might privilege some actions rather than others , regardless of more or less favourable institutional opportunities.
The risk of a structural reading is to provide far too ample space for existing fixed external threats or opportunities to explain the processes under investigation. It should not be forgotten that any such threats or opportunities are not only associated with routine interactions between governments and political actors. Needless to say, they change over time. The electoral climate, for example, is likely to lie heavy on mobilisation efforts, at least when actors carry some electoral weight. It is certainly hard to discern to what extent outcomes spring from collective action strict or rather from changing political opportunities. Moreover, other unpredictable, incidental or casual factors can intervene to rule for or against the effectiveness of mobilisation.

What is sure is that while fundamental power inequalities exist between actors, challengers are not necessarily overwhelmed by powerlessness (McAdam 1999), nor must they await for facilitative support to mobilise. Academic interpretations, on their side, tend to privilege structural perspectives, but there is more to it. A rigid structural reading does not provide a sufficient appreciation of the fact that contentious politics is fundamentally interactive and dynamic. Furthermore, the visibility of protests and unconventional forms of actions might be misleading, thus constraining scholars' understanding of contentious politics to one level of analysis (Melucci 1996). Other forms of engagements can be observed, if we allow for an attentive enough observation of contentious episodes.

Any analysis of collective action can catch unprepared even the most attentive of observers if they fail to allow for its indeterminate nature. Whatever happens is not necessarily the

result of a stimulus-response dynamic (McAdam 1999). The course of action is by no means uniform. It is scattered with traps, it can be interrupted by a plethora of vicissitudes and all forms of rebounding and be exposed to more or less fraudulent manoeuvres. More than often, it can take unforseeable directions (Cefaï 2009).

As far as the Italian literature is concerned, scholars tend to agree on the fact that migrants are mainly occupied with mutual aid and cultural types of activities, aimed at the promotion of their own cultural heritage. Notable by their absence are organisations with expressly political demands (see for example Mantovan 2007). Furthermore, authors mostly report on the relative weakness of im-migrants as political actors, even though some of them (see for example Belluati 2004) provides us with some timid hints pointing to their agency. The essay that follows caught up this thread of analysis. I will adventure into a description of collective actions in Modena and Verona by paying attention to mutations, in connection with changing institutional opportunities as well as more individual determinants, while at the same time respecting their chronological backbone. This will be done in a comparative light, as far as findings allow for it. The investigation will focus on activities as they emerged 'en train de se faire'. It will sketch out the trajectory that phone centres troubles followed, against a horizon charactised by a pluralism of engagements. Various forms of engagements will be highlighted, including public as well as more familiar ones that tend to be discredited in the name of a common good (Trom 1999 cit. Cefaï 2009). I will also account for more fray forms of engagements that have been thought, planned, re-planned, suspended, carried out or not and that generally escape the eye of researchers, thus ending up being classified as missed opportunities. This will be done in the belief they could well provide with the seeds for further mobilisation efforts or else shed light on the complex character of collective action, including the difficulties that (seem to) lead into a hopeless cul-de-sac.

After having introduced the associational structures that emerged in the two cities under analysis, I will now take a step back. Rather than focusing on organisations *per sè*, I will concentrate on '*organised actions*' (Cefaï 2009) to highlight that actors' engagement are not only a straightforward reproduction of associational mechanisms and that actions can be identified in a constellation of dispersed activities and places (Joseph 1984). It will become evident that the trouble of phone centres has been re-configured in different, more or less institutionalised scenes, at both simultaneous and successive intervals. It goes without saying that different actors can participate in different micro-arenas, in what can still be

intended as a continuous stream of contention. Let's focus on the episodes that occupied the stage in the period September 2006 – beginning of 2010[188].

7.3.1 The first steps.

It was September 2006. Intense inspections were carried out in phone centres, in Modena[189]. The Questore was leaving to take up his position in another city. Before doing it he talked about phone centres in the press and he '*certified*' (Tilly and Tarrow 2008) the danger attached to these shops, thus legitimising residents' claims further[190]. Owners were meeting, on an informal basis. They organised a few appointments, including one with the Local Authority and one with police officers in Sassuolo. They wanted to inquire the Mayor after the local regulation he had passed a year earlier thus providing stricter requirements for the sector. As anticipated, Sassuolo is a town located in the provincial area of Modena. It has become well-known for the repressive and discriminatory measures adopted by the Municipality with respect to immigrant residents. Different was the reason why owners contacted local police officers.

They strived for clearer indications on how the Anti-terrorism Decree was to be implemented, as heavy fines had been delivered to them. To the author's knowledge, none of their questions were answered, nor was it clear whether the meeting with the Mayor actually took place at all. In the same period, inspections were under way in Verona too, but not with the same frequency as in Modena. Additionally, a few fines had been delivered. It all seemed to be 'normal', at the beginning.

After the summer, IP Associati was founded. In parallel, some press articles warned on the problematic nature of the business of phone centres[191]. Owners were not very happy about the negative labels attached to them and their activity. They were actually a bit worried and they voiced their concerns in the press[192]. In the same article, they called for the Local

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188 The decision to focus on this period depends on two main considerations: first, the material available only allowed to focus on it; second, the majority of interviewees narrated of episodes referable to this time frame. To be fair, only scarce information is available for the period 2006-2007, particularly for the Veronese case. The majority of information derives from press reviews and actors' narratives which were clearly rather fragmented, as they accounted for facts that happened more than a year earlier. In fact the field work only started in March 2008. Any omission is attributable to the limited resources available for the research.

189 As the press review indicates, inspections were carried out more than once a week. In fact, more than an article per week was published on this topic.

190 This article was published in September 2006, but it is one of the articles that unfortunately could not be retrived and hence was cited by phone centre-owners.

191 See Gazzetta, In via torre negozianti e residenti ormai esasperati. November 3rd, 11.

192 La Gazzetta, Fermate la caccia alle streghe. Chiusure fatte su pressione di forze politiche xenofobe. November 27th 11 2006, pg ?

Authority to consult them: rumors had it that a new regulation for the sector was about to be drawn and they expected to be involved in the process. Members met on a regular basis, even though attendance by them varied. Nonetheless, all of them demonstrated to be well informed about any progress made by the association (President of IP Associati, November 6th 2008). Internet played a crucial role in this sense: it facilitated the scheduling of meetings and any necessary updating (see also Tilly and Tarrow 2008). A similar comment can be made with reference to the Veronese context. While meetings often went unattended, most members were kept informed via email.

The foundation of a dedicated association, in Modena, generated a sense of political efficacy, alongside an increasing trust that something could be done (see also Fennema and Tillie 1999, 2001), in spite of the negative experience accumulated through previous mobilisation efforts (phone centre-owners, November 11th 2008, Modena). In particular, the hope was growing that communication channels could be opened up with institutional actors, now that an Italian was representing them. Expectations went partly fulfilled, later in time. However, it is debatable whether it depended on the legitimacy enjoyed by their President. It should be remembered - as mentioned already - that Regional Law 6/2007 already provided for the Municipality to consult interested parties.

With the beginning of the new year, in February 2007, increasing pressure was put on the Local Authority to define a regulatory framework capable of avoiding the untamed proliferation of phone centres. It was a regional Consigliere that did so[193], the same that drew up the proposal for a specific regional law, the final version of which was passed in May 2007. Shortly after, in July, the Municipality announced it was going to define a local regulation[194].

Some hundred kilometers away, in Verona, the situation was getting very tense. A run of inspections was planned shortly after the new Mayor took up his mandate. As anticipated, it was not the first one he planned. Another run had been carried out while he was still responsible for the Assessorato Regionale alla Sanità, in order to verify the hygienic requirements of phone centres and kebab shops. This time it was particularly harsh: large scale inspections took place. Each phone centre was visited repeatedly. Many of them were visited once a day, or more, by a patrol including various police forces. According to

[193] Gazzetta, Phone centre, Pighi dimentica? February 2nd 2007, 11.
[194] Gazzetta, Phone centre: ecco le nuove regole. July 21st 2007, 13.

Marco, it was in coincidence with this run, in summer 2007, that the Comitato really started mobilising. Initially, members chose the legal way. In some cases appeals were delegated to Marco. In others, owners acted independently and contacted a lawyer themselves. I interviewed two of them (December 1st 2008 and April 12th 2009). Both expressed positive comments about owners: in their view they were demonstrating a capacity to act autonomously while taking charge of the difficulties they were facing with their business, thus suggesting they were well integrated into the local society. A few phone centre-owners in Modena choose the legal path too. Yet, it was mostly later on that they privileged this instrument.

7.3.2 The participatory process in Modena.

Towards the end of the year, IP Associati was invited to a meeting organised by the Assessore alle Attività Economiche, in his office. A first draft of the local regulation was presented to owners. Comments were expressed in return, as well as critiques. This was meant to be only a first meeting, the initial step of a participatory process, at least as far as phone centre-owners had gathered:

'This is how they presented it [as a participatory process], but, to be true, this is how things went: 'We want to write up this regulation, you can put forward your needs'. We have put them forward, we have shared our objectives and we have stressed that all our shops were in compliance with respect to hygienic-sanitarian norms, etc. etc. They showed us a first version of the regulation and we have said that we wanted some articled to be removed (…) thus trying to make them understand our motivations. The Assessore and the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici told us that they would have taken our comments into consideration and that they would have discussed them with the relevant Commission to then share with us their reflections. In the end, they did not accept any of our changes to the regulation. The only one they accepted was that relating to money transfer. All the rest was not accepted.' (phone centre-owner November 7th 2008) *(extract 33 - appendices)*

'I mean, they listened to us, when we met them to put forward our concerns, they immediately showed us a first version of the regulation that was to be approved and then they gave us an appointment so that we could express all our ideas and say what we did not agree with. The Assessore wrote down everything we criticised about the regulation and he discussed all these points at the meeting of the Consiglio Comunale. They said they did all they could to try and meet our needs but there are things they did not take into consideration at all, they did not take anything into consideration apart from the issue of money transfer.' (phone centre-owner, November 18th, Modena) *(extract 34 - appendices)*

The actual process was set up with the main aim of drawing up the regulation itself, as the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici himself confirmed. Local officers wanted to demonstrate their willingness to address and possibly solve residents' complaints. Arguably, this was becoming even more urgent as the Mayor's mandate was approaching its last year and the electoral campaign was soon to be planned. Oppositional parties had not failed 'to

use' phone centres as an exemplary demonstration that the Municipality was not attentive enough to residents' needs[195].

A plethora of actors were involved in the participatory project, which can be better defined as a technical roundtable: the Settore Politiche Economiche e Patrimoniali, the Settore Trasformazione Urbana, Qualità Edilizia, Fascia Ferroviaria[196], the Local Police, the Mayor's Cabinet Office, the Centro Stranieri, the Ufficio Igiene Pubblica dell'ASL[197] and IP Associati. Each actor was involved in a specific phase, according to their competence.

What is interesting is that while the trouble of phone centres could not be expected to be addressed merely with the drawing up of a dedicated local regulation, the participatory process focused on it. Other relevant issues were not even mentioned, within this institutional scene. It included inspections and specific neighbourhood conflicts from which the trouble of phone centres had actually emerged. Arguably, they could have shed light on some of the most thorny aspects to be addressed.

In a preliminary phase, prior to the drafting of the local regulation, the Municipality had organised a monitoring activity. Police officers and cultural mediators - entrusted by the Centro Stranieri - had been asked to visit phone centres in order to sketch a detailed picture of the sector. It was mostly technical information that was retrieved, such as the shop dimensions and their structural characteristics (phone centre-owner, November 6th and December 9th 2008). Cultural mediators did not accompany police officers in the whole round, but only in the visit to phone centres that had been the object of residents' complaints. In these cases, a short interview was conducted with owners, to find out their opinion in this sense while trying to dig out any difficulty they were possibly experiencing with either customers or neighbours. '*They then disappeared and never came back'*, as a few owners commented (December 9th and 12th 2008). At first, similar remarks suggested their surprise. However, they further explained that: '*It almost seemed it was done for nothing but to find out how phone centres could be closed down*'. In fact, they did not feel their concerns were taken into any consideration afterwards. Moreover, the new structural requirements spelt out in the local regulation ignored the fact that most phone centres are situated in very little shops in listed buildings, where no structural works are permitted.

[195] Il Resto del Carlino, Bene le regole, ma non costringeteci a chiudere i battenti. August 21st 2007, 8.
[196] The Department for Economic Policies, the Department for Urban Regeneration and building regulations.
[197] The Public Hygien Office of the competent Health authority, at a local level.

Negotiations barely went any further in the following phases of the process. As the extract above suggests, two meetings were held at the Municipality to discuss with owners. In a first meeting an initial draft of the regulation was presented to them, in a second, shortly after, they were specifically asked for their opinions. A third meeting took place, which I will discuss later.

Owners invariably complained for their scarce involvement in the whole process and for what they perceived as a very limited readiness on the side of the Local Authority to discuss with them and take their suggestions on board. Another actor argued in a similar direction: the Secretary of Lapam. He stood by phone centre-owners, as will be better explained later. This is why he asked the Assessore alle Attività Economiche for a meeting to take the chance to express his reticence, and that of CNA[198], towards the regulation:

'Together with some colleagues of CNA whom we involved in this issue, we went to meet to Assessore and we told him: now stop for a moment and leave them alone. The result was that we managed to convince them to avoid some awful things. In some cases we managed to convince them not to impose certain requirements onto certain owners [that could only carry out some works due to structural limitations of their shops]. We told him: do not do this. I am referring also to some serious aspects … now I cannot remember precisely.' (March 4th 2009) *(extract 35 - appendices)*

What emerges from the above is that Lapam and CNA did partly manage to support the cause of phone centres. In fact, they insisted with the Assessore 'they should be left alone'. Eventually, they succeeded in making sure the Municipality would consider the specific structural characteristics of each shop, instead of imposing requirements that owners could hardly comply with. At the same time, they felt no space was really available for negotiations to take place.

A rather different narrative was reported by the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici, according to whom the Local Authority had initially been very prone to confrontations with phone centre-owners (October 10th 2008). In his view, it was the latter who became very rigid in their position. To be precise, this happened after the local regulation had been passed, when owners understood there was no other alternative for them but to appeal against the new legislative framework.

Participatory tools can certainly be intended as an instrument to facilitate actors' access to a public arena. Unfortunately, all too often they are considered as the main avenue towards

198 Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa (National Confederation of Handcraft and Small to Medium Size Businesses).

the configuration of the 'res publica', while they only represent one of the places and moments in which a public problem can be possibly configured. Most importantly, they cannot ensure in themselves an effective participation on the side of all actors, particularly those who hold no electoral power. Indeed, in the case of Modena, it is rather the 'Janus face' of this governance tool that emerged, at least in the perception of phone centre-owners. From a first reading, it would be reasonable to claim that the Modenese Municipality offered them with an opportunity to speak up their voice. Undoubtedly, it did so. Yet, the evidence provided should warn from any a priori enthusiastic understanding of similar instruments without any appreciation of more or less explicit dynamics of politics. In other words, no participatory process can be participatory at all, unless ample space is allowed for actors to confront and bring forward their claims.

7.3.3 'Enough of apartheid!': im-migrants rising up in Verona.

Back to Verona. In the first days of December 2007, some phone centre-owners joined a protest. It was organised by the Coordinamento, to reclaim the rights of im-migrants as a collectivity. Briefly, some facts, as reported by the main local newspaper, l' Arena[199].
It all happened in the town centre, right in the main square, where the town hall is situated. A group of 300 im-migrants were counted. Native residents joined too.
As usual, Marco was in the forefront of efforts that lead up to the organisation of the event:

'*Enough of apartheid in Verona. From today onwards we will fight against the Municipality*'[200]

This is what he declared to journalists. Two banners were hanging under the arches of the Roman amphitheatre, in front of the town hall:

'Here racism is at home, it's a shame!'

'Italy is a Republic based on work… by migrants'[201].

[199] L' Arena, Immigrati in piazza. In Bra manifestazione di protesta del coordinamento migranti. December 2nd 2007, 16.
[200] 'Diciamo basta al nuovo apartheid di Verona. Da oggi sarà guerra contro questa amministrazione'
[201] 'Qui il razzismo è di casa, vergogna!'; 'L'Italia è una Repubblica fondata sul lavoro...migrante'

What was the protest about? It strongly condemned some measures the Municipality had just adopted. To cite one, the Mayor had introduced a minimum requirement for access to public housing, that is to say a proof of two years' residence on the local territory. Protesters included immigrant shopkeepers too, who lamented being the target of police inspections. During the demonstration, an appeal was made for the Mayor and the Prefect to meet a few representatives and listen to their claims. Eventually, they were invited to the Prefect's office. Six people went. A few im-migrants, Marco, the secretary of the Coordinamento and a representative of shopkeepers. It was Mamadou. He was there to represent first and foremost phone centre-owners.

As he later reported in an interview (June 6th 2008), the Prefect had promised he would set up a meeting with the Comitato Provinciale per l'Ordine e la Sicurezza Pubblica to discuss on inspections, the modalities in which they would be carried out and the problems relating to the implementation of the Anti-terrorism decree. It is worth mentioning that no other phone centre-owner actually referred to this protest during interviews. When I explicitly asked about it I was told that, yes, they had organised it but it only served to make it clearer to them that any such form of voice is useless.

Snow et al. (1986) taught us that social movements function as carriers and transmitters of mobilising beliefs and ideas: they are actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists and observers at the same time (198). Focusing further on the protest, various frames can be detected. '*Here racism is at home*': this is the diagnostic frame, this is the problem they highlighted. Causal responsibility was implicitly attributed to the Municipality for its racist measures. '*Enough of apartheid in Verona. From today onwards we will fight against the Municipality*': a prognostic frame coupled the diagnostic one, thus suggesting a solution or rather the way forward to the identified problem. It was not written on banners. They were merely spoken out to journalists. No specific mention was made of what kind of fight was to be lead. It seemed more a kind of threat to the Local Authority rather than an actual prognosis. In other words, attention was focused on the problem, while prognostic considerations were left to the margins.

What was certainly missing was a motivational frame for protesters to act. It might be somehow derived from the slogan '*Italy is a Republic based on work… by migrants*' as it reminded newcomers of their importance as a labor force and hence of their right to speak up. Unfortunately, it was not straightforward enough to provide an actual motivation and,

possibly, it deterred further action. It might also explain why protesters, at least as far as phone centre-owners are concerned, eventually opted for more pragmatic actions. In fact, diagnostic frames alone, no matter how well developed they are, can do little to affect mobilisation (ibidem).

Part of the struggle of any form of collective action involves a conscious effort on the side of actors to frame their activities in ways that resonate with various audiences they hope to influence, including not only activists but also bystander publics and constituencies. Two remarks can be made in this sense. Any reference to the crucial role of newcomers as a labor force could certainly hold considerable hierarchical salience for residents, in the context of industrious 'Third Italy'. It could also provide a frame that was not too abstract and distant from their everyday experience. Nonetheless, it cannot be underestimated that another frame was occupying large part of the debate on immigration: that of safety. This certainly went to the detriment of any other possible alternative interpretation of the phenomenon, thus restricting any chance for newcomers' claims to gain any further support. Interestingly, a similar discourse on work was to be adopted a few years later, on March 1st 2010, for the organisation of the first national strike by im-migrants in Italy and this might suggest a form of cross-contamination between collective actors.

7.3.4 'Siamo per la legalità[202]': phone centre-owners raising up in Modena.

In February 2008, it was the turn of phone centre-owners, in Modena, to protest. On February 7th, they were invited by the Assessore alle Attività Economiche to attend a meeting at the Municipality. It was the third meeting that was organised with them, as anticipated above. It followed the approval of the local regulation. Owners thought it would be an occasion for further confrontations. It was not.

The Assessore alle Attività Economiche was going to read it out to them. Facilitative services had been provided for owners to better understand the regulation. As the press reported[203], a few language interpreters had been involved to ensure an easy understanding of the new piece of legislation. Owners ironically stressed that, in fact, '*it was cultural mediators that spoke English and French!*' (December 3rd 2008, March 20th 2009). Considering the large majority of them come from Bangladesh, their presence was clearly rather useless.

[202] 'We stand for legality'
[203] La Gazzetta: I phone centre lasciano il tavolo dell'Assessore. February 8th 2008, 19.

As soon as owners realised they would have no space to bring forward their arguments, they stood up and left. The whole process had converged into a 'test of power' (Bolstanski and Thévenot 2006) in which actors failed to achieve any form of 'coordination' (ibidem). All of them had been given a chance to express their views. They had done so with reference to clear order of worth (riprendi meglio questione teorica), but the test was not passed. Arguably, it was not even put in place, because no opportunity was available for an actual confrontation of different opinions. This fuelled the hostility towards power-holders and, with it, the motivation to mobilise. A week after, a protest was organised:

'We attended the following meeting of the Consiglio Comunale and we raised our banners. We said: 'You must listen to us.' We are a small category, you need to listen to us, we represent a part of local businesses (…). We also agreed on the need to draw up a regulation but not a limitation to our activity.' (phone centre-owner, November 6th 2008) *(extract 36 - appendices)*

As this owner reported, the date they chose for their protest coincided with the following meeting of the Consiglio Comunale. On that day, they entered the building, they stood up in the hall, raised their banners and manifested their dissent, while waiting to be admitted into the meeting room. They were soon asked to leave. Once outside, they continued protesting. Leaflets were handed out to passers-by, which reported similar messages to those spelt out in the banners. Among others, they included the following[204]:

'*Our activity is already subjected to a license by the Questura*'[205]

'*We are the scapegoat of urban decay*'[206].

These are all diagnostic frames. As in the case of Verona, no specific actor is identified as the ultimate cause of underlying problems. Yet, two of them are implicitly referred to: on the one side the Municipality, on the other residents and neighbourhood committees. The protest in Verona focused on the Local Authority and various dispositives introduced by it. One the countrary, in the case of Modenese phone centre-owners only one instrument was put under attack: the local regulation, alongside the double authorisation it required from owners. Residents and neighbourhood committees were equally blamed: they were accused of having transformed these shops into the '*scapegoat of urban decay*'[207]. A safety discourse emerged strongly. This should be hardly surprising. Given the diffusion, at a national level,

[204] Resto del Carlino: Phone centre costretti a chiudere. February 12th 2008, 11.
[205] 'La licenza della nostra attività viene già rilasciata dalla Questura'
[206] 'Siamo il capro espiatorio del degrado'
[207] 'Il capro espiatorio del degrado'

of a frame associating im-migrants with criminality, it could well be expected for owners to try and surpass it or even promote a counter-frame. In fact, another banner reported this statement: '*We stand for legality*'. Their position was further reinforced in declarations by the President of IP Associati who, some days earlier, had announced the adoption of a decalogue through which owners were going to discipline themselves. It was done in the effort to reverse the negative imagery that was generally used to portray these shops[208].

'*Hundred families without a job*[209]': the problem diagnosed by protesters went well beyond the technicalities of the regulation. They recalled attention on the risk for many (phone centre) family units to be left unemployed because of the new legislative framework. Particularly at a time of economic crisis, whereby unemployment represented a threat for all residents, it could have provided with a legitimate enough frame capable of building up considerable consensus. The author's impression is that a safety discourse took over, again, with a overwhelming effect. This is all the more evident in the prognostic frame adopted by owners: '*Let the label associating phone centres with criminality and international terrorism be removed from our shops*'[210].

Protesters were suggested that something had to be done to overcome the criminality label attached to phone centres. It remained unclear who should do so and how, considering they were widely perceived as 'evil activities'.

Owners' discourses circulated and resonated in public opinion. In fact, a sort of thrust and counter-thrust took place between the Local Authority, neighbourhood committees and IP Associati. The press provided the stage for it[211]. How effective , this 'dialogue' was for each and all actors is quite debatable. A few days before the approval of the regulation, the coordinating body representing neighbourhood committees had advanced claims that recall the '*jeopardy thesis*' by Hirscham (1991: 87)[212].

Its underlying logic is based on the elaboration of a series of motives that are capable of invalidating any potential opportunity for political transformation. It stresses how a given object or phenomenon severely affects a fundamental state of well-being, thus making it unacceptable. In this case, we are clearly talking about phone centres and their presence.

[208] Resto del Carlino, Legge col trucco: vogliono chiudere i phone cener. January 29th 2008, 8.
[209] 'Cento famiglie senza lavoro'
[210] 'L'etichetta di collegamento con criminalità o terrorismo internazionale ci venga tolta'
[211] See section 8.3.3
[212] Gazzetta, Richiedere legalità non è razzismo. February 2nd 2008, 22.

Claims advanced by the coordinating body described them as an 'evil' phenomenon. Against this scenario, any space for discussion on the regulation of these shops was of course hard to construct:
attention had been shifted to intolerable grieviances suffered by (native) residents. Any specific concern by phone ccentre-owners could only be help as irrelevant and illegitimate as a result.

7.3.5 The emergence of the legal way and other 'familiar' actions.

Numerous meetings were organised by IP Associati after this protest took place. Efforts were made to define the way forward for collective action. Eventually, it was decided that the next step to be taken was to appeal to TAR[213]. A lawyer was contacted in Milan. He had dealt with many similar appeals in the Lombardy region. Two were the main objectives of the association in this case: on the one side they asked for specific articles of the local regulation to be judged against the criteria of constitutionality; on the other, they wanted the regulation to be suspended until the Court's decision. The sentence was soon pronounced. Suspension could not be granted as the regulation was not yet effective. As for the rest, no sentence has been passed to date.

In Verona, appeals continued to be put forward either to the regional TAR or the Giudice di Pace[214], but none in relation to the regional law. They all picked up on fines delivered to phone centre-owners[215]. The main concern of the Comitato was that of sorting out, once for all, the difficulties relating to the interpretation of the anti-terrorism decree and the regional law. New runs of intense inspections were again under way, with the beginning of summer 2008, and the need was felt to do something about them. A crucial step was taken in the month of June.

[213] Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale (the Regional Administrative Court). These are regional administrative judicial body, whose main task is that of dealing with appeals put forward by private individuals on administrative deeds.
[214] The Giudice di Pace has the main function of mediating minor disputes between two or more parties, either in the context of civil or penal law.
[215] Narrative evidence repored that an appeal against the regional law had been prepared by a lawyer in Padua – another city of the Veneto Region, but it derived from the initiative of phone centre-owners of the same city.

Tired as they were of what they perceived as harassing inspections by the police they opted for a pragmatic action[216]. Some owners confronted police officers face to face when subjected to inspections. More about this later[217].
Considering the Prefect had not kept his promises and no meeting had been organised with the Comitato Provinciale per l'Ordine e la Sicurezza Pubblica, a few members of the Comitato insisted on setting up an appointment with him. Considerable disagreement was evident on whether he was the right person to speak to.

'*I want to see the Mayor!*' yelled out a few participants, during a meeting of the Comitato on June 8th. The need was strongly expressed to confront with him. He was identified as the ultimate perpetrator of their difficulties; he embodied the actual Local Authority. As I will explain in section 8.3.2, he has been clearly adopting a rather personalistic attitude. Owners' wish to confront with him which confirms that his endeavour has been rather successful in this sense. Nonetheless, the Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive was eventually chosen as the best interlocutor.

A few members of the Comitato had already been in her office to ask for explanations on the newly introduced requirements and, on those occasions, clear indications had been given to them. In other words, a positive memory of previous experiences with this officer encouraged them in this direction, in spite of the fact that specific questions on inspections could hardly be addressed to her but to the Local Police, the Questura and the Prefect. The idea was still pending to contact again the latter, with a plea to honour his promises. It was rejected, with the intention to get the Dirigente to do so. She was to open up the channels of communication with relevant institutional actors.

On May 9th 2008, a group of ten owners adventured into her office, without any prior appointment. In case of a refusal on her side, owners had agreed to call journalists and give visibility to the non-collaborative attitude by the Municipality. All members of the Comitato wanted to be there. The most active were. They did not want any representative to speak in their name. Upon arrival they were asked to wait at the door. The Dirigente soon arrived and they exchanged a few words. She promised she would consult the Mayor on how to interpret the local regulation so that owners would know exactly what requirements they had to comply with. In particular, they wanted to make clear whether

[216] As Pivet and Cloward (1977) demonstrated, it is the everyday experience of people that shape the reasons of their dissent, the target of their anger and the forms of their protest.
[217] See section 7.4.6

they could offer telephone services only or both Internet and telephone services, in the hope to press for the second interpretation to be privileged. Let's see what her memory retained of contacts with phone centre-owners.

'When the regional law was passed they started coming here as little ants and in a case, but now I cannot remember well… a lawyer came too, he is famous for he has been supporting the weakest social segments let's say. He came here and started yelling but what could we do? We were not against that owner he came with… he was simply not in compliance with the new law! (…) We had contacted all owners, we did not organise meetings to explain the new law, as you were asking me, but we sent a letter. Actually, to be honest it is often the case that they do not speak the language and it is better if they ask the help of a consultant, a trade unionist or a business consultant. (…) Normally we do not do it but in this case we sent them a letter and we tried to write it with only few technical words and I have to admit that they were very disciplined and started coming to my office, one by one, with their eyes wide open while saying: 'Oh my God, maybe now you are going to withdraw my license.' Yes, they came here but they were well behaved and came along to ask for some clarifications as many of them were not in compliance with the new law. Normally they came along individually, without any consultant accompanying them.' (February 3rd 2010) *(extract 37 - appendices)*

This is the extract of an interview that was conducted a few months ago only, after numerous insisting requests to the Municipality. Interestingly, no memory emerged of any disruptive action by owners. After a specific inquiry on my side, the Dirigente could not remember about the Comitato having visited her. She could only recall a rather arrogant lawyer that accompanied a few owners: Marco.

During the interview it soon became evident that while some efforts had been made to facilitate owners into understanding the new requirements, a clear-cut distinction of responsibilities was in her mind: her duty was to deliver phone centre licenses and it stopped there. It was not for the Local Authority to consult nor confront with them on any difficulty. They were simply meant to conform with the new regulation. In fact, she refused to contact the Prefect, the Local Police or any other colleague on their behalf.

After leaving her office, the members of the Comitato decided to visit straight away the Comandante of the Local Police. They were invited to sit down with him and voice their concerns. An informal agreement was reached that a halt would be put to inspections while waiting for the Municipality to give clear indications on how to interpret the regional law. At the same time, the Comandante pressed owners to comply with the new regulatory framework as inspections were going to continue on a regular basis. Interestingly, in an interview that was carried out with him later, on January 21st 2010, he explained me that the meeting had been very positive: eventually phone centre-owners had learnt how to deal with police forces appropriately, that is to say they learnt to confront them directly as much as their native colleagues generally do.

Many of the owners described it as the only successful action undertaken by the Comitato (July 20th and August 3rd 2008). Marco had the same idea but activists often cast too high expectations on collective action, without taking into due consideration what can be 'realistically' obtained in a given context (see Pivot and Cloward 1977). It should not be underestimated that similarly to some owners, he was wondering whether inspections would actually come to a stop, now that the Mayor had been demonstrating (to residents) his intention to act strong. The Comandante, on his side, reported that inspections had already come to a halt in fact:

*'Absolutely yes [they had a direct contact with the Municipality], both with us and with the C.d.*R. *Commercio e Attività Produttive . These meetings had an impact on the inspections that followed. To start with, the number of fines delivered to owners decreased. In addition, it became clear that owners were now willing to comply with the new requirements. You need to bear in mind that by now we are carrying out regular inspections. They know that we check their shops two, three or four times per year and that we check whether they register customers, if they have the police authorisation needed to operate their business. They know that the Municipality keeps them under control.'* (January 21st 2010) *(extract 38 - appendices)*

It is therefore questionable in what direction this meeting was effective, whether for the Local Police to reaffirm that inspections were to be carried out regularly or for their temporary suspension to be extended. The members of the Comitato that attended the meeting were invited to get organised into an association and to join the following meeting of the Comitato Provinciale per l'Ordine e la Sicurezza Pubblica. This suggests that 'political space' was more likely to be accessible to 'organised actors' only. However, to the author's knowledge, no meeting was ever organised. None of the parties took the matter any further.

Similarly to their colleagues, owners in Modena contacted police forces. In particular, they called for a meeting with the Questore. It was held at Lapam and more than forty members of IP Associati joined. They later reported that very little results were accomplished. Only some of their doubts were clarified. In face of inspections, they continued to be at the mercy of police officers' discretion:

'We did not achieve great results… we met the Questore and in part it went well but in part it did not as things are not that clear yet… so we are still afraid of inspections because we do not know what can come out of them. But we do not give up! We will keep trying!' (phone centre-owner, November 6th 2008) *(extract 39 - appendices)*

7.3.6 The last resort.

Soon autumn arrived. A demonstration took place in October. Its main aim was that of raising citizens' awareness with respect to discrimination, following racist episodes scattered across the Italian peninsula. Modenese residents were the privileged target of the event. It was organised by various local immigrant communities, but other actors supported the initiative, including the Provincia, the Municipality of Modena, trade unions and many third sector associations[218]. IP Associati was not invited to join, as an owner reported (December 29th 2008). It was them who contacted the organisers to participate in it. Leaflets were distributed during the event to publicise the difficulties of phone centre-owners. No space was given to them in the press. Demonstrators had not agreed with this action in the first place. Arguably, the overarching objective was that of uniting immigrants and building on the support of local actors. It is reasonable to think this could not go hand in hand with a denounciation of the enduring problems that the phone centre-owners were suffering from.

As the end of the year was approaching and with it the date in which the local regulation was to become effective, IP Associati called for an appointment with the Mayor, without any success. Hence, the support of two Consiglieri was sought. Contacts with them were established through Lapam. After having shared his concerns, Vanni insisted for their help. One of the two promised she would present an interrogation in the following meeting of the Consiglio Comunale, on December 18th. Phone centre-owners set off to plan other actions that were to take place on the same day.

Tension excalated and grew stronger: '*Sooner or later someone will risk their life*'[219], an owner confided to me (December 17th 2008). He was crying when he explained that some of them were truly worried. A few were suffering from health problems. According to rumours, one of them had even tried to commit suicide. Their spirit was generally very low, to say the least. The belief was spreading that nothing could be done anymore and that owners could only wait for the TAR to judge the local regulation and hopefully revoke it.

On December 18th, the association called for a strike. It was an ostentation of members' readiness to sacrifice one day of business to voice their dissent. The strike also aimed to

[218] Gazzetta, Stranieri: un presidio contro il razzismo. October 17th 2008, 17.
[219] 'Prima o poi ci rimette la pelle qualcuno'.

mark their presence on the territory and to recall the important services they offered not only to im-migrants but to native residents too: hardly any grocery store was left in the city centre and elderly people could find a few food products in phone centres that operated a mixed business. They were also convenient for penniless young people.

All owners closed down for half a day, apart from two of them who chose to continue working: they were convinced it was going to be useless. It goes without saying that the success of any strike is very much linked to the electoral weight protesters hold, as an owner suggested (December 5th 2008, see also Piven and Cloward 1977). She had called me to ask for an opinion. I had only met her a few times and she seemed to be very much concerned about her business only. I had quickly taken it for granted that she had no interest in the association's activities. As it later emerged, she was rather ill at ease surrounded as she was by male colleagues. I wondered whether that was one the reasons why she was not a very active member of the association. Possibly it was so. In the end she did not close down her shop, even though she did join the protest her colleagues had organised, when I confirmed I was going to be there.

In spite of the efforts by the Consigliere mentioned above, no interrogation was put on agenda for the meeting of the Consiglio Comunale. It was eventually discussed a month later, in January 2009[220]. Owners decided to attend the meeting anyway. They stood there silent, while holding their banners. A Consigliere of the oppositional coalition (Flori, Modena a Colori) later reported this clearly testified they had been given considerable space to speak up their concerns:

'Owners had the opportunity to speak up also during a meeting of the Consiglio Comunale, last December. They had the freedom to do so and I do not think they have similar opportunities in their home countries. '[221]

As soon as the meeting was over, a few owners and the President managed to have a chat with the Mayor, the Assessore alle Attività Economiche and the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici. They wanted me to accompany them. I refused. The situation was very tense for them and for me too: a few months earlier I had been asked to interrupt my research. After the meeting, an owner told me:

[220] See note 179

[221] (my translation) From the proceedings of Interrogazione Consigliere Massamba, January 26th 2009: *Regolamento phone centre*. Trasformata in interpellanza

'We have tried to keep calm (…). We have only tried to make them understand that if they continued in this direction we would not accept everything so easily because if it makes sense it's ok but it is not acceptable for us to put up with this and if they go on like this we will also try and involve other immigrants… we would not like to resign to protests but if it is necessary…' (December 30th 2008) *(extract 40 - appendices)*

It was mostly Vanni that spoke up. He stressed the unfair nature of the regulation, with the Assessore stating that nothing could be done to change it: the Consiglio Comunale had approved it. He reminded owners they had had a year to comply with the new measures, while encouraging them to contact the relevant office, in order to discuss any specific technical difficulty they could experience while carrying out structural works. An attempt was also made by owners to have the regulation suspended until the TAR sentence. It was not agreed. Before leaving, the President announced he was going to dismiss and take no responsibility for any possible violent reaction by owners with the coming into force of the regulation. Neither the Mayor nor the Assessore, nor the Dirigente reacted in any way. A protest followed, in front of the town hall.

Phone centre-owners were well aware they were missing a considerable critical mass for the protest to be successful. A few of them remembered with nostalgia times in which their mobilisation efforts could enjoy the support of friends and relatives as well as other activists like them. But that was in their home country, before they migrated. Shortly before the protest, they had been inspired by the President to try and involve colleagues of other 'ethnic shops'. A strong motivational frame was used in this direction: they were likely to be the next target of municipal policies. Nonetheless, none of them joined. Apparently, they did not want to expose themselves publicly for fear of retaliation. Interestingly, the same frame had been used in Milan by a much larger group of phone centre-owners who had protested against the Lombardy regional law a year earlier[222]. Was this a form of cross-contamination? It could be. Most phone centre-owners constantly demonstrated to be well informed about any form of protest carried out by their colleagues in other cities. Moreover, Vanni had been receiving a daily update on any issue concerning phone centres by subscribing to a google search tool. As he declared himself, news had often fed into his ideas on how to move forward.

[222] Corriere della Sera, In piazza gli imprenditori stranieri. Legge sui phone centre: oggi corteo di protesta dal Pirellone al Comune. March 24th 2007, 10. Available at: http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2007/marzo/24/Legge_sui_phone_centre_oggi_co_7_070324009.shtml [accessed on November 5th 2008]

Two other frames were adopted for the protest: a diagnostic and a prognostic one. The former focused on racism to point out the nature of the regulation as well as the consequences it was going to carry with it. Phone centre-owners, especially at a time of economic crisis, were going to be unemployed with a family unit to care for. The Municipality was implicitly blamed for it, while, as the leaflet declared, all those politicians who claim to be democratic were explicitly criticised for having failed to take any position in this regard. Differently, from the previous protest, in March 2008, a prognostic frame was also adopted: 'We want the local regulation to be suspended!'[223]

Protesters had gained the support of a small group of left wing activists, but only five of them joined the actual protest. Their motivation was strong: they had been actively contributing to the fight against any securitarian stance. An important aspect should be noticed: contrary to the previous protest, in February 2008, no article reported on this event. The electoral period was starting. It certainly countered against its visibility[224].

Tension had reached its climax. Phone centre-owners were very angry and wanted to set off for a new protest, with the help of left wing activists. They met a couple of times in their premises. I was again asked for help. This time, owners wanted some contacts of colleagues I had been interviewing in Verona. I thought a mechanism of 'brokerage' was under way (McAdam et al. 2001). It was mostly a blast. It extinguished more rapidly than can be imagined, as the President stressed (December 19th 2008).

While Modenese owners had been busy organising their protest, Veronese ones resigned to voice their concerns in the press. It was the first time the Comitato was given visibility[225]. Articles had been merely reporting the perspective of residents, police officers, policy-makers and, in very rare cases, that of individual phone centre-owners[226].

After a number of heated discussions, the Comitato did no longer agree with Marco on the way forward. He had been stressing on the need to organise protests –the organisation of the 1st of March 2010 national strike was under way - while failing to deal with their everyday issues, such as legal appeals, in due course. Owners repeatedly asked me to provide them with a few contacts of reliable lawyers. They still believed the only way

[223] 'Chiediamo la sospensione del regolamento!'
[224] See section 8.3.3
[225] L' Arena, Siamo perseguitati e costretti a chiudere. December 11th 2008, 18.
[226] See section 8.3.1

forward was the legal one and they have persistently done so over time, similarly to their colleagues in Modena. To date, no other action has been taken in this sense though, nor in any other direction. What is sure is that the Comitato was no longer ready to build on persistent claims over newcomers' rights nor to linger onto unconventional forms of action. In the words of a member:

'It is practical actions phone centre-owners need to think about now! Fine to be involved in politics, phone centre-owners do want to put forward immigrants' claims, of course, but this can only be done once practical problems are sorted out' (December 14th 2008) *(extract 41 - appendices)*

This suggests that while experiencing problems of marginalisation, when their primary needs are not yet satisfied, it is hard for im-migrants - and for anyone else in fact - to dedicate any time to politics (però 2008, Mantovani 2007). It is worth making a few comments here. As Hamid (2006) pointed out, it is rather problematic to use actors' qualifications to identify actions relating to politics. In fact, the same people can label any of them as political or not depending on a variety of factors. I noticed, for example that any such definition by owners strictly related to how high the spirit was. In other words, whenever I talked to owners in a positive phase of their mobilisation efforts – as far as their perceptions were concerned - they tended to report on every little step they were taking, thus stressing their political nature. In other circumstances, they rarely referred to any of their previous actions as political.

Somehow, many of them seemed to use this label whenever they could associate them with some positive outcomes, that is to say when they resonated with their target and possibly resulted in some forms of agreement or at least confrontation.

Another question should be highlighted. I believe that actors' politicisation might actually fail to be acknowledged when it takes the shape of low profile forms of engagements that cannot be easily detected (see also Eliasoph 2005). It should be clear by now, and it will be more evident in the following sections, that phone centre-owners have enacted conventional and unconventional forms of actions, familiar and public types of engagements. None of the meetings they called for, including those for members and those with police and local officers were classified as politics by them. They were experienced as actions relating to their more familiar world, as they were far from any institutional scene, regardless of any institutional actor being actually part of it or not. All these forms of engagement, contributed to their opening up to a public arena. Together with a few others:

those which failed to be implemented because obstacles were encountered or else agreement was not reached among members. I will focus on them in chapter 8.

7.4 Phone centre-owners and the police: between routine checks and residual practices of expulsion power.

Any expansion of opportunities and threats relates not only to the way they are enacted but also to they way they are perceived (Mc Adam 1999). Additionally, perceptions of state response may be particularly influenced by power manifestations such as forms of repression (Della Porta 1996), which carry with them the less visible (for whom?) response and yet the most dramatic actions by challengers. This section will provide a clear example in this sense.

When I first started investigating the conflicts around phone centres, I barely considered the possibility of interviewing any police officer or official on issues that went beyond residents' complaints. As I progressed with my research, I realised it would be well worth looking into police inspections too. Interviews with phone centre-owners and their customers were in fact very informative about the non negligible impacts inspections were having on them. I started to organised interviews with various members of the police forces, including the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa of the Questura of Verona, the Comandante of the Local Police, various police inspectors and agents somehow involved in phone centres inspections.

Unfortunately, over a year and a half has passed since I first asked the authorisations to interview the above-mentioned officers and officials. Eventually I did, even though I was never granted one from the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa of the Questura of Modena. The same applies to police agents. This is to say the research would have certainly benefited from more evidence from police forces. Nonetheless, I do believe it is well worth analysing the data collected as it raises issues of utmost relevance both from the scientific and political point of view.

7.4.1 After 9/11...

Since 9/11, enforcement officers in many EU countries have made extensive use of preventive powers to target people they presume to be Muslim. Many im-migrants have been repeatedly stopped for identity controls both out in the streets and in places associated with likely terror targets, such as metro systems, train stations, shopping malls, predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods, telephone calling centres, halal restaurants and mosques (Open Society Institute 2009).

Drawing from phone centre-owners' narratives, the association between Muslisms and these shops can be hardly confirmed. However, Italian Anti-terrorism Law 144/2005 officially identified them as '*terror target sites*'. It goes without saying that the prevention of terrorism is a legitimate aim and a core function of national governments. The United Nations even provided for States to suspend certain rights whereby they are confronted with a state of emergency - including the threat of terror attacks - that would seriously jeopardise the country's security (Office of the High Commissioner for human rights 2003: 18). At the same time, strict limitations as well as procedural requirements have been imposed with respect to any suspension or derogation:

'*The principle of non-discrimination must always be respected and special effort made to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups. Counter-terrorism measures targeting specific ethnic or religious groups are contrary to human rights and would carry the additional risk of an upsurge of discrimination and racism'* (5). *'[Additionally, any relevant measure] must not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, etc.'* (103).

Following the introduction of Anti-terrorism Law, phone centres have been subjected to regular inspections by different police forces. Some have been planned by the Comandante della Polizia Locale, to check on compliance with the relevant regional laws. Others have been planned following directions by the Ministry of Interior and the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa, with the main aim of countering terrorism and checking on administrative requirements. According to various police officers and officials[227], the approval of the Anti-terrorism Law was crucial in that it provided them with a preventive tool. By listening carefully to their narratives, another aspect emerged: phone centres came to be identified with '*sites of undocumented*'. Police officers grew gradually aware of their '*social function*' and of the fact that undocumented im-migrants could be easily found there. When they first arrive

[227] See for example Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa, December 16th 2008, Verona; Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona

in a country, they invariably strive for emotional and practical support and phone centres have assumed a crucial role in this sense over time.

It cannot be stated that the Anti-terrorism Law was specifically aimed either at the control or the expulsion of undocumented. Yet, it seems that a perverse mechanism turned it into a valid instrument in the hands of police officers, when these shops were recognised as an easy target to single them out. In other words, inspections transformed in what I define as a '*residual practice of expulsion power*'[228]. A few words need to be said here. Expulsion power is mostly connected to practices of border control. Identification, on its side, represents the first step in the process. Phone centres inspections can be linked to it: beyond their explicit goals, like checking on compliance with the Anti-terrorism Law, they have come to be associated with another unofficial scope: the fight against irregular migration. Hence, they can be ultimately understood as a tool of expulsion power, in spite of the fact they clearly fall outside mainstream practices of control.

The nature of inspections as a '*residual practice of expulsion power*' became even more evident as the regulation of phone centres evolved into a more complex normative structure. Alongside the introduction of a wide range of laws and regulations, the competence for inspections started falling onto different police bodies. This created considerable confusion, as will be reported later. What needs to be stressed now is that when asked about the outcomes of inspections, interviewees always referred to the identification of undocumented im-migrants. This confirms that the fight against irregular migration has gradually stood out as one of their tacit goals. Furthermore, it is legitimate to wonder whether, in the case of Verona, it was more than that. In fact, phone centres were explicitly indicated in the Municipality' s program as a target of inspections, similarly to other places considered to be 'at risk'[229].

What needs to be stressed here is that inspections have not been performed in a vacuum. They took place in the context of the '*Italian emergency season*'. Terrorism has little to do with it. As anticipated, since the beginning of the 1990s, immigration has come to be seen as emergency number one, in Italy. In spite of the fact that im-migration flows are no longer a new phenomenon, no strategic long-term policy has been elaborated to manage them. They are still very much considered as the main safety problem of the country. Citizens'

[228] For the term practice see note 87
[229] See Section 5.1

attention has been diverted towards an imagined '*enemy*', newcomers (Dal Lago 1999) who have been blamed as the main cause of insecurity. At the same time, numerous alarmist campaigns have been organised all over the peninsula. This has considerably constrained im-migrants' access to and exercise of rights. It has been even more so for the undocumented. Paradoxically, against a national scenario characterised by the presence and constant reproduction of a population of undocumented, im-migrants' expulsion has become the cornerstone of the internal control system[230], with an increasing attention being placed on the repressive role of police forces. Furthermore, the so-called '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law), has demanded clampdowns and strict enforcement of national immigration laws, including the decision that the status of undocumented is to be punished as a crime and that proactive police efforts must be made to seek out illegal im-migrants. This has further legitimised a pre-existing stance, in the measure it was '*certified*' by government agencies (Tarrow and Tilly 2008)

It should not surprise therefore, that police officers try to do their best in this direction. It is actually a shame for them when a person, and particularly an undocumented im-migrant, manages to ward off an inspection, because it makes them lose credibility:

'You can have problems with some customers (…) I mean, when you find an undocumented or a person that tries and avoid an inspection when he/she sees you arriving it is clear that, to start with, it is not nice if he/she manages to escape (…) because you lose credibility. You cannot go and carry out an inspection and give the the possibility to take the piss out of you. It is my job! It is not such a banal statement. It is extremely difficult to manage and see everything and everyone inside the shop (…) and whatever you miss you can be sure you will find it there the next time. It is as if you gave an authoritisation to do so (…). Among the requirements the shops [phone centres]must respect there is also that of sorvegliabilità[231]therefore you close the door, you check everyone for documents, you carry out all other checks and then give documents back to them.' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena) *(extract 42 - appendices)*

So far we have talked about police forces' tasks only. Other actors have taken up a role in the context of phone centres inspections. Responsibility over identification generally rests in the hands of police officers who, when necessary, proceed with im-migrants' expulsion. It was explained, however, that phone centre- and Internet point-owners are now required to register customers prior to their access to telephone and Internet services. Basically, with the introduction of the Anti-terrorism Decree, the duty of identification has also been passed onto them too. When a country goes through a state of emergency, it is reasonable

[230] See section 2.2.5.2

[231] According to Ministerial Decree 564/1992, places like pizzerias and cafés that sell drinks and food need to ensure they have a way out which is open onto the street, that is to say a way out that allows to verify easily who enteres and comes out

for owners of commercial concerns to be entrusted with it. At the same time, it is important to reflect on how this principle has been implemented and on deriving consequences:

'The fact of asking owners to identify customers can have some sense but the problem is actually how the normative is interpreted and implemented and how inspections are carried out …'. (lawyer, May 20th 2009, Verona) *(extract 43 - appendices)*

Arguably, inspections have been hardly effective in achieving any of their set or unofficial goals. Nevertheless, they have had a disproportionate impact on newcomers' everyday life, including phone centre-owners and customers.

7.4.2 A complex system of inspections.

As set forth in Anti-terrorism Law, it was the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa to be first entrusted with responsibility over phone centres. Notwithstanding the approval, a few years later, of regional and local pieces of legislation, his Division now functions as a kind of '*control room*' for all police forces responsible over the sector[232]. Its specific role includes first of all an in-depth investigation on prospective phone centre-owners to determine whether they possess all the subjective requirements to be suitable for their business. In other words, it makes sure they have a clean record and no relationship with any criminal network. Second, it checks on the objective requirements set out by the regional laws in relation to shops structural requirements. This is done in coordination with the Local Police, as it relates to its sphere of competence. Third, it verifies the adequacy of data transmission equipments, together with the Ministry of Communication and the Polizia Postale[233]. If all requirements are satisfied, phone centre-owners can be delivered an authorisation to operate their business. Here ends the first part of the duties of the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa. The second part includes a number of inspections.

Regular inspections have been carried out to check owners follow the correct procedures to identify customers and register their personal details appropriately. If they fail to do so and are found in mis-compliance with the law more than three times, their shop can be confiscated until further notification. Inspections are also organised upon specific

[232] Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa, December 16th 2008, Verona.
[233] This is a specific Department of the National Police that is responsible over activities relating to the control and repression of illegal and administrative activities that fall within the complex area of communication, including first and foremost illegal activities perpetrated through the Internet.

directions by the Ministry of Interior. They tend to be planned at regular intervals and whenever terror attacks or similarly serious events take place. Finally, targeted inspections can be planned whenever the need emerges to undertake specific investigations, even though, in this case, it is other specialised bodies of the National Police that take up the task.

Cases were reported in which the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa was contacted by residents who complained about disturbances caused by phone centres and their customers. The Dirigente stressed that similar episodes strictly relate to owners' capacity to manage their shops properly. Whereby problems emerge, then, responsibility is generally delegated to the Local Police who will try and prevent the explositon of street fights, quarrels as well as any other type of disturbance. Having said this, the Divisione Amministrativa intervenes if complaints turn into a public order problem, as they need to act strong on issues which carry the heaviest impacts on inhabitants:

'Well, a lot depends on shopkeepers and owners because if the owner starts acting though or manages everything in the right way everything will work out fine, if the owner does not bother about it because it is even better for him toh ave people outside that maybe end up making an extra call … but in this case he/she will pay the consequences for it because if it turns into a public order and safety problem I close the shop down in compliance with the law for these activities.' (Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa, December 16th 2008, Verona) *(extract 44 - appendices)*

A Local Police Inspector explained that inspections are often carried out by a patrol including various members of police bodies, including not only the National and Local Police, but also the Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza Corps[234], so that they can maximise their efforts:

'It requires an organic intervention, with two or three patrol cars [referring to different police forces] (…). We make sure there are no irregularities from the normative and administrative point of view, then we check for compliance with any other relevant piece of legislation.' (November 21st 2008, Verona) *(extract 45 - appendices)*

Similar narratives were provided in Modena. Stress was also put on the fact that organising inspections together with other police forces allows for a more efficient intervention as far as the '*management of immigrants*' is concerned:

'It is handy for us to carry out inspections all together because a big problem of all local police forces in Italy is the management of foreigners: it requires a formal identification, a photo-identification, finger prints, etc… we can well do everything till this stage, we can do it in our headquarter. From there onwards we need to the help of other police bodies [the Questura]and considering the official channels we generally have to use it all results in a considerable

[234] The former belongs to a branch of the Army, the latter belongs to the National Police Force and is responsible for activities relating to border control and fraud investigations.

burder for our operators and therefore inspections cannot be as efficient because we manage to do one instead of six inspections.' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena) *(extract 46 - appendices)*

It should be clear by now that inspections generally result from a straightforward intervention planned by one of the above-mentioned agencies. However, they can also spring from the cumulative effects of decisions taken by individual police officers (see also Open Society Institute 2009). It has been demonstrated that the latter can be affected by stereotypes which are largely shared in public opinion[235]. For example, when residents put pressure on them with insisting complaints, a practice can spread whereby police officers organise runs of inspections to re-assure them. At times, they actually acknowledge themselves the potential perverse effects that this can produce: they can fail to re-frame safety issues in a wider discourse focusing on the public good (Bifulco and De Leonardis 2005). Of course there might be police officers that simply hold racist views. Yet, others can be equally unaware of the extent to which generalisations can drive their subjective actions. As far as the case studies are concerned, targeted inspections might have come to a climax following a number of variables. This included, among others, increasing requests by inhabitants to check on one or more phone centres which were perceived to be the privileged locus of alleged illegal activities (see for example Resident and Shopkeeper, April 16th 2009, Verona and Resident, December 16th 2008, Modena). Press coverage supported these perceptions. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that police officer represent a fundamental source of information for journalists. Therefore, it can be them who actually generated news in the first place. If we flick through Veronese and Modenese newspapers, we can easily notice how frequently articles associated with phone centres report on successful inspections whereby undocumented were stopped, even though the number of individuals that were actually found undocumented is very limited[236]. This is rather unsurprising if we consider that this is part of police officers' job. Nonetheless, it might have contributed to creating a dystopian image insisting on a widespread presence of undocumented which in turn was reproduced through police officers' tasks.

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235 See also Palidda 1999, Quassoli 1999, Maneri 1998, Dal Lago 1999.

236 As testified by press articles both in Modena and Verona police forces seem to organise runs of inspections whereby they stop approximately hundred people. In all the relevant articles found, they reported that less than ten individuals were found undocumented (see for example L' Arena, Investigazioni speciali. Terrorismo islamico e internazionale. May 11th 2007, 11; L' Arena, Contro l'immigrazione clandestina. Blitz in stazione e a Veronetta. March 25th 2006, 17; L' Informazione, phone center passati al setaccio: trovati sette clandestini ma non dappertutto irregolarità. October 3rd 2008. A similar narrative was provided by the Local Police Inspector that I interviewed in Modena: in particular, he wrote it in a report he prepared following my request for data (December 19th 2008, Modena).

7.4.3 Increasing inspections.

According to phone centre-owners, inspections have been very frequent. Some of them have been visited more than once a week, regardless of any irregularity being detected in their shop. Police officers and officials, on their side, admitted that both their number and frequency increased considerably since the introduction of the Anti-terrorism Law - even though no precise figures could be provided in this sense. Residents' complaints have been at the centre of their concerns. Attention has been granted to each one of them, while priority has been given to cases in which the number of grievances reported was particularly high:

'Whatever citizens report is a priority for us. We try and understand what they are about and what we can do about them. We do this for every single complaint they forward to us. It is not about the one person that makes one call, but as far as we can manage we plan an inspection even for this (…). We try and calibrate our intervention according to citizens' complaints.' (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona) *(extract 47 - appendices)*

'According to our plans, every phone centre needs to be inspected at least twice a years, which means inspections do not affect their activity that much. Considering these activities operate with a license delivered by the Questura I think that this is a reasonable frequency for inspections. In any case we prioritise shops on which residents complain most.' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena) *(extract 48 - appendices)*

A few Modenese phone centre-owners suggested that an increase in inspections has been noticed whenever a new Questore arrived in town. In their view, this is easily understandable, as they need to provide residents with tangible signs of their commitment, as soon as they take up their position: immigrant shops inspections are particularly praised in this sense (see for example November 6th 2008, Modena).

In Verona, a similary scenario emerged, with considerable differences. To start with, a different turning point was highlighted. Narratives confirmed that the first massive run of inspections were organised in summer 2007, a few months after the new Mayor was elected[237]. As anticipated earlier, he was the main signatory of a regional law proposal for phone centres. While the final version was still being discussed, he was in charge of the Regional Health Department and he set off to implement a number of health inspections in both phone centres and kebab shops in Verona[238]. The latter were then indicated in his

[237] Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona.
[238] As reported in various articles of the local newspaper l' Arena in the month of January 2007. See for example L' Arena, Ma l'amministrazione conferma l'attenzione sulle Golosine. 'Faremo accertamenti igienici'. L'assessore Tosi promette sopralluoghi di verifica. 6th August 2005, pg 12.

electoral program as a target of inspections[239]. This raises the question of whether his actions were meant as a strong political manifesto to be used for its electoral run[240].
Immediately after, the new Mayor took up office, inspections were undertaken on an everyday basis, sometimes even twice a day. A few runs had been carried out in previous years, but never with a similar frequency. When inquired about their rationale, the Vice Comandante of the Local Police[241] replied they are simply part of their efforts to address citizens' complaints. Not to be underestimated is the fact that, in the first months of his mandate, the new Mayor even accompanied police forces, thus suggesting a form of populist personalistic power. Journalists were invited to join too, to give visibility to inspections and, arguably, to prove Veronese residents, that the Mayor was keeping his promise.

Some phone centre-owners, in Verona, insisted that police forces has concentrated on checking specific neighbourhoods, including first and foremost Veronetta[242]. Some narratives confirmed it, other did not. Possibly, this happened in the very first months the newly elected Mayor took up his mandate. Afterwards inspections equally targeted other areas of town. Let's report a few narratives of how owners experienced inspections:

'The fact is that there is still considerable confusion as far as phone centres' issues are concerned. I talk to you exactly in the same way I talk to the police. Do you know what they tell me? X, we do not know anything about it, we need to do this inspection. Furthermore, the last time they came here, the police officers told me they would give me the number of the Comandante and then they told me: call him every week and ask him: is there any news?' (June 14th 2008, Verona) *(extract 49 - appendices)*

'Mamma mia, they come almost four times in a month! All of them come: Finanza, Carabinieri, every month, sometimes they come all together, sometimes only one police body comes. (…) And then every time the police finds an excuse to give you a fine. They do not care about it. Even if they find an undocumented outside the shop. They do not care about it, they give you a fine.'(June 26th 2008, Verona) *(extract 50 - appendices)*

'I do not speak Italian so well but I do understand it and I know that policemen wrote that they found an undocumented standing on the pavement (…) now this person was minding her/his own business. This thing about undocumented is a matter of public security. We told the police: this person was standing on the pavement and I do not have the right to ask for documents. Who am I to do it? If he/she represents a threat for public security what can I do?' (November 18th 2008, Modena) *(extract 51 - appendices)*

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[239] Comune di Verona, 2007. Linee programmatiche di governo per il quinquennio 2007-2012. Session 24th October 2007 n 79. Available at: http://portale.comune.verona.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=9229 accessed on January 10th 2009 (accessed on 1 January 2008).
[240] This doubt was also raised by two lawyers who have been working on some appeals in relation to the closing down of some phone centres. They argued similar inspection are part of a clear discriminatory policy which might be explained, in part, as a tentative answer to residents' fears
[241] November 21st 2008, Verona.
[242] See sections 6.1.2: 6.1.3

As the above extracts clearly show, there has been some confusion among police officers about the underlying rationale of inspections. Some of them suggested owners should regularly contact the Comandante to find out about the latest provisions made for them.

This was after one of them harshly denounced that fines are given with any excuse. Most interestingly, reference to the fight against undocumented was made by two interviewees. They pointed out the excessive responsibility entrusted onto them in this sense: examples were given of undocumented being found outside their shop, with police officers giving fines to owners as a result.

It should be specified that the phone centre of the second interviewee has been particularly subjected to inspections. This can be possibly understood when looking at his im-migration path. Arguably, he will never have an easy life in Verona: he has made a big mistake, once[243], and that was it. The phone centre of one of his colleagues has been repeatedly subjected to inspections too, however. He does not have a criminal record. However, as he claimed, '*they might not like it when an owner keeps appealing against fines*' (December 4th 2008, Verona). Against this background, a few examples were recorded in which owners were not particularly resentful with respect to inspections. They supported the fact that police officers were only trying to do their job, by delivering fines whenever owners were not in compliance with the law (June 13th 2008, December 15th 2008, Verona).

7.4.4 Inspections and the fight against terrorism and irregular migration.

There is no indication that inspections have contributed to counter-terrorism. This is hardly surprising: when they draw from ethnic profiling techniques, as it seemed to be the case in Verona and Modena, they rarely produce effective outcomes. At best they result in arrests for petty offences, Immigration Laws violations or non-compliance with regulatory requirements (see for example Open Society Institute 2009). To be true, the main goal of the Anti-terrorism Law was one of prevention and it is hard to measure something that did not happen.

[243] As he explained, when he first arrived in Italy he worked as a street vendor - '*when street vendors were still allowed in town!*', as he said. After a few months the police inspected his flat and found some forged products as well as some undocumented friends of him. He served five years in jail. Afterwards he managed to find a job and with the help of his wife he saved money to open a phone centre. Officially it has been run by his wife. In fact, with a criminal record to date, he could not be delivered the license to operate the business.

When explicitly asked about it, the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa refused to reply, claiming the reserved nature of his work. Yet, when reporting on inspections, he stressed it was mostly on residents' complaints they had to work on, as well as on owners' compliance with the requirement to register customers. Colleagues of the Local Police highlighted similar issues and difficulties with shops structural requirements. They also confirmed that, to their knowledge, no phone centre-owner, in Verona, had been found guilty for anything relating to terrorism. The Comandante of the Local Police only recalled reporting an undocumented suspect for further investigation by the Questura[244]. In a similar vein, the Local Police Inspector interviewed in Modena could not remember of any phone centre somehow connected to terror issues. Considering his team collaborates with that of the Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa, it is reasonable to hold his answer as rather informed, in spite of the fact that specific competence on terrorism does not rest with the Local Police.

Possibly, if any latent terrorist cell had been identified, in connection with phone centres' business, the press would have been informed, as it happened in Rome[245]. Furthermore, as many phone centre-owners insisted, it is probably more sensible for terrorists and criminals to use telephone cards or public telephone boxes[246]:

'*Nowadays any terrorist should be stupid to make any calls in a phone centre. Everyone knows they are being constantly inspected.'* (June 14th 2008, Verona) *(extract 52 - appendices)*

As for undocumented, they might well feel more protected in a phone centre than out in the street, according to a Police Inspector interviewed in Modena (April 24th 2009), but phone centre-owners did not seem to agree in this sense.

Although inspections have given no tangible results in the fight against terrorism, some officials claimed they have served a broader aim. I already reported on the importance attached to residents' complaints. Equal consideration has been reserved to their perceptions of unsafety. Hence, police interventions have had a vital role in terms of

244 The local headquarter of the National Police

245 A few years ago a terrorist, who had taken part in London terror attack, was caught in a phone centre of the capital city (see La repubblica. Preso a Roma il quarto terrorista delle bombe del 21 luglio a Londra. 30th July 2005, http://www.repubblica.it/2005/g/dirette/sezioni/esteri/metrolon/ven29/index.html [accessed on 2nd September 2009].). This is one of the reasons why the national government eventually decided to subject phone centres to specific Anti-terrorism requirements.

246 The former are sold in tobacconists' and there is no police monitoring activity to make sure the details of customers are taken at all, nor their call registered. The same can be said for telephone boxes: a telephone call might be intercepted and personal data obtained only if an individual is chased and stopped while making the actual call. In fact, no telephone box is actually monitored. Mobile phones can be monitored instead, but a preventive authorization needs to be asked from mobile operators before the police proceeds to tapping the phone of any user. (Police Officer, June 28th 2009, Verona).

'controlling' public opinion: according to interviewees, they have made citizens feel safer. It is well-known that increasing demands for safety have put enforcement agencies under pressure. This, in turn, has caused heavy repercussions on their work: they have had to rethink their interventions and the way they manage the so-called '*rules of disorder*' (Palidda 2000). At the same time, citizens' demands are largely advantageous for the political system. In contrast to their inability to address structural problems, governments seem to find in the fight against micro-criminality an opportunity to act strong - or at least to show a strong determination to do so. They promise voters to cope with all the potential threats to their security (Wacquant 2002), including first and foremost the presence of im-migrants (Petrillo 2000, Palidda 2008). By doing this, they can neutralise potential allegations of idleness towards citizens' preoccupations. Regardless of any effective results, they can show they are still able to exert some kind of control (Quassoli 2004).

Similar comments can be made also as far as the fight against irregular migration is concerned. The average citizen appears to be generally more concerned about undocumented im-migrants than actual criminals[247]. The category of illegal/irregular im-migrant has been used accordingly not only as an administrative devise. It has also been used for crime prevention and repression. In fact, stopping im-migrants to check them for documents can be claimed by policemen as a positive 'outcome' of their work. As anticipated, it seems that phone centres have transformed over time into target sites of undocumented. There is nothing fundamentally illegal if police forces undertake regular visits to specific shops in the effort to search for undocumented and possibly respond to citizens' fears too. Particularly at a time when resources are limited, generalisations can help save time. Yet, the latter can be used in ways that over-target individuals. They can ultimately lead to a decline in legal standards. Moreover, they can promote abuses in the system of inspections: criminals and undocumented might be affected as much as regular im-migrants and any other ordinary citizen. All of them might be stopped by the police for the mere fact they regularly go to a phone centre. Furthermore, if the same practice is applied interchangeably to undocumented, irregular and regular im-migrants as well as actual or potential criminals, the legal protection and guarantees they should be granted by law might be severely constrained (Quassoli 2004).

[247] And it is possibly even more so now that undocumented as actually considered as criminals themselves, as set forth in the '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*'.

Paradoxically, while inspections might contribute to the fight of irregular migration, a shortage of resources might negatively affect their ultimate outcomes. Informal conversations with police officers highlighted they are experiencing considerable difficulties with the implementation of immigration enforcement laws. Against a national scenario characterised by a very strict normative framework, a shortage of implementation tools and resources have resulted in officers being unable to comply fully with them. On the one hand, undocumented are being repeatedly identified, on the other it is not as frequent that their actual expulsion follows.

7.4.5 Inspections: benefits versus costs (for whom?)

Im-migrants' access to telephone and Internet services has been very much constrained in coincidence with an increase in inspections. Some customers confessed they were very much annoyed by the fact they constantly have to show documents, even in phone centres. This is how, over the recent past, these shops have gradually lost their social function as a meeting place. Debatably, this runs counter to any effort to support the integration of migrant communities, particularly in contexts characterised by a shortage of meeting spaces for them (see for example President of the 3rd Circoscrizione, December 20th 2008, Modena)

Access has been particularly constrained for undocumented and irregular im-migrants[248].
When I first started talking to some owners, they hardly mentioned them. As I grew familiar with a few of them, many confessed that undocumented were more and more scared to visit their shops. They also pointed out that 'respectable' regular im-migrants and Italian citizens too were more resilient to go there as they did not want to be associated with inspections:

'When the boom of phone centres started and it became clear that they were very much visited by immigrants, they [the police and local authorities] introduced all these repressive measures the business started diminishing considerably. Respectful families, and I am also talking about regular migrants and Italians, do not want to come to our shop anymore because if they come here with their sons or daughters and wife the police ask all of them for documents, and they search them. It is really not a nice experience, I can tell you, not an experience a respectable family wants to have nor report to the rest of the community.' (June 6th 2008, Verona) *(extract 53 - appendices)*

[248] While undocumented refers to individuals of immigrant origins that have arrived in the country without valid documents, the term irregular refers to those who have entered the country regularly and have become irregular in a second moment, once their permit to stay expired and could not be renewed due to the expiry of their work contract.

Over time, various customers have actually stopped going to phone centres. It is particularly the case for those that experienced a harsh police inspection. In fact, they were often described as a very unpleasant event for adults and children, because of the way police officers behaved:

'*When it happened to me to be there [in the phone centre during an inspection], I saw five policemen entering into the phone centre. They immediately asked everyone to stop doing whatever they were doing, including the owner and every single customer. Everyone was asked out of phone booths, without having the time to say bye bye to the person they were talking to. Even people who were there just to accompany them were stopped. Children too! Everyone was then asked for their ID and permit to stay. It went on for an hour or so. No one was allowed in or out of the shop in the meantime. It was no fun at all I can tell you*!' (phone centre-customer, May 12th 2009, Modena) *(extract 54 - appendices)*

Interestingly, phone centres are not considered to be 'safe places' for young people to hand around. This is police officers' opinions, at least. While I was still carrying out some interviews, in January 2010, I walked past a phone centre while an inspection was under way. I entered the shop. Police officers were talking to a (immigrant) teenager. They had sent his uncle off to call for his mother as '*phone centres are a dangerous place and he should not be left alone here*'. The teenager was rather upset for the patronising attitude of police officers, he told me later. He did not quite understand what all that fuss was about, nor did his mother who was quite nervous about it. A similar episode happened in 2009, less than a kilometer away from this shop. A police patrol inspected a phone centre. A young girl was found there, behind the desk. It was the daughter of the owner. Her uncle went away for a little while to pay the bills and while she was supposed to join her father upstairs she kept playing around. The owner was accused for 'abandonment of minor'. As the newspaper reported his behaviour was to be condemned even more as phone centres are dangerous places[249].

At times, inspections were defined as frightening, humiliating or even traumatic occurrences. This happened mostly in Verona, after the election of the new Mayor:

'Since Tosi was elected everything has changed. (...) That time the Mayor joined the inspection too. Everyone was there: USL[250], the Guardia di Finanza Corps, the Local Police, tje Carabinieri Corps, the [national] police… everyone… because there were 9 cars here. All together! We were not here. My mother in law was. I was shopping. A friend of mine called and told me: 'There are many policemen in your shop'. I drove fast back to the shop and when I arrived I found something weird: almost 15 policemen! (…) I asked 'Why all this? I then saw Tosi holding his jacket over his shoulder and I thought: 'Mamma mia, today is the last day!' I looked at everyone. At that point Tosi said: 'Close down the shop right now!' (...) I got a bit of milk for my son, a few other things, some coins... and I closed

[249] L'arena, Immigrazione. Gli agenti della polizia municipale avevano posto i sigilli al negozio. September 4th 2008, 10.
[250] The local health authority

down. There were people [customers], almost… 30 people. I started crying. My son, my daughter, my wife and I were sent out as animals. And then they left. I did not know what to do.' (phone centre-owner, May 16th 2008, Verona) *(extract 55 - appendices)*

Customers mostly highlighted that phone centre-owners always try and make sure inspections are not too disruptive, by doing all they can to speed up policemen's work and by openly contesting any disagreeable conduct on their side. Yet, as narratives suggested, (some) inspections resembled a form of racial raids[251]. It goes beyond the scope of this work to argue any further in this direction. However, the mere fact they strongly recall them should be a cause of concern for the possible decline in legal standards, not to talk about reflections on the way the Italian society is dealing with immigration[252]. Regular inspections can be rather intrusive with respect to people's life. Furthermore, as some authors pointed out (Costas 2005), when entire communities are targeted, they can be subjected to a form of collective guilt. This emerged quite clearly from interviews with customers when they expressed they feel ill at ease with respect to the image harsh inspections as well as media coverage – particularly on phone centres - give of anyone of immigrant origins.

Another important observation can be made. Inspections have had a negative effect on public confidence in the police. During informal chats with customers, some worries were expressed as they felt the police could not be trusted upon for protection :

'[They] loose time inspecting phone centres while major serious crimes might be committed elsewhere' (phone centre-customer, June14th 2008, Verona) *(extract 56 - appendices)*

Most apprehensions related to their children: repeated reference was made to the fact that as they grow in what is likely to become their home country they would like to make sure they are well protected (Interview, 12th October 2008, Verona; 5th December, Modena).

Apart from lamenting the malaise caused to their customers, phone centre-owners, on their side, claimed police officers often held unjust attitudes towards them while contributing to the creating of an unpleasant atmosphere:

[251] No form of racial profiling can be easily linked to them, however, as any such form is inherently problematic: it has roots in widely used practices that might not be racist or irrational in the first instance (Open Society Institute 2009).

[252] This is all the more true for Italy, where police forces are not subjected to the principle of accountability and whereby there is hardly any system for monitoring discrimination by police forces (check on this for reference).

'When they come for an inspection they treat us [owners] as if we were already guilty for something. They have no respect for us, no respect at all. (…) They come in, they close the door and the person who is behind the desk [the owner or the shop assistant] are asked to move away from there… it is them who need to stay there so… they create an atmosphere of fear, panic… nobody can do anything, nobody can move …' (November, 21st 2008, Modena) *(extract 57 - appendices)*

Many supported that fines had been given at random, with any excuse[253]. The outcomes of various appeals put forward over time is actually proving them right[254]. What is worth noticing is that similar police practices affected owners in various ways. While some of them still feel discriminated, others actually feel 'lucky' whenever they are 'blessed' with an inspection which does not result in any fine being delivered. This highlights the discretionary power of police agents. Even more, it suggests that owners have become used to it, to the point they find it 'normal' to be fined for whatever reason:

'They never found anything out of place, I have never been fined. So I can say I am lucky. I believe that, here in Italy, if the police wants to give you a fine they always find something, even something nonexistent, so that eventually they can fine you' (April 28th 2009, Modena) *(extract 58 - appendices)*

In a few cases, efforts were made by owners to try and win the favour of police officers. To be clear no explicit mention was made of the latter blackmailing them. At the same time, some owners reported on having provided them with a free photocopying service, in the effort to show a positive disposition towards them and try and stave off unjust fines (November 17th, Verona).

A totally different story has characterised Internet points, in spite of the fact they are subjected to the same normative framework of phone centres[255]. I interviewed a few owners over time and none of them complained about inspections, nor the attitudes of police officers. Inspections have often been carried out during their closing time. Whenever they were undertaken during opening hours, instead, customers were not disturbed, nor was the shop closed to prevent them from leaving it. Only in a specific case did an owner experienced a particularly harsh inspection, whereby every customer was asked for documents and the inspection went on for long: the judge had issued a search warrant. Phone centre-owners are well aware of differences in 'treatment'. They very much stressed them. What annoys them most is the fact that even phone centres are treated differently, in other Italian cities, as will be mentioned later.

253 See pag 10, Phone centre-owners, June 26th 2008, Verona.
254 See interview with lawyer, December 1st 2008, Verona; December 9th 2008, Modena.
255 With one exception: the regional law does not apply to Internet points in Verona.

7.4.6 Challenging police practices and expulsion power.

It was with the first run of inspections, in 2005, that phone centre-owners began challenging the Anti-terrorism Law. Tourists provided with the first motivation to do it. When asked for their personal details, they were hardly prepared to do so as they did not understand such a request. In no other country has a similar requirement been introduced by the Anti-terrorism legislation. Hence, many of them reacted negatively. It was particularly the case for English customers who do not actually hold an ID document and are not used to be asked for any, in respect of privacy. Phone centre-owners soon realised that resilience to show their document was not a matter of one or more fussy customers. Motivated as they were to offer the best service to all of them, they undertook a kind of inquiry to explore the underlying reasons for their behaviour and find the best way to deal with it.

Of course the same problem emerged for all phone centre-owners. They repeatedly discussed about it, in the effort to identify a reasonable enough solution to comply with the law and to make sure that customers would not feel ill at ease. In the face of their negative reactions, owners confronted a few tourists. It became immediately clear that the requirement of identification was unique to Italy. Owners, in turn, started feeling discriminated. They felt discriminated with respect to phone centre-owners operating in other countries. This added up to an already emerging feeling of discrimination *'with respect to other shopkeepers and to phone centre-owners operating in other Italian cities, such as Naples and Rome, where the law is less rigidly applied'* (December 30th 2008, Modena). It fostered their bitterness and encouraged them to act.

Undocumented now think twice before going to these shops and the same applies to regular im-migrants, as I discussed. Tourists, on their side, often resign to leave the shops without accessing any service. They chose to go to an Internet point instead. In short, owners can now count on lower profits, not to mention the heavy fines most of them have been subjected to. The business of phone centres has indeed suffered from a considerable economic impact. All police officers interviewed stated they were confident phone centre-owners had become much more accurate in running their business. In their opinion, the considerable increase in inspections had gradually made them more responsible, as they grew aware it would be too risky not to register customers appropriately. In fact, non-compliance with the Anti-terrorism law can cost them up to a minimum of 1032 euro. If

they are found in mis-compliance for more than three times their shop can actually be confiscated. Therefore, it cannot be (economically) 'rewarding' for them to restrain from identifying customers:

'Let's say that now the situation has settled (…)They all had to pull themselves together … they have made an investment and if I go and close down the shop for a month, well… then they think twice [before letting go of identification]. In the same way it is not [economically] rewarding to use equipment in a certain way because it is enough for me to find it out once during an inspection that I 'give them a hammering' that they stop doing it in the future.' (Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa of the Questura of Verona, December 16th 2008) *(extract 59 - appendices)*

It should be specified that since the Anti-terrorism Law was introduced, there has been considerable confusion on how to implement the relevant requirements. A few examples can be useful in this sense. In principles various documents could be accepted from customers to comply with identification tasks. Owners were also assisted by Tellink - the actual program most of them use to register personal details: a specific drop down menu indicates a list of valid documents. Notwithstanding, cases were reported in which owners were given a fine as the registered document was not held valid[256]. In other cases fines were issued because they failed to ask im-migrants for their residence permit, in spite of the fact the Law does not require them to do so, nor does it actually allow them to do it. This is a task that rests exclusively with police forces. Finally, some cases emerged in which owners had adopted a system of customers' cards to avoid asking for documents every time a regular customer needed to access services[257]. A similar practice is actually carried out by Internet point-owners. However, while the latter have never been reproached for it, nor fined, phone centre-owners have.

Long discussions went on in this sense, as will be explained later. For the time being it suffices to say that police officers were themselves aware of the practical difficulties owners were experiencing. This is not to say that none of the latter took advantage of the confusion the Law engendered to justify their mis-conduct. Some of them did as it prevented them from losing customers, but, in the long run, such an attitude could not prove consistent, from a business perspective: it was senseless for them to risk a heavy fine to earn just a few coins. Of course, it could be understandable at a time of crisis, when

[256] I am referring in particular to the 'carta sanitaria' that is to say a card that gives access to health services to both regular migrants and undocumented and to foreign passports (June 14th 2008, Verona; December 12th, Modena).

[257] This is a system whereby when customers first use telephone or Internet services, the owner registers their personal details and make a copy of their document, thus assigning them a numerical code through which they are given the possibility of accessing services the following times, without providing again with their personal details.

owners can hardly count on a decent salary. Yet, it was not convincing enough. Their profits do not merely rely on undocumented and tourists. They equally derive from regular im-migrants and Italians. The point I am making here is that indeed there is a different reason why owners have failed, in some occasions, to identify customers. It is not on economic grounds. The risk they have taken is very high: as spelt out in Ministerial Decree 2005, the violation of article one – which requires owners to identify and register customers – can result in the delivery of a fine and in a penal sanction too.

Many phone centre-owners did recognise the importance of complying with the Anti-terrorism Law in the same measure that police officers did. They respect it as an overarching piece of legislation which has been defined by the Parliament and which deals with an issue of utmost national relevance. They also repeatedly declared themselves ready to do their part and to collaborate with police forces where necessary. Yet, they grew increasingly angry about inspections, the way they were carried and the manner in which identification issues were being dealt with. In both cities, they got organised and called for meetings with the Local Police. Some of the points they put across were somehow clarified. For example, an informal agreement was reached, in Modena, whereby owners were granted the possibility to identify customers once only, instead of proceeding to their identification upon return, with the ultimate aim to make customers feel more comfortable.

Hardly any agreement was reached in Verona during meetings with police officers. The issue of identification is still rather blurred. The same can be said for a different issue that came up. As anticipated above, inspections have been often carried by means of a patrol including officers of various police bodies. Specific checks have been done and fines delivered, especially as far as the Anti-terrorism Law is concerned, by any police officer, regardless of their specific competence. Owners confronted them in situ, whenever it happened. Their questions were resolved with similar answers: 'I am only doing the job I was told to do', 'the normative allows for it'. They also confronted them during meetings but no agreement was reached.

In both cities it was always owners who called for meetings, after repeatedly confronting police officers during inspections, in a familiar type of engagement. This is particularly curious in the case of Modena. In 2007, the Municipality set up a participatory process. All relevant actors were involved, including also phone centre-owners and police forces. As the term itself implies it would be reasonable to expect that this process was participatory in

nature, thus providing a platform for actors to confront burning issues. Yet, confrontations between owners and police officers took place outside official institutional scenes. The same happened in Verona, with the difference that no provision had been made there for any participatory process.

Many owners insisted that police officers were often unclear about their competence, hence they choose to undertake the legal path: a number of appeals were presented on these grounds, even though various owners preferred not to do it as it can take a long time for sentences to be passed and they cost them a fortune. Some actually won them. In one of these cases, the Giudice di Pace[258] ruled it was not for the Local Police force to check on compliance with the Anti-terrorism Decree. Police officers never took this sentence seriously[259], as the Vice Comandante himself declared (November 21st 2008, Verona) and, to date, cases have been reported, whereby this sentence was not respected. Police practices still vary on a one to one basis, depending on officers' discretionary power (see for example December 12th Verona and November 6th Modena). The political directions police officers are given are equally crucial, as a lawyer stated:

'They do not take the Giudice di Pace seriously, they do not consider him as a real judge (…) And then inspections are strictly connected with politics. The Police report sto the Prefect who needs to be in line with politics (…). I have experienced it myself when I had to contact the Prefect in Verona.' (December 1st 2008, Verona) *(extract 60 - appendices)*

The above extracts clearly indicates that politics matters. Inspections are described as very much linked to a clear political vision. The lawyer interviewed reported on a specific case in which he had the opportunity to actually experience himself what he was telling me. I will not set off to describe it. It suffices to say the phone centre was confiscated with very much visibility being given by the media. Apparently, it was to function as an exemplary case for all other owners and for residents to understand the Mayor was acting strong[260].

Phone centre-owners did not resign to legal instruments to challenge the Anti-terrorism Law and expulsion power. In spite of the risk they run of being fined, in spite of their respect for the Anti-terrorism Law, some of them refused to 'hunt' undocumented. They refused to take up a role they associated with policemen: that of checking im-migrants for

[258] See note 221

[259]This depends on the fact that the Giudice di Pace is not an ordinary judge

[260] The Prefect rejected the request for de-confiscation with an unusual motivation, as it was based on the counter-deductions of the Comandante of the Local Police - as if a judge condemned a party on the basis of the positions of the opposant party. The appeal was won by the phone centre-owner and the shop was eventually re-opened. All the related documents that had been filed at the Prefecture disappeared, however.

documents. In their view, in fact, such responsibility should lie exclusively in the hands of police forces:

'It is for the government to control and manage undocumented! I am not supposed to ask them for any document, surely not for their residence permit! Who am I to prevent them from entering my shop? I am not and I do not want to be a policeman! They might just come in to ask for an information, to meet a friend, to use the toilet! And if they need to use the telephone or internet, as any other person could do why should I not allow them to do so? They are not criminals!' (May 27th 2008, Verona) *(extract 61 - appendices)*

'Why do they welcome undocumented migrants in Lampedusa, give them bread and water and then let them disperse in cities, instead of doing like in England and Spain where they send them back or help them find a job and give them documents? I want a reply on all these questions from the Municipality! Why is it that in such a scenario they come and look for undocumented in my shop? First they welcome them and then if they come to this city and to my shop it should be my fault?(…) *But it is not 100% fair because when an undocumented lives in a country this decree does not contribute in any positive way to it… let's say I am an undocumented and I do not have valid documents [with reference to the permit to stay] and still need to live day by day. I need to go to shops, not only to phone centres.'* (December 2nd 2008, Modena) *(extract 62 - appendices)*

'It is not fair to delegate certain types of tasks. Citizens' safety is not our job therefore it is not fair that they put this burden onto us (…) Then for inspections they use certain strategies and they try and carry them out in periods in which they think they can get more foreigners… if they know there have been more immigrant flows and they do it on purpose to come and find those immigrants who do not hold regular documents.' (December 12th, Modena) *(extract 63 - appendices)*

Interviewees made clear statements in terms of whom should be held responsible for undocumented im-migrants and for safety related issue. The Local Police Inspector in Modena did argue that a very heavy responsibility had indeed been put onto them. Owners, on their side, insisted it is for the government to take care of undocumented. They also expressed very critical opinions about Italian immigration laws and practices, as compared to those of other countries which, in their eyes, are at least more coherent. Specific criticism was raised with respect to the management of undocumented that actually make it into the country, arguing that the Anti-terrorism Decree does not help them integrate, as it prevents them from leading a 'normal life'. In the third extract, the interviewee explicitely suggest that strategies are adopted by police officers to carry out inspections in coincidence with any new immigration flow so that newcomers can be easily found. Furthermore, the perceived 'strategic' use of inspections to single them out was pinpointed as scarcely effective and yet overly invasive for customers:

'If undocumented go to a supermarket, instead of a phone centre, they are not asked for documents and they are left in peace. Why doesn't the police try and catch undocumented on the street instead of insisting on phone centres thus making so many people uncomfortable? (December 11th 2008, Modena) *(extract 64 - appendices)*

All these issues were brought to the agenda when they confronted policemen. Phone centre-owners wanted some precise replies on their questions. They never really had any.

However, by doing so they somehow re-politicised the 'figure' of undocumented im-migrants, thus bringing attention to the fact that in spite of strict immigration enforcement policies, they are first of all normal individuals that try and lead a 'normal' life, with all the needs that derive accordingly.

Owners invariably admitted they find it very hard to ask anyone for documents, as they grew aware that customers can hardly understand any such request. Some of them even said they prefer taking up the risk of being fined because of non-compliance with the law. Having said this, they have been particularly sympathetic with im-migrants. In fact, they all know what it means to be constantly stopped and asked for documents:

'*I know what it feels like when they stop and maybe search you, anywhere, while you are simply walking down the street, just because you look foreigner or even just because you are unlucky to be there (...) You suddenly feel alarmed, even if you have valid documents with you or you are waiting for your permit to stay to be renewed*' (November 17th 2008, Verona) *(extract 65 - appendices)*

I repeatedly tried to investigate how phone centre-owners were actually dealing with undocumented when they entered into their shops. Most of them settled the matter by replying they would send them away. Unsurprisingly, as I got more familiar with the difficulties they were experiencing, I came to realise they would not easily disclose their opinions nor tell me about their everyday practices. Of course, they were not too sure about the use I would make of any information. The large majority of data I managed to collect derives therefore from informal conversations undertaken while on the field, after more than a year I had started researching on phone centres. Because of the delicate content of the data that follows[261], I will not provide with any detail that can be linked to either any owner or the city he/she operates in.

Registering fake credentials or those of friends or relatives: I did imagine this could be a way out for undocumented im-migrants to access services. In fact it was. Owners intentionally did it in the effort to sympathise with them. They do recall the difficulties experienced when they first arrived in the country, regardless of whether they entered with or without regular documents. This explains their 'protective' attitude. They could hardly put up with a situation which was close to being schizophrenic. It should be remembered that phone centres exert a crucial social function, as I explained in length[262]. Apart from being a truly meeting place for im-migrants, it is also a place that many of them refer to in order to be updated on the status of their residence permit renewal. Phone centre-owners

[261] Owners could actually be liable for some of the actions reported.
[262] See section 4.2; 4.2.1

are well aware of the frustrations the whole process involves. Furthermore, they somehow accompany im-migrants throughout this journey. They take part in it, at least emotionally.

Other alternative strategies have been used by owners to avoid identifying undocumented. Phone centres' registration system does not allow for phone booths to be un-blocked unless the details of customers are first registered. Hence, some of them bought cordless telephones that could be used outside the shop. To start with, they were bought as they could be useful whenever the shop was full and customers were not willing to wait for their turn. They became even more useful for undocumented to call, away from any monitoring system. This made it easier for them not to bump into any police inspection: it was sufficient to pay careful attention whenever any police car was reaching closer.

'The trick of the mixed-business' was also adopted. While the requirement of identification was introduced for the phone centres, it was not for other types of activities, such as food stores. However, some phone centre-owners run a mixed business. This could somehow help justify the access of undocumented im-migrants since they could be easily there for buying food stuff. This excuse was often used and police officers actually reported about it themselves. Yet, they were unaware of its political nature. They rather attributed such behaviour to the general negligence of owners in conducting their business. Clearly, after the introduction of the Modenese local regulation and the Veronese ordinance, the same strategy could no longer be used, as they both forbade mixed businesses. Last but not least, phone centre-owners often allowed undocumented as well as other customers to access services beyond the shops closing time. This gave them the opportunity to call or use the Internet safely, without running the risk of a police patrol coming around.

Narrative evidence suggested that practices of resistance have also been enacted in other cities, with the collaboration of local associations. Pisa is a case in point. No research has been undertaken to further investigate on it, but it was reported that immigrant and third sector associations got organised to help undocumented call their families. This was made possible, without failing to comply with the Anti-terrorism Law, because they only have one computer, while the Law requires customers to be identified only in shops/clubs with more than three terminal devices. Importantly, this action was make possible thanks to the contacts these associations had been developing with residents of immigrant origins and in particular with phone centre-owners.

There is another side to the picture. Some owners did not challenge the Anti-terrorism Law at all. They were rather challenged themselves in the management of their business. As it should be clear by now, all of them have been put under considerable stress, with the increase in police inspections. All owners agreed in saying that it has been very hard to operate since the Anti-terrorism Law was introduced, thus recalling the impolite and aggressive attitude of some police officers while carrying out inspections. Evidence collected in Verona was very informative in this sense: it was pointed out that during the first months of his mandate the Mayor took part in numerous inspections and lead them in a rather patronising way. Difficulties with the language made it hard for owners to discuss with police officers or to protest in face of any disagreeable manner. Customers, on their side, rarely supported them in capacity of witnesses.

The tension phone centre-owners experienced, together with their fear of retaliation did not help either. In some cases this actually resulted in forms of depression, if not even attempted suicides[263]. A deep sense of frustration, anxiety and even rage was expressed by many interviewees who resigned to take the situation day by day, instead, as they grew convinced that the Municipality would continue harassing them anyway:

*'Why do they not simply ask us to close down the business? They are leading all of us in that direction anyway! If eventually they force me to close down and f*** up my business, my whole life's investment, I promise I will burn down the shop and show them that I am not just standing helpless!'. 'I am so tired of being afraid all the time ... you never know when there will be another inspection (…) nor do you know when the next piece of regulation will come up... . '* (June 14th 2008, Verona) *(extract 66 - appendices)*

As inspections became very frequent and harsh, many owners denied that their shop had ever been a meeting place in the first instance. At the same time, some of them started appropriating the shop spaces as some kind of policeman:

'*I'm always very careful and make sure I check on everyone who comes in my shop. If an undocumented migrant comes in I immediately send him/her away. If I realise that an undocumented migrant is hanging outside my shop I send him/her away too. I do not understand why I should be responsible for this but if the police comes and finds any of them around it blames me and it fines me and I run the risk of having my shop confiscated too.'* (August 10th 2008, Verona) *(extract 67 - appendices)*

'I have tried to manage this activity in way that prevents people from hanging around considering what happend to me [she refers to fines delivered to her] (…) anyway I do not like when people group up as they mess up and if they are outside they bother people who live upstairs and then they complain and they say they do not want them to hang

[263] While undertaking interviews I did notice the sever state of anxiety suffered from various owners. A few of them told me some of their colleagues were experiencing depression problems. A case of attempted suicide was also reported both in Modena and by the Milanese lawyer who supported phone centre-owners both in Modena and Milan (December 1st 2008, Modena).

around there, so the faster they leave the better it is so we can avoid having any problem with neighbours...' (November 18th 2008, Modena) *(extract 68 - appendices)*

Unexpectedly, some owners suggested police should cast their attention on specific target communities only, thus somehow reinforcing stereotypes promoted by media, politicians and police officers on 'good' and 'bad' im-migrants:

'Since I have this phone centre I never heard of any phone centre being somehow involved with terrorism, apart from that phone centre in Rome. (...)Anyway, it's fine for me that the government put forward an Anti-terrorism Law to protect citizens from the threath of terrorism. And I am very happy to help the country in this sense if I can do anything about it. But since we all know where terrorism comes from why don't they ask us to identify and register only people with a specific nationality? (December 11th 2008, Modena) *(extract 69 - appendices)*

To sum up, phone centre-owners have not been mere recipients of policies and practices conceived and implemented by others. Interestingly, inspections themselves provided with an opportunity to raise their voices. They have spoken their concerns through familiar forms of engagements in situ, which eventually opened up to more institutional channels, such as meetings that were organised at local police headquarters. Arguably, without this transitory phase, im-migrants might have hardly succeeded in contacting police forces in the first place, not even in Modena where a participatory process had been set up. Importantly, the first contacts between owners and police officers were established during inspections. They provided the former with a strong rationale to confront with police officers, in fact. In addition, it somehow 'obliged' the latter not to refuse an official meeting as, at times, it was them who suggested owners should do so, while trying to respond to their insisting requests.

It is significant to notice that phone centre-owners' actions are not an inexorable re-action to power structures (McAdam 1982). They have engaged autonomously, in a proactive fashion. An excellent example is provided by the inquiry they undertook with tourists, which was done out of owners' own initiative, thus recalling Hirschmann (1980) and his call for 'possibilism'. A similar comment can be made in relation to the various ways in which they have been challenging expulsion power: while some owners took up a policing role, others simply refused to 'hunt' undocumented, while taking the risk of being fined or having their shop confiscated. In other words, some resigned to a verbal expression of their concerns, others moved well beyond them to enact veritable 'practices of resistance'. Various strategies were used in this sense in connection with a low-profile type of attitude (Eliasoph, 2005). Unsurprisingly, they were hardly perceived by police officers, thus proving very effective in their ultimate scope.

In the introduction, it was stated that inspections, as a residual practice of expulsion power, can only be understood in a context of the '*Italian emergency season'*. This leaves some burning questions open: when will this state of emergency come to an end? What can possibly contribute to it? As far as terrorism is concerned, it suffices to say that the relevant law was supposed to lapse at the end of 2007 but it was re-confirmed three times already – which actually raises doubts on constitutional ground, as a lawyer suggested, because it was meant to be a temporary piece of legislation. As far as the Italian emergency season in itself is concerned no sign can be highlighted that points to any conclusion of this historical period, at least in the nearest future. The '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law) is an example in this sense, as it was argued.

A few final comments in a comparative light. It is evident that harsh inspections have been organised both in Modena and Verona. Yet, the Veronese scenario has been by far more constraining than the Modenese one. Various cases were recorded in which owners appealed against inspections and actually won. It might be suggested that this encouraged owners to undertake the legal path more insistently than in Modena. However, if we look at all other forms of engagements undertaken by owners in both cities, they actually resemble each other to a very large extent. Interestingly, it was stressed that the Modenese Municipality organised a participatory process which could represent an important (institutional) space for phone centre-owners to confront with police officers. In fact it was not. In short, regardless of institutional participatory devices available to them, im-migrants went down the same path, thus building up their concernes with a familiar environment to then open up to an institutional arena.

7.5 Are they now de-mobilising?

De-mobilisation is generally intended as a process opposite to that mobilisation. The latter is expected to be accompanied by an increase in available resources, while the former with a decrease. This is of course a rather deterministic view. Besides, as it was discussed in the theoretical chapter, the term 'resources' can be associated with various material and symbolic entities. Having said this, it was reasonable to expect that if any process of de-mobilisation was to occur at all in Verona and Modena, it would have taken place after the Modenese local regulation and the Veneto Regional Law became effective, at the end of 2008. In the remaining of this section I will show that while mobilisation efforts have certainly slowed down, against a scenario of general discouragement, some scattered forms

of collective action can still be retrieved, particularly in Modena[264].

From January 2009, a general atmosphere of demoralisation and resignation could be perceived every time I returned to the fieldwork with occasional visits to phone centres. Owners have called me, at times, to ask for help. Some of them were looking for a good lawyer. They hoped for someone to take charge of new appeals they wanted to put forward for fines delivered at the end of 2008. Many of them, particularly in Modena, still believed their collective actions had been well worth it, in spite of the fact that any of their goals had been hardly achieved. They very much agreed on the importance of having created their own formal association so that their voice could be legitimised:

'Anyway, I'm telling you, I think it was useful and it still is because when we had meetings with the Assessore… if you go there and you are part of an association they do somehow take into consideration. If you go by yourself as a phone centre-owner, well… then when you say the magic word 'phone centre' they look at you as if you had the plague… We created the association because it is a strength. (…) Maybe what would be very helpful now is the possibility of involving other immigrants too or local residents in order to let them know what is happening and the fact we are the victims of injustice… this could help us gain some support, maybe we could organise some meetings not only for us but also with them...' (phone centre-owner and member of IP Associati, March 30th 2009) *(extract 70 - appendices)*

A few individuals have not stopped reflecting on the way forward. The need was felt to spread the voice and raise the scale of action. Modenese owners asked me again to provide the contact details of colleagues in Verona and viceversa. I did. As far as I know, it was only the President of IP Associati that once travelled to meet a few owners in Verona. They talked both about possible forms of mobilisation and business opportunities. In fact, the Modenese association had started evolving into an organisation of services, with its own website[265], as it happened in other cases recorded by scholars (see for example Kriese 1996). No action resulted, nor any business collaboration was established.

In parallel, the passing of the local regulation had a kind of cascade effect on phone centre-owners. With the gradual decline of the sector, the advancement of the economic crisis and consistent expenses falling onto them to comply with the regulation, owners started competing in a race to the bottom. Some of them lowered prices considerably as to win more customers. A few of them insisted with colleagues for a meeting to be set up and agreements to be made in this sense. Their intention was that of preventing the drawbacks

[264] It should be pointed out that while the research continued well into 2010, regular contacts with phone centre-owners and other local actors were interrupted in October 2009. Hence, no detailed information are available for the period November 2009 – May 2010.
[265] http://www.assophonecentre.com [last accessed on May 10th 2010]

of competition. The reader might recall they had already tried to do so some years earlier. It did not quite work then, it did not work this second time. A few owners even decided not to close on Sundays – the most fruitful day of the week from a business point of view, in mis-compliance with the relevant ordinance. They had no choice but to try and survive and this was the way forward.

Some of the members of IP Associati tried to ingratiate themselves to the Assessore alle Attività Economiche in the attempt to have the permission to operate on public holidays, without any success. The associational spirit was low. All owners entered a state of alert. They somehow felt new requirements were soon to be introduced. In their view, the Municipality could only continue harassing them.

The Bengalese members got organised to found a Bengalese association. In theory this had nothing to do with either the business of phone centres or any form of collective action. Yet, when reporting on it, they stressed that their fellow Bengalese colleagues in Bologna could count on a strong association to support them, while they were still missing a critical mass.

At the beginning of summer, in July 2009, the '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law) was approved and with it new requirements for money transfer services. Vanni called for a meeting. Very few owners participated. Specific inspections by the Guardia di Finanza Corps were already under way. They were not disruptive, not as much as previous ones (phone centre-owners, March 11th, May 15th 2009). Police officers limited themselves to checking on the relevant license to then leave the shop and continue their job. Phone centre-owners in Verona were not supposed to be subjected to inspections as the Municipality had ruled they could only offer Internet or telephone services and no other ancillary one. Yet, they continued offering this service too, with no apparent reaction by police officers. Strangely enough, after what had been perceived as an harassing attitude towards them, owners were now free to operate all these services without being delivered any fine. Against this scenario, it is even more reasonable to wonder, as already suggested above, whether previous runs of inspections had rather had the main symbolic goal of providing an exemplary demonstration, to both owners and residents, that the Municipality was ready to strike down on the former. Residents now knew their complaints were being addressed, hence phone centre-owners no longer needed to be pressurised.

In November 2009, it was again inspections' time in Modena. Owners felt very disheartened as the modalities of inspections had not changed. They were still very disruptive, to say the least. A letter was sent to the Municipality, the Prefecture and the local headquarter of the National Police to ask for an explanation in this sense but they never received any answer.

A new year started. The economic crisis worsened. As this chapter is being written, phone centre-owners are thinking of preparing a new letter for the Municipality and of sending it to the media too. They now want to be allowed to operate on public holidays, as any other commercial activity is. By now collective action has been apparently canalised into more institutional channels. However, it we take the model of discursive opportunity structures seriously, by considering movements as carriers of messages (Melucci 1989), we could well keep investigating on communicative processes. This would allow to look at contentious actions not so much in terms of radicalisation or institutionalisation but rather in terms of the diffusion rates of messages (Koopmans 2004).

7.6 Missed opportunities.

Looking back into the various mobilisation phases of phone centre-owners in Modena and Verona, a plethora of missed contacts become evident. Some of them were intentionally missed as they were judged irrelevant as far as their collective action was concerned. Others were missed in the sense they could not develop much further. I will rapidly run through them, as they highlight a few interesting issues.

A few members of the Comitato have been active within the local Senegalese association which is among the largest immigrant organisations in Verona. A similar observation can be made for other im-migrants' associations both in Modena and Verona, even though they might be much smaller and short of any formal status. No help was ever asked to any of them, not to provide with any support for their cause, not to feed into a critical mass for protests. It might be explained with the fact they all mostly deal with cultural goals. Nonetheless, it would be worth investigating further in this direction, as various owners in both cities lamented the fact that their fellow countrymen, who live in other Italian cities, could benefit from the support of their associations (see for example December 18th 2008, Modena and October 12th 2008, Modena).

Many Veronese phone centre-owners have had contacts with local trade unions, since their arrival in Verona. Over time, they grew convinced they were becoming more and more weak. It is therefore unsurprising that they considered them as a mere last resort. Another factor has discouraged forms of collaboration: unionists comprise a few im-migrants, but they were all co-opted and phone centre-owners - as well as newcomers in general - do not quite feel represented by them (June 14th and September 9th 2008).

The reader might wonder whether Lapam, besides linking up IP Associati with some Consiglieri Comunali, did explicitly support them during protests or in other steps of their mobilisation. Unfortunately, it could not do so. All had to be done in an informal way as the sector of phone centre attracts the mistrust of various associate members:

'Without him [the President of IP Associati] we would have never dealt with them [phone centres]. We would have not even contacted them. A national questionnaire had been sent out to intercept the mas well as other new entrepreneurial activities. The questionnaire was sent out, three or four years ago, then nothing was done anymore to avoid upsetting associate members. (…) Therefore, in spite of the fact that our approach is explicitly open to immigrant entrepreneurs, it is still hard for us to involve phone centre-owners. These activities in fact attract the mistrust of members. (…) [We helped them] in part, in an informal way by making seminar rooms available for them to meet and by helping them constitute an association and elect a President, but we have done it informally in order to avoid forms of rejection by our members. (…) It is not small entrepreneurs that give us problems, nor craftsmen, nor industrialists, but rather shopkeepers.' (March 4th 2009, Modena) *(extract 71 - appendices)*

The readiness of influential allies to support challengers represents a crucial variable in terms of favourable political opportunity structures. The (partly) 'missed' alliance with Lapam certainly went to the detriment of phone centre-owners chances to make their voice heard.

In a previous section (6.3.3), while analysing the process that led to the approval of the local regulation in Modena, the Consulta degli Stranieri was mentioned, among other actors. In particular, it was highlighted that its President did intervene during discussions, even if briefly, to stand by the side of phone centre-owners. None of the latter, nor the President of IP Associati are familiar with him nor any member of the Consulta. They are aware of its existence but they do not know what its precise functions are about, they do not know whether and how it can support im-migrants' claims. To the author's knowledge, no contact was ever established with it by owners, nor the other way round. This casts light on the fact that similar consultative bodies might actually benefit more local governments, in the sense that they testify a will to involve im-migrants in political life, even though their role is merely of an advisory type. Yet, in early January 2010, rumours reported that discussions were under way among Consiglieri Comunali to close it down.

A Consulta degli Immigrati exists in Verona too. It was set up shortly before the last elections, in 2007. As soon as the new Mayor took up his mandate, its President together with some representatives asked the Mayor for a meeting. They were never welcomed in the town hall with the justification they are by no means representative of immigrant communities in Verona. The Mayor expressed the intention to close it down. It never happened but *de facto* it has hardly ever been operational. Some actions have been put forward. Among others[266], a few members organised visits to 'ethnic shops', including also phone centres. Their main aim was that of undertaking a small survey to collect their concern with respect to the increasing runs of inspections targeted at them. Over time, the lack of collaboration or even just consideration by the Municipality frustrated members' enthusiasm which gradually stopped meeting and carrying out any forward actions.

In the next section more space will be given to another actor that entered the stage in Modena: neighbourhood committees. For the time being, it suffices to say that the President of IP Associati tried to set up a meeting with a few committees and their coordinating body. He wanted to propose the definition of a document in which each party would agree on a number of principles and rules to be respected for the common good of all residents, particularly in neighbourhoods in which phone centres concentrated. He also wanted an opportunity to discuss with them about the complaints they had raised and possible solutions they might find, while at the same time pointing to the difficulties experienced by phone centres. No meeting ever took place. Communication between them only took place in the press and it was not along the lines Vanni had in mind.

7.7 Beyond external constraints: the fatigue of engagement and the forms of internal dissent.

It is undeniable that several forms of constraints and internal dissent run counter the mobilisation efforts of phone centre-owners in Modena and Verona. To start with, both the President of IP Associati and the most active representatives of the Comitato in Verona constantly stressed how hard it is to motivate a significant number of owners and to keep the spirit high in spite of the ups and downs of collective action. They all agreed in saying that participation has certainly diminished over time. In some interviews I explored this aspect further to find out that opinions seem substantially unchanged over time.

[266] From an email exchange with the Vice President of the Consulta

Difficulties to engage can certainly be ascribed to precarious living conditions, as anticipated above. For most owners phone centres have represented a whole life investment and a stable economic source for the support of entire family units. Needless to say, against a scenario which seemed to foretell the eclipse of the sector, the burning concern for them was to secure some form of income. If we reach beyond a psychological understanding of the problems any individual is likely to face in such circumstances, a few other interpretations can be given on the limited engagement of some and the decreasing engagement of others.

Cases were recorded in which it was mostly practical problems that prevented them from participating in activities, including the failure of some colleagues to communicate appointments early enough (see for example December 10th 2008, Verona; April 28th 2008, Modena) or a lack of time availability (December 20th 2008), due to the long working hours that characterise the business.

According to some owners, the ultimate cause could be referred to the ignorance of some colleagues who barely understood the need to meet and mobilise. At times, they blamed it on cultural (ethnic) traits, at times on ignorance *per sè*. Scholars themselves do point to cultural characteristics in their studies. Bengalese im-migrants are generally described as rather introverted and prone to participation only in as far as cultural events are concerned, while Senegalese are depicted as very supportive and sympathetic individuals particularly towards country nationals (see for example Mantovan 2007). The evidence collected contradicted such a belief to show that whereby the standard of living conditions were satisfactory and no personal problems were suffered many newcomers of any origin were ready to stand by fellow countrymen as well as colleagues of other origins:

'I help them out as a volunteer, I do not want to be paid for it, I only do it to help out and I'm happy to do it. And after all I'm quite alright with my job because I have other little jobs too.' (Bengalese phone centre-owner, December 19th 2008, Modena) *(extract 72 - appendices)*

'Generally I try and help a lot because our religion teaches we should help others. right now I have little time because I have problems to sort out and I'm about to leave for Senegal and I cannot make it to meetings.' (Senegalese phone centre-owner, September 5th 2009, Verona) *(extract 73 - appendices)*

Another interesting issue emerged in connection with religious beliefs. Some priests apparently insist for their parishioners not to get involved with the trouble of politics and to rather take care of their own family and business. This piles up on im-migrants tendency not to expose themselves too much as to safeguard their position:

'Many [immigrants] are not interested in these things. Many Ghanaians, for example, many of them are Christian evangelist and attend the Church and their priests tell them: 'Do not bother with it [politics], try and take care of your family and they do not try and understand why this or that happens'. Then you need to understand that immigrants often accept anything to avoid losing their job.' (Ivorian phone centre-owner, May 2nd 2009) *(extract 74 - appendices)*

This is not to say that owners have mostly failed to engage, on the contrary. Against a rather discouraging scenario, many of them have done so and many still believe it is well worth and important to be active and put forward claims:

'I still think it is useful [to mobilise]. The problem is that, in my opinion, the problem of immigrants… I share with you my analysis for what I know of Italy, of politics… the treatments we are subjected to, the place that Italian society reserves to us is a consequence of national policies, of media coverage, that in the end educate the Italian population into treating non-European immigrants in this way (…) Sometimes I think this also depends on the fact that this country has little to offer even to natives and therefore it is hard to think that something can be done to foreigners. And I cannot see anything which is done to contrast this… ' (Mamadou, May 2nd 2008, Verona) *(extract 75 - appendices)*

Among the most active member of IP Associati, a woman expressed a similar attitude. When I first interviewed her (December 9th 2008) she was pregnant and very worried for her new business: she had been managing the phone centre since 2007 and things were getting worse and worse. Adding to it, she lamented the perception that inspections had been targeted at her shop: many caregivers were now meeting there, thus avoiding inspections in a park nearby. Yet, she was very energetic in showing her will to continue mobilising:

'I'm happy of our association but more participation would be needed… I'm new and therefore I cannot stand out. Owners are not always there but as I get to know them I share my point of view with them. We could do much more, we are only at the beginning. We would need to motivate owners to join forces more than they have been doing because it is hard for all of us to agree on a given issue and we all need to understand that the only way to come out of this situation is to join forces. I will certainly go forward!' (phone centre-owner and member of IP Associati, December 29th 2008, Modena) *(extract 76 - appendices)*

All throughout the interview it became clear how internal dissent was providing her with a further motivation to engage. Somehow, she suggested that any further step could only be taken in conjunction with the effort to strengthen internal cohesion. She acknowledged the fact that the overall agreement of members was necessary for the association to take any action forward. At the same time, she stressed that dissent provided with an occasion to actually confront with fellow colleagues and enter into a dialogue with them, while in other occasions meetings had mostly resulted in Vanni advancing a proposal and owners simply confirming he enjoyed their trust.

It has long been noticed that associations, in Italy, are characterised by a fragile nature, with spots of internal dissent. In any kind of organisation internal friction is likely to exist particularly as far as leadership and representation are concerned, as indicated already. Other issues can equally emerge. Immigrant communities are often divided along ethnic lines and even within their own communities they can experience forms of divisions connected with class, specific geographical origin, ideologies, etc (Werbner, 1991: 20). Distinctions are also made between 'good' and 'bad' im-migrants, due to more or less justifiable forms of mistrust among them. Some friction sprang from example from unjust competition among owners. Most of them managed to operate a clear separation between mere business and collective action. Nevertheless, unfair competition by some did throw a negative light on some colleagues. In some occasions, it contributed to invalidate the proposals they put forward as they were expected to run counter the common interest of all owners.

Particularly in Verona, where the group of phone centre-owners seemed to be more fragmented, considerable disagreement was noticed on the type of collective action to be privileged (see for example November 17th 2008, Verona). This was less the case in Modena, even though dissent emerged there too. An owner, for example, kept insisting it was ok to mobilise while affirming that more trust had to be put in the law (December 18th 2008).

An underlying sense of powerlessness did not go unnoticed either. Along the perception of an inherent impotence relating to a shortage of favourable political opportunities, some owners resisted most proposals, at least when they were first put forward. As Giugni and Morariu (2007) suggested, it might be relevant to shed light on forms of activism not only against existing political opportunity structures *per sè*, but also with respect to perceived opportunities. In other words, for protests to emerge challengers must believe that an opportunity exists to bring about change. While no punctual focus was put on this very aspect, it seems that this variable does in fact provide some explanatory hints, particularly in Verona. In this context, various owners highlighted the restrictive character of local immigration policies and clearly expressed their perception of a ruthless lawless attitude by local authorities:

'Well, then the mentality is always that of Tosi [the current Mayor of Verona]. I always speak negatively about him because he lied to me and I do not like him. When we met at the stadium and he said: 'If I am elected Mayor we will work all together, there is no colour [political colour] (…). So, if I meet him the first thing I will tell him is: 'You are

a liar!' I do not care at all. I have seen that he only used immigrants. When people talk about safety, especially when it is elderly people that do so, those who have nothing else to do, when they see an immigrant they say: 'Oh my God, there is so many of them! They are all criminals!!' But it is not like this. This is why Tosi won. What can we do as phone centre-owners?' (December 30th 2008) *(extract 77 - appendices)*

"They are not convinced they can do something about it because these people [reference to police offices and the Mayor]when they wake up in the morning and decide you have to close down they come and ask you to close down. This is how it goes, just like this, without any respect for law, they do not care at all about the law.' (Mamadou, June 6th 2008) (extract 78 - appendices)

CHAPTER 8:
CONTENTIOUS DYNAMICS IN VIA BIANCA AND VIA ROSSA.

In this section, I will dive into an in-depth analysis of local conflicts on phone centres, by focusing on the cases of Via Bianca, in Verona, and Via Rossa, in Modena[267]. I will highlight dynamics as they unraveled in their respective neighbourhoods. As it should be clear by now, the conflicts around phone centres emerged out of residents' complaints in various parts of these two cities. Therefore, I thought it would be interesting to observe their evolution in a few specific cases. This was not to carry out a micro-sociological analysis *per sè*. The decision to develop a dedicated chapter along these lines was rather motivated by the will to highlight similarities and differences with respect to the wider Veronese and Modenese urban contexts. Furthermore, Via Bianca and Via Rossa were understood as instrumental in raising a number of crucial points I wish to make, in the wake of preceding chapters. In fact, while they retain their specificities, they are exemplary of some more general trends at work in the two cities.

As it will become evident through the next pages, various actors appeared on the contentious scenes of Via Bianca and Via Rossa. The reader will recognise some of them, as they 'spoke up' in previous chapters. Others will be presented here for the first time. I am referring to neighbourhood committees and mediators, in Modena, that have been merely mentioned in section 7.1.3. I am also referring to mediators, in Via Bianca, that will be introduced in section 8.1.2. In the first phase of my research, I studied contentious dynamics without any specific focus on any neighbourhood. No trace was found of this actor and yet it has played an important role that could even open up to forms of policy innovation. Finally, some actors will almost disappear: they have engaged in the more general conflict relating to the definition of the normative framework on phone centres, while they have left the management of specific neighbourhood troubles to directly interested parties.

This chapter will provide ample space for familiar forms of engagements, regardless of any outcome that sprang from them. As anticipated, the notion of contentious politics in itself does not allow us to understand and interpret the intimate dimension of the 'vita activa'. At

[267] The names of these streets are invented.

the same time, familiar forms of engagements might be invisible to the public scene. Yet they can emerge in any phase of a given conflict: actors engage in different regimes, at different times. All regimes are all worth investigating into, as they all carry with the them the potential to open them up to the public arena (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006).

Some background information will be given next on Via Bianca and Via Rossa, in order to set the analysis into context. The former is located in a residential area, in a neighbourhood south of Verona town centre, which has the second highest percentage of immigrant residents in relative terms[268]. A considerable increase in the presence of newcomers has been recorded over the past years. The neighbourhood is well-known for its history of drug dealing, dating back to the 1980s. Otherwise, it is generally considered as a neighbourhood with a good quality of life (President of the Circoscrizione, May 27th 2008).

Two phone centres opened in this area: one, facing a little public park, started operating in 2000. Initially it was a clothing shop. Later, the owner opted for various changes of business, till he eventually decided to move into a mixed one: he tried to combine phone and Internet services with the selling of foodstuffs. Another phone centre opened a couple of years later, in an adjacent street. It was a foodstore and it still is. It was never a phone centre, in fact. Nevertheless, residents have been referring to it as such.

Via Rossa is a residential street. It is located in a neighbourhood south of Modena, which borders with the historical centre. This area has the lowest density, with respect to other neighbourhoods[269]. It is considered to be very quiet. Hardly any problems have been reported in the last years in relation to either urban decay or forms of disturbance (President of the Circoscrizione, December 3rd 2008). Due to a number of factors, including first and foremost its residential character, more and more im-migrants have moved to this neighbourhood in the last years[270]. One of the local parks has actually become well-known as the meeting point of caregivers (ibidem). In general, however, this

[268] 17 out of 100 residents are of immigrant origins in this neighbourhood compared to 21 out of 100 in Veronetta (Comune di Verona 2007. *Cittadini stranieri residenti.* Elaboration by the Ufficio Statistica on data provided by the Registry Office).
[269] The immigrant population in this neighbourhood corresponds to 9,61% of the total, the percentage for the whole town is 12,57% and in specific neighbourhoods, such as the central one, corresponds to over 20% (Comune di Modena 2008. *Statistiche residenti.* Elaboration by the Settore Sistemi Informativi e Servizi Demografici).
[270] More than 3000 im-migrants moved to this neighbourhood in 2008, compared with an average of 2000-2500 im-migrants who moved to other neighbourhoods (Comune di Modena 2008. *Statistiche residenti.* Elaboration by the Settore Sistemi Informativi e Servizi Demografici).

area has the lowest percentage of newcomers[271], with respect to the rest of town, contrary to Via Bianca, with respect to Verona.

A few phone centres were opened here: one is located precisely in Via Rossa, on the ground floor of a residential building block, whose occupiers are mostly of immigrant origins. Since its launch, it has been operating as a mixed business and it has been taken over twice. In adjacent streets, another three phone centres[272] have been operating, even though they have been the object of far less complaints.

According to a young man who lives in Via Rossa, perceived problems in the neighbourhood related and still relate to issues of urban decay and pacific cohabitation:

'O*n the ground floor opposite my house a Tunisian young man opened a pizzeria. An Indian opened a phone centre, just next to it. In practice, in a few months the Bronx moved downstairs! The pizzeria was in fact not a pizzeria: no one ever saw any pizza coming out of it nor a supplier carrying anything inside. It was not clear what they were doing inside. The phone centre was open till 10 pm, they sold alcoholic drinks at rather cheap prices. Eastern European immigrants, because the problem here emerged with them, particularly Moldovians, started choosing the place as their headquarters. Every night they grouped up there, they pissed in people's gardens, they left beer bottles there (…). Then they visited once the phone centre, once the pizzeria, as the owners was a friend of theirs, and maybe listened to music loudly. It was mostly forms of decay that resulted out of it, more than a year ago.'* (December 4th 2008) *(extract 79 - appendices)*

In his view, it is newcomers, that is to say the vast majority of phone centres' customers, who are to be held responsible for any trouble. Similar opinions were expressed by a few other interviewees, who live nearby, both on the same day and later in March 2009. Immigrants of specific nationality were indicated as particularly problematic. Complaints stressed on alcohol abuse. Other issues were raised too. Traffic and parking problems were highlighted, especially with regard to the case of Via Rossa. In fact, the phone centre is located in a very small corner of the street which is hardly accessible, thus causing traffic and parking problems. Furthermore, the young man brought my attention to another question that was central to him. He supported that phone centres have acted against integration, at least in his neighbourhood. In other words, they have caused so much trouble that, according to him, inhabitants have almost turned into racists.

When I started undertaking interviews in Via Rossa, residents had been complaining for a year with intermittent requests to both the Circoscrizione and the local police, as the President of the Circoscrizione reported:

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272 One of them is now a mobile phones-shop.

'The conflict has been going on for a year now, I would say. [I am referring to complaints that refer specific to] that area [reference to Via Rossa], that shop (…). It was a single problem that emerged but when it re-emerges the level of tolerance changes… the Local Police and the Circoscrizione both receive uncoordinated complaints (…) so I am referrring to problems of pacific cohabitation with neighbours and similar problems, some signs that maintenance is needed, maybe 'decay' is too strong of word to describe the situation. If we look at the specific case, this [phone centre] in Via Rossa is problematic because of people's gathering but it is the mere presence of im-migrants that actually makes people feel ill at ease. (…) If we then think about certain urban contexts that are really not adequate… I am referring to places where there is a small street, typically residential, with considerable gatherings and mobility difficulties… it is not the phone centre per sé but rather the situation alla round it (…).' (December 3rd 2008, Modena) *(extract 80 - appendices)*

During the interview he put complaints into perspective, thus stressing it was more a call for general maintenance they addressed, rather than a case of actual urban decay. '*The mere presence*' of im-migrants was cited as somehow disturbing in the first place, regardless of any actual activity newcomers undertake while out in the streets. It was nothing to do with phone centres themselves. It could be linked to particularly fragile urban contexts, whereby the regular re-emergence of various forms of disturbance resulted in an increase in the levels of intolerance.

Certainly, the first complaints had actually emerged in parallel with grievances suffered in other parts of the neighbourhood:

'In the park there were people that used to take their pants down (…) and did 'their business' in people's gardens … (…)Then it is about these im-migrants from Eastern Europe that I cannot stand anylonger. Furthermore, we had a park here in the neighbourhood; it is infront of the church of X (name) and it is a little park in which I spent lots of time in my childhood (…) almost every evening I go there with my friend. The same people [that meet up infront of the phone centre] were there too. An intolerable situation had come about in our neighbourhood because people did what they wanted.' (resident, December 4th 2008, Modena) *(extract 81 - appendices)*

Reference was made to a park. The target of residents' complaints seemed to coincide with that of Via Rossa and adjacent streets. Not to be underestimated is the fact that this park is a place where the interviewee, as well as his fellow friends, spent good part of their childhood and still hang around. It is reasonable to say that this further strengthened feelings of intolerance, as disturbances somehow attacked their most intimate forms of attachment.

In Via Bianca complains were first put forward in 2005. They were very similar to those highlighted above, as reported in a newspaper article:

'*Everything started with the opening of two phone centres. They have become habitual meeting points for a considerable number of people of different nationalities that meet up and hang around till very late at night and*

drink. A series of inconveniences have resulted such as hampered traffic, disturbance, abandoned litter (...); let alone the frequent moments of tensions both within the groups that meet up and between the latter and residents.'[273]

I have introduced this case with a press extract because media coverage has had a crucial impact on the conflict in Via Bianca, as evidence will show in the next pages. This is the second article that appeared in the local newspaper. Another one had appeared a month earlier to denounce how parking problems were adding to disturbances. Three other articles were published in the following weeks, along a similar line. It was newcomers who were mostly blamed for trouble, but there was another side to the coin, according to the priest that lived nearby:

'In spring 2007 works were carried out [by the Municipality] to regenerate the square. The little public park has always been a meeting point. Among other reasons, it depends on the fact it is situated close to the church and people of the neighbourhood have traditionally met there. In the 1980s it had become a true meeting point for people that … (…) that [statue of] Mary has seen all sorts of things. Many youngsters died of overdose. (…) [This neighbourhood] is popular as the Bronx! In that period a group of Italians in their 40-50s was created (…) they said they were not using drugs anymore but they were used to drink lots. They had been chased away from all nearby pubs because people were familiar with them and they were no more authorised to drink or they had started to go to the supermarket and buy drinks there. Then they found out the phone centre was even cheaper. They were used to buy cans and bottles and drink them there. In the morning, we often found lots of empy cans and bottles there in the public park. And it was not immigrants, nor Ghanese nor Nigerians but very much Italian. In the week-end some Africans were around too because during the week they worked and got back home at 6 pm and since it was dark they did not go there. (…) I lived there and I can tell you the problem was not to do with them.' (priest, May 16th 2009, Verona) *(extract 82 - appendices)*

As anticipated, this neighbourhood has long been having severe drug problems. The public park close to the parish church has been a traditional meeting point for inhabitants, including especially drug addicts. It has been so long since many years, long before the phone centre opened in front of it. More and more im-migrants have been hanging around it since its opening, particularly on the week-ends. They were by no means the primary cause of disturbance, in the view of the parish priest.

A few days after the appearance of the above article, another one came out. The priest was interviewed this time[274]. He invited residents to reflect on the 'real' causes of decay, blaming it more on domestic animals. Most importantly, he criticised racist attitudes and stressed on

[273] L' Arena, Nella strada di XXX (name of neighbourhood) raccolte 230 firme per chiedere al Comune di intervenire. Traffico, rifiuti e violenza. La gente insorge. August 4th 2005, 13: 'Tutto, spiegano, è cominciato con l'arrivo di due phone centre (…) sono diventati punto di aggregazione abituale per un considerevole numero di persone di varia nazionalità, che si radunano e stazionano fino a notte inoltrata (…). Il risultato, dicono gli abitanti, è una sequenza di disagi: traffico intralciato, schiamazzi, dispersione di rifiuti (…); senza contare i frequenti momenti di tensione, sia all'interno di questi assembramenti, sia con i residenti (…).'

[274] L'Arena, Il parroco don XXX (name) invita a essere tolleranti con le diverse culture e a impegnarsi a integrarle. Imputa il degrado della zona agli animali. Il titolare del centro: 'La vita non è facile neanche per me'. 6th August 2005, 12.

the need of a welcoming attitude towards im-migrants. As he argued: '*Anti-social behaviours are observable in natives too, but the petition was explicitly targeted at non-European immigrants*'. Debatably, he sneaked off any possible test by avoiding to address any relevant order of worth and by focusing on a general call for integration.

The phone centre owner was also interviewed. As the priest did, the owner reported that im-migrants were not the unique cause of disturbances. He also admitted he was rather uncomfortable with the situation himself and was trying to do his best to cope with it:

'*Whenever any tension arises around [the shop], I immediately close it down. When there is too much mess in the [public] park I call the police. They often suggest I should talk to those who disturb and ask them to lower their voice but they reply it is none of my business. The green area is public and access to it is free! I cannot prevent people – many of whom are Italians – to buy a drink from my shop and hang around there. It is not easy for me either*'. '*They [residents] think it is the shop that causes the problem. But I have seen them [the problematic customers]. They do not come here to buy something. They 'do business' [drug dealing] outside, in the public park. I denounced this fact to the police. (…) It is not my fault if they get drunk, if they disturb! I only do my job by selling food and drinks. I even help them because I provide them with a toilet! Otherwise they just piss outside. Till last year there was not even a bench to sit on, in the park* (May 18th 2008, Verona) *(extract 83 - appendices)*

Residents were surely not happy about circumstances. They repeatedly expressed their complaints to the owner of a shop located nearby the church. They knew him as a Consigliere - of the minoritarian coalition - of the Circoscrizione and as a representative of the Lega Nord. This is why they easily called into his shop in the belief he would take their concerns into due consideration:

'It was here that people came, in my shop, as they knew I have long been here and I was also a Consigliere of the Circoscrizione. They say the day in which the phone centre was closed down because I was there with the Mayor and the Local Police and therefore they understood I was the person that knew about the situation. With whom could they give vent to their frustration? They could do it with someone that had contacts with the Mayor and police forces.' (April 16th 2009, Verona) *(extract 84 - appendices)*

This is even less surprising if we consider that, a few years later, a project was introduced in his electoral program: it was a regeneration plan for the area where the phone centres were located. Clearly, residents soon understood he was sensible to their claims.

In August 2005, as the above article was coming out, two groups of residents presented a petition. One was initiated by a shopkeeper whose shop is located close to the phone centre facing the public park. The other was promoted by an extreme-right Alleanza Nazionale representative of the majoritarian coalition of the Circoscrizione. A neighbourhood committee had been set up in previous years to promote quality of life in

the area[275]. However, when the first interviews were undertaken, in June 2008, it did not exist any longer. The petition rather sprang from a spontaneous initiative of some residents, as a Consigliere of the then majoritarian party suggested (April 17th 2009). More than 200 signatures were collected in total. Claims were based on a civic order of worth: their protest highlighted the bad quality of life that characterised the neighbourhood. It was the two phone centres to be explicitly blamed for it. Signatories recalled the stabbing of a young im-migrant, a few days earlier, even though it was an isolated episode. Mention was also made that undocumented im-migrants had been identified in and around the phone centre. Against this background, residents were asking for more inspections by police forces. They also provided some suggestions on the possible way forward: the removal of park benches.

This petition followed a first one that had been presented a year earlier by the same shopkeeper. Hardly any direct confrontation had been taking place between residents and phone centre-owners, but the shopkeeper, who lives elsewhere, did try and talk to the latter:

'I tried immediately to talk to them, in the sense that I made sure they would respect me and all in all they did respect me. I tried to talk with them. I organised a few petitions because it was fair to do it… I realised that the problem was nothing to do with them but with those who had given them a commercial license and which allowed two phone centres to open in a street like this one… the petitions we organised were on public order because there were people fighting here. But it was mostly the occupiers [of the apartment block over the phone centre] that collected signatures from neighbours. They presented the petition directly to the Circoscrizione, they did not form a committee.' (April 22nd 2009) *(extract 85 - appendices)*

While the woman was the promoter of this action, it was mostly the occupiers of the apartment building above the phone centre that were determined to take it forward. As a few of them referred during interviews, they were fed up with disturbances and they were afraid that a street fight could take place again. It had occurred only once and yet it was vivid enough in their memory to make them feel alarmed (April 22nd 2009). Their claims focused on safety issues. They drew up a petition along these lines to ask for an intervention by the Local Authority. The shopkeeper had a different concern, on her side: she insisted a petition was due because the Municipality should have not granted any authorisation for phone centres to operate in a residential area. Arguably she was less concerned with actual problems as she lives elsewhere and it was mostly in the evening, when her shop was closed, that disturbances were lamented.

[275] No contacts could be made with any of the members in spite of requests addressed to residents and Consiglieri of the Circoscrizione.

In parallel, some of her colleagues had manifested their dissent on the renewal plan for Via Bianca put forward by the Circoscrizione. The intention was that of regenerating the square in front of the church as well as the little park next to it. Shopkeepers, on their side, had lamented it was going to be detrimental to their business, as it would make the square inaccessible to any vehicle. Eventually the plan was implemented and outcomes turned out to be positive for them. Yet, they did not welcome the decision as they felt the Circoscrizione had privileged the interests of the parish priest who was very much in favour of the renewal plan (May 16th 2009).

On the wake of the last petition, the Circoscrizione passed a motion, in October 2005. Residents' requests were welcomed. The local police and the Questura were asked to collaborate, by increasing the number and frequency of inspections in the area. Numerous runs followed, as all actors confirmed, including particularly the parish priest:

'It seemed this was the only problem in the neighbourhood and everyday the police came around, and the Carabinieri Corps, the Guardia di Finanza Corps were called for by residents, by <u>some</u> residents. (…) It was like exaggerating a problem that from a little problem evolved into a big one.' (May 16th 2009) *(extract 86 - appendices)*

Among other people, the petition signatories' had asked the priest for support, with no success. They were left with the feeling he wanted to stand by im-migrants, with no apparent reason (shopkeeper May 22nd 2009)

In Via Rossa, the first action undertaken by residents to protest against disturbances, took the shape of repeated calls to the Local Police. The Guardia di Finanza Corps was also contacted to ask for the pizzeria in Via Rossa to be inspected[276]. At the same time, the press was actively used to voicing their concerns. Stress was put on the fact that Modenese residents had been mostly concerned about a safety alarm that had gradually emerged in a neighbourhood close to the railway station. Yet, another one deserved their attention too: that of Via Rossa. The Mayor was accused of doing too little in this regard[277].

While the pizzeria was no longer operational, groups of im-migrants kept hanging around the phone centre close to it. Increasing complaints were advanced: adding to disturbances and urban decay, residents were now stressing on traffic problems too. The Municipality was ultimately blamed for it, with reference to its inadequate polices that failed to impede

[276] It was soon closed down. No details could be retrieved on the actual reasons.
[277] Gazzetta, E anche Sant'Agnese adesso insorge. Liberateci da quei phone centre. July 20th 2007, 11.

the opening of more phone centres in the same area[278]. As more and more complaints were reaching various municipal offices a mediation project was set up.

8.1 Institutional actors versus non-institutional ones in the use of participatory tools.

8.1.1 Institutional forms of mediation in Modena.

Mediation projects, in Modena, are managed by a local co-operative, whose services were contracted out by the Municipality, in 2002. Their main aim is that of supporting residents in managing conflicts among them, at a neighbourhood level, in relation to a whole variety of issues that usually fall onto one particular category: disputes around a differential use of public and semi-public spaces.

The Municipality started reflecting on emerging conflicts some years ago, on the basis of quantitative data that had been collected through regular annual surveys (see section 6.1.2). In face of episodes and phenomena that could not be classified as crimes, the Local Authority decided to experiment a complex approach, based on the involvement of all interested parties. An increasing awareness had been matured that similar problems could not be dealt with the instruments that are typically adopted to sanction criminal behaviours. Therefore, it was felt that more 'institutional' interventions had to be associated with mediation types of projects[279].

As the Officer responsible for mediation services explained, mediation activities follow specific procedures (December 12th 2008). They generally last for a year. Various municipal offices collect residents' complaints. Whenever they reach a certain threshold, two mediators start visiting the area whereby complaints can be located and meet residents. They do so on a regular basis, even once a week, if necessary, in order to get familiar with the environment and build on the trust of inhabitants, by listening to their concerns. The first to be approached are residents and in particular those who advanced their complaints. Then shopkeepers are contacted, if grievances point to a given shop, or else the counterparts, that is to say the target of complaints.

[278] Gazzetta, Il degrado avanza anche a Sant'Agnese. October 21st 2007, 8.
[279] For more details see the website http://www.comune.modena.it/monet/mi-interessa/Abitare/conflitti-di-vicinato/punto-daccordo-centro-di-mediazione-sociale-ufficio-di-mediazione-dei-conflitti

In Via Rossa, the mediation process followed a similar route. Apparently, each and all residents that had expressed any concern on the neighbourhood were contacted and invited to join. They all did[280]. A resident (December 19th 2008) reported that none of them was quite satisfied with it, as they felt no progress had been achieved to address their concerns and eventually solve the problems. Any such process clearly requires considerable time for any agreement to be reached or even a small step forward to be made. At the same time, participants were urging for a quick resolution.

They kept insisting on different orders of worth, hence any potential chance for coordination slowly broke down: on the one side, residents referred on a civic order by listing various factors that somehow contributed to a worsening of quality of life in the neighbourhood, as evident from the above narratives. They also introduced an industrial one: they called for the Municipality to define a strict regulation to harmonise the business of phone centres with the needs of neighbours (resident, December 15th 2008; Officer responsible for mediation services, December 12th 2008). Interestingly, the President of the Circoscrizione confirmed that residents never lamented on the grounds of a market order of worth, as it happened in other areas of town: phone centres were allowed longer working hours than other shops but this was not mentioned with reference to a potential form of unfair competition. It was rather indicated to stress how it resulted in neighbours being disturbed with noise. It should be specified that the President did not take part in direct confrontations between inhabitants and the phone centre-owner. They are strictly reserved to the people who either put forward complaints or embody the target of such complaints. Nevertheless, he met residents on various occasions as well as mediators, therefore he managed to get a feeling of the situation.

The phone centre-owner advanced a market order of worth, by claiming her business should not suffer regardless any resolution that was to be taken. She was well prone to confrontations and demonstrated being ready to take up her responsibility in addressing complaints, even though a scarce language fluency made it all the more difficult for any dialogue to run smoothly (Officer responsible for mediation projects, December 12th 2008). Furthermore, it was reported that the owner shared residents' opinions, to a certain extent,

[280] Detailed information about the actual project are missing, as it is still under way and the relevant officers could not provide me with specific information, nor the contacts of all the interested parties. Above all, I could not take part, as a participatory observer, in the various steps of the project. Hence, the information reported next draw from interviews with residents I contacted with the help of a (to be) representative of the local neighbourhood committee. Some of did not take part in the actual mediation process, however, because they were not invited in the first instance - as they had not advanced any complaint to municipal offices.

while her perception of causing any disturbance seemed rather low. When I interviewed her myself (April 24th 2009) I rather had the feeling she was rejecting any accusation because she could hardly have an impact on customers' behaviours, which represented the ultimate actual cause of any trouble. Following up on the first confrontations and on residents' suggestions, the Circoscrizione had proposed her to stop selling beer and alcoholic drinks. Her first reaction was to welcome the idea. Upon further reflection she expressed a different opinion: this solution would not prove effective as customers could easily buy them in any nearby shop and yet hang around the phone centres, with the only difference she would lose customers. This opened up another crucial issue on the nature of phone centres: its character as a meeting point.

As the mediation project evolved, the President of the Circoscrizione started wondering whether this very function was to be encouraged or not:

'[We wondered whether] it is fair and normal for that place [with reference to the phone centre] to become a meeting space and for it to become so because there is no other space that can function well in this sense? Maybe this is a question should we ask ourselves!' (December 3rd 2008, Modena) *(extract 87 - appendices)*

The Municipality had built the local regulation on the assumption that phone centres are indeed a meeting space, similarly to parks and squares. The President of the Circoscrizione, on his side, was never quite convinced of this interpretation. Nonetheless, he strongly believed a serious debate was due on im-migrants' need to meet and group up with fellow friends. Arguably, he could well take up the role of a '*policy entrepreneur*' (Giuliani 1998 cit. Allasino et al. 2000), in the same way the Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici of the Municipality could have done. Both pointed to a similar alternative innovative path to address the complex issue of phone centres: they somehow addressed their property as a meeting place, rather than trying to discard any such function. Their position could well contribute to re-defining the terms of the debate. Things went differently. The Dirigente dedicated his efforts to drawing up a regulation that did in fact inhibit any chance for phone centres to be fully recognised as a meeting point and to continue existing as such (see section 6.3.3). The President of the Circoscrizione did not take his point forward, as far as I could gather, as he believed it was to be done elsewhere. Moreover, at that very time, he was mostly concerned with the pressure residents were putting on him:

'We started with some interventions to show residents we were addressing their complaints. We carried out some occasional ad hoc interventions, such an improvement in the lighting system or by moving a bench away from its original place or other similar things, that is to say small interventions. In the meantime, other more systematic

initiatives were put in place. Among these, but it was a mere coincidence, we have organised a mediation project on housing. It became part of a regional project. Among other interventions, we can count also a mediation project organised by Punto d'Accordo - the mediation services office - and in other occasions some contacts were made with residents. (…) After the end of term [Christmas end of term] we will organise an assembly with residents to rethink the steps made so far and to present the whole project.' (December 3rd 2008, Modena) *(extract 88 - appendices)*

Something had to be done to address residents' complaints effectively. It cannot be said enough it is indeed a duty for any Circoscrizione to respond to its voters. Yet, a particular urgency was perceived in the words of the President, especially when he underlined the importance of a strong symbolic action to prove residents and their neighbourhood were being given enough attention. Maintenance types of interventions went exactly in this direction. They certainly did more than that. A few residents noticed an effort on the side of the Circoscrizione and of the phone centre-owner to keep the passageway clean and cleared (March 16th and 24th 2009).

Actions by the Municipality and the Circoscrizione comprised another project which was funded by the Regional Authority. It was meant to cope with conflicts that were emerging in a few housing contexts, including first and foremost the apartment building block above the phone centre. Unfortunately, no further details could be collected on this. In the meantime, the mediation process came to a halt, as a few residents moved out away. Mediators intended to pick it up again and they did so later on, after an intermediary follow-up. Yet, according to the narratives of one of the participants, whom I interviewed in December and again later in March, residents were not quite happy with it, as the Officer responsible for mediation projects realised:

'Even the minimum stray must be reported because residents are all so focused on this issue now. (…) There are periods in which cohabitation works better, others in which something happens. Then we know that when people are focused on a given problem they become hypersensitive which means that any improvement is not noticed at all because it is considered as part of the routine. If anyone makes a mistake people immediately recall their previous experiences and they get angry as if nothing had ever happened. (…) Questa è un po' la difficoltà della mediazione territoriale in genere.' (December 12th 2008, Modena) *(extract 89 - appendices)*

According to her, it is sufficient for any disturbing episode to recur that residents forget about anything done in the meantime to address their complaints. Over time they become rather hypersensitive about issues. Other difficulties can be encountered, as the on-field experience had taught her, all somehow relating to the fact that mediators' role is not easily understood. To start with, shopkeepers – as any other counterpart – tend to feel under attack and to be scared for mediators to be there to sanction them or else to judge who is right on a given matter. Another important observation should be made. As she explained,

mediators act in synergy with local police officers. In other words, where the former intervene, the latter generally abstain from action. However, cases are not missing in which mediators have to call the police. It goes without saying that the responsibility rests with any citizen for agents to be contacted whenever needed. At the same time, it cannot go unnoticed that whereby it is mediators who do so, their role can be misinterpreted. During the interview, the phone centre-owner did recall an inspection and she reported it had been called by the mediators. She did not comment much further. She only said they had been acting as 'their right-arm'. A second difficulty of any mediation project, it to succeed in encouraging interested parties to surpass a logic whereby mediators are intended as the unique recipients of their claims and therefore as the one actor that is to do something about them. This is exactly the impression I had when comparing the opinions of the two residents I interviewed: the one that had been taking part in the mediation project very much insisted on what mediators had not done yet and were expected to do next (December 14th 2008). The other mostly brought forward her claims, without any clear idea of whom her expectations were to be cast on (December 14th 2008). A third difficulty concerns the desired and actual outcomes of projects. While the main goal of mediation types of activities is that of holding all interested parties responsible for a given conflict, it rarely happens. As a matter of fact, residents often close up within the walls of emotional recrimination, thus delegating public officers with the resolution of their problems.

Mediation efforts continued well after the first months of 2009. In April, I interviewed the Responsabile Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana and she confirmed her colleagues were still working on the case of Via Rossa. She also informed me on a new project that was now underway there, as well as in other parts of town. Mediators were now trying to contact shopkeepers, mostly those of immigrant origins, and to distribute a vademecum for them to be better informed and better equipped to run their commercial activity (see also section 6.3.3). This included advises on how to deal with difficult customers.

During our conversation, she repeatedly insisted that complaints on phone centres had decreased considerably. The same could not be said for Via Gallucci (see section 6.1.1). The reader might recall that problems in this area related to the 'bar fracassoni'. A participatory process had been set up there, as in Via Rossa. What is interesting is that, while similar solutions were proposed, such as maintenance types of interventions and a call for increasing police inspections, in the wake of participants' ideas three rather innovative solutions were also found and eventually implemented. First of all, as banal as it

might seem, a plea was made to the Local Authority to provide the area with a few public toilets so that customers would not do their bodily business outside in the streets. On the contrary, in the case of phone centres, the regulation spelt out it was owners that had to provide an adequate toilet facility for customers. Second, a new professional figure was promoted: the so-called '*steward di strada*'. Dressed up in civic clothes, with only an orange sleeveless jacket for them to be identified easily, the steward di strada were meant to hang around the area of Via Gallucci, particularly in the summer months, during week-ends, when streets full up with youngsters. The ultimate aim was that of preventing any unpleasant situation from emerging and to keep 'the volume down'. The Responsabile Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana argued this solution had been successful in its first phase. A question remains unanswered: how come there was no cross-contamination between projects in Via Gallucci and Via Rossa, considering that experiments in the former were proving useful? And why was IP Associati not asked for an opinion on the trouble in Via Rossa as trade unions were for the case of Via Gallucci?

In parallel with the mediation project in Via Rossa, a participatory process was run by the Municipality (see section 7.3.2). The Officer responsible for mediation projects was invited to join, with a limited role:

'We were part of it in the measure in which it was useful for the Municipality to have someone contacting, in a soft way, phone centre-owners, I mean not the Local Police. Out contribution was thought of as crucial also for another reason: local officers needed someone some language interpreters to talk to owners.' (December 12th 2008, Modena) *(extract 90 - appendices)*

Curiously enough, the two activities were managed independently. Of course, Via Rossa represents only one of the cases around the trouble of phone centres. Yet, the complaints that emerged in this area are by no means different from those that were evident in other neighbourhoods. Via Rossa could have provided some hints to further revisit the local regulation on how problems could be addressed. It was not so. It seems the Municipality's approach evolved along two parallel lines that never really crossed: on the one side a mediation project coped with micro-issues, at a neighbourhood level; on the other side a participatory process, was ultimately aimed at the definition of a legislative framework to deal with the management of phone centres at a wider urban level. Some authors (Allasino et al. 2000) observed that conflicts can encourage forms of collaboration among municipal actors. They also showed that some of them can fail to be involved, as their competence is judged irrelevant for conflicts resolution. In Turin, for example, the 'safety label' attached to contentious dynamics prevented 'social' officers from engaging. In the case of Modena,

mediators were partly involved in the management of phone centres conflicts as their competence was identified as useful only in the measure they could help contact owners 'in a soft way'.

8.1.2 'Invisible' informal forms of mediation in Verona.

In Verona, the mediation process did not follow an institutional route. As residents were reporting in the press on disorders and disturbances in Via Bianca, a new group of actors (from now onwards mediators), appeared on the scene. No trace of them was ever found in the press. This is how they recalled problems in the neighbourhood and how they started engaging them:

'There is a group of people that have dedicated time to social issues (…). It kind of catalysed people that were sensible to certain themes. After the priest left for a peace mission, alongside a series of difficulties that were encountered because a leader as well as a common objective were missing, the group could hardly be kept together and contacts were kept only on an informal basis, for some time. Then, in 2005, we started with a new adventure and organised a feast in connection with the parish church. It was going to be a feast for the neighbourhood (…). It was important for us to call it 'feast', as it was not going to be a 'sagra' – a local country festival – but rather a feast indeed, because of the quality of our proposal. Over the years we had been guided by a main theme, peace, and we looked at from various perspectives, by inviting people, organising seminars, etc. One of the specific aspects we focused on was peace within the neighbourhood, that is to say integration, as the first problems were emerging around the first phone centre that had opened [in Via Rossa]. (...) In other words, the feast provided with an excuse to start dealing with the relationship between immigrant and Italian residents (...). As we were focusing on the theme of integration we thought it would have been ridiculous not to involve the African residents, so we decided to approach them, in a very informal way (…), to explain our intention (...) and try and understand what theme could bring us together. We met many times and out of our meetings we decided to define a first event in which we organised a kind of table football championship. Teams included Ghana, Nigeria and Italy. (...) We soon understood it was not such a light thing. (...) This first experience (...) was a success in the sense that an incredible number of people joined. (...) That day was like a dive into 'reality'. We realised it is not all so easy nor is it logical at all to approach immigrant communities directly without having any sort of preparation (…). But we had already started preparing a second event (…). We had invited an African band (…) and we approached the community a bit like… we organise this event for you and they did not like it at all. (…) We also make a few 'cultural' mistakes in selecting the band. Let's say that in the following months we experienced some difficulties in the relationship with immigrant residents because one of the phone centre-owners got offended. (…) This was the moment when we learnt the most. I mean, we started reflecting around much more complex issues, that is to say on the way we could approach them. We even involved an African mediato and asked him to tell us something more about the communities (…). Then we organised various meetings with them in order to understand what needs they had. (…) At that stage, unfortunately, something happened we could no longer cope with. (…) The relationship between Italian and immigrant residents worsened due to a series of attacks the latter suffered from (…) and a series of inspections by police forces (…).' (April 29th 2009, Verona) *(extract 91 - appendices)*

I reported this long extract as it shows particularly well how dynamics unraveled. What emerges clearly is that the mediators started directly engaging the trouble of phone centres in a familiar regime. As their group got together, they had no intention of coping with any political issue, nor with phone centres in particular. No trouble had emerged yet. When it did, they chose not to ignore it, as to be coherent with respect to the path they had been

undertaking, that is to say with their integration goals. As soon as residents advanced complaints on phone centres, the mediators decided to try and do something about them. As anticipated above, there was hardly any direct confrontation between inhabitants and the phone centre-owners. It was the mediators themselves who approached them, thus proposing a meeting.

As it can be expected, considering the pressure they were experiencing, owners were very much worried about their business, the activity that provided them and their family with a living. They attended meetings which eventually turned into an occasion to give vent to their worries and frustrations: drug addicts regularly entered their shops and used the toilet. Whenever the police came round it was owners, however, to be blamed for it, particularly the one whose phone centre faced the public park. This added up to residents accusing him for any kind of disorder and disturbance in the neighbourhood (May 16th 2008).

The mediators tried to facilitate the relationship between these phone centre-owners and residents, including particularly the petition's signatories. They spoke to them individually and also tried to get them together. Interestingly, they started going to his shop to buy things, in the effort to show there was nothing wrong with it. Mediators were not successful in setting up any meeting with all interested parties. In spite of this, informal chats helped them realise that all in all opinions converged. Actors invariably referred to disturbances and abandoned litter, even though each one of them attached a different weight to each specific complaint. At the same time, similary to the Modenese context, no substantial agreement was ever reached among parties on whom was to be held responsible for the trouble. Owners and the mediators in Via Bianca pointed to drug addicts. Residents admitted they represented an old well-known stigma for the neighbourhood, while highlighting it was im-migrants, however, that were responsible for disorders and disturbances.

Over the weeks, the phone centre-owner who had the spotlight on advanced an industrial and a market orders of worth. The first was voiced while claiming he provided customers with a service the Local Authority had failed to provide: a toilet close to the public park. The second was introduced following an initiative that had been taken by the mediators. The Questura was not giving any sign it could cope with drug addicts adequately, therefore the mediators had encouraged the phone centre-owner to stop selling beer as to keep them away from his shop. This solution did not work. Drug addicts started buying beers

elsewhere and yet kept hanging around the shop and the little park. At that point, the phone centre-owner felt that in face of no progress in this sense it was merely his business that had been suffering, in favour of other shops and supermarkets.

It should be noticed that the Consiglieri of the Circoscrizione were well aware of the work the mediators had been doing with the phone centre-owners and of their attempts to facilitate confrontations. They never joined them in their endeavour. However, they did encourage them to continue. Again, most of the conflict unraveled outside institutional scenes, in a familiar regime. An opportunity had been lying ahead for mediators to pave the path towards an innovative solution to address the trouble of phone centres. It could have also opened up the way to the public arena. As I said, they agreed with owners it could be worth banning alcoholic drinks and they carried out an experiment accordingly, even though it was hardly successful. Moreover, they made a plea to the Circoscrizione to provide with a public toilet (May 27th 2009). Most importantly, they tried to move residents' attention away from safety and maintenance issues towards more general considerations on integration and pacific cohabitation in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately they never succeeded in bringing actors together, hence no form of coordination could be ever achieved, nor did institutions provide any disposition to facilitate it.

Narratives threw light on yet another aspect. Some Italian shopkeepers and residents were rather stiff with the mediators. As one of them explained (shopkeeper, April 23rd 2009), they still recalled an old contention with the priest, the same I introduced above in relation to renewal plans in the neighbourhood. They had experienced the negligence of local institutions (see also Vitale 2009) and this possibly constrained any positive attitude towards confrontations, as they felt their dissent would be again silenced in favour of the priest and, in this case, in favour of phone centre-owners. It was therefore unsurprising to find out they had developed a rather negative disposition towards them.

It was not only native residents that felt institutions had been neglecting them. The phone centre-owner whose shop had been mostly subjected to complaints, told me about an episode that severely affected his trust in the Local Police. It all happened after repeated attempts by a drug addict to steel products from his shop. Eventually, the owner called for their intervention. When agents arrived they closed down the shop and inspected it. This was a demonstration for him that no matter the situation, he would be held responsible for

anything happening in the shop (phone centre-owner, May 12th 2008). The pre-electoral period was well under way by then. It was the end of 2007.

What did the Circoscrizione do in face of the conflict? As a Consigliere of the majoritarian coalition reported, neither his colleagues nor him ever met any of the petition signatories in person (May 27th 2009). The same was confirmed as far as phone centre-owners are concerned. An attempt was made to confront with some representatives of the local branch of the Lega Nord party who had been stressing on the trouble of Via Bianca. Unfortunately, relationships with them had long been jeopardised for reasons he did not specify. The Questura was then asked to try and establish a contact with them, as they feared the trouble of phone centres could be excessively politicised, with elections on top of them. A few proposals were then put forward for the general maintenance of the public park. To cite an example, the idea was suggested to improve the lighting system. At the same time, an explicit request was made to the Local Police to coordinate inspections to the area with those of other police bodies and to keep the Circoscrizione informed on any progress. Consiglieri started feeling the whole trouble of Via Bianca was reaching a climax: in fact, it was turning into a safety alarm.

8.2 The neighbourhood committee in Via Rossa in Modena.

'They created a committeed and it emerged from the mediation project we organised. Initally, the group with whom we worked functioned very well. At a certain stage, a person that entered into politics aroused the mind to creating a committee. This was far from the underlying rational of our project that was rather based on dialogue and mediation (…). We certainly made our mistakes (…). In practice, they started and they still give a certain kind of interpretation to the whole issue… they exploit the communication channels.' (Officer responsible for mediation services, December 12th 2008) *(extract 92 - appendices)*

As anticipated above, the mediation project in Via Rossa came to a halt towards the end of 2008. The group had started working well, as reported by the Officer responsible for mediation services. As the process was well under way, some of the participants called off to join a small neighbourhood committee that was formed by a young man. The latter had not participated in the project. He had not matured any political experience. From the interview, it emerged he was simply interested in the neighbourhood he lives in:

'*No, no, no, absolutely. I never got involved in politics. I am a person that likes being informed and up to date (…) Then this issue emerged… It was in my neighbourhood… to be honest I could never stand bullies and I could not stand seeing these people [with reference to immigrants hanging around] then, I could not accept it, do you understand? It was for this reason that I started to send articles to newspapers, I organised a few meetings with friends, neighbours, we shared our email and telephone contacts … .'* (December 4th 2008, Modena*) (extract 93 - appendices)*

He soon managed to involve a few friends and neighbours. Apparently, a few of them had been growing unsatisfied with the mediation project and were eager to move forward. This is how he founded the committee. It is an informal structure. Following the classification by Poletti (2003), it can be defined as a '*comitato a termine*'. It comprises this young man, who became the representative and another fifteen people approximately, of whom few are friends of him and others are residents he got to know over time. As he explained himself, it is a simplification to call it 'neighbourhood committee', because it is a small group of people. Yet, while we were talking, he recalled, in a rather ironic way, that the Questore had just sent him his Christmas wishes: '*Caro Presidente, le auguro un Buon Natale...*'[281]. In other words, he had gained access to a fully recognised political identity. As all other committees, the one in Via Rossa equally enjoyed legitimacy in the eyes of the Local Authority.

It was mostly the representative who proposed actions and engaged in them. In particular, he acted as an intermediary between residents and the Circoscrizione. The latter was perceived as a small enough institutional entity to deal with, contrary to the Municipality which was at times considered as too far from citizens. As for residents, he has been regularly in touch with them by bumping into them in the street and through occasional meetings he organised.

'I never met anyone that did not agree with me, absolutely not. They are all grateful to me, I know that someone complained because I sent articles to newspapers, but I think it was some landlords or house owners who were eager to sell their house and for whom my attitude was therefore counterproductive …' (December 4th 2008, Modena*) (extract 94 - appendices)*

During the interview, he seemed to be rather confident in claiming he represented residents and their issues. Committees' leaders often take it for granted that they represent the interests of a given territory. Yet, cases are evident in which they fail to undertake any legitimate test of representativeness (Vitale 2008) and this is a case in point. Some residents of Via Rossa barely knew of any activity he was undertaking and clearly expressed their disagreement in this sense, as I will report later.

As far as the specific issue of phone centres is concerned, it should be specified that the committee was not born to protest against the businesses themselves, even though it did emerge in a context whereby the presence of phone centres was very much perceived as disturbing (December 3rd 2008). The representative of the committee very much engaged in

[281] 'Dear President [of the neighbourhood committee] I wish you a Happy Christmas…'.

a familiar regime. Informal confrontations took place between him and various customers of the phone centre, with no success. He lamented their aggressive attitude and their scarce readiness to collaborate:

'One evening I went downstairs and discussed with these guys and then for some time whenever I bumped into them they offended me… luckily nothing ever happened. They were aggressive, not at all collaborative.' (December 4th 2009, Modena) *(extract 95 - appendices)*

He also repeatedly talked to the shop owner. As he lives nearby, they often met by chance and this gave them the opportunity to discuss and re-discuss as the situation was evolving. Numerous efforts were made by both to try and come to terms with each other, without awaiting for any facilitative support:

'I told him [the phone centre-owner in Via Rossa]: 'Try at least not to sell alcoholic drinks, I am not asking you to close down the shop'. 'No, no, no, as far as I can I will carry on with my shop', she replied. I have to say she was very aggressive and I understood there was no intention on her side to listen to me he was very. Another owner in Via x (name) (…), on the contrary, agreed with me. He even put a sign outside that said alcohol was banned, but at least he showed he was sensitive to the problem... it was a symbolic gesture but it made me understand he was trying to do something on his side…' (ibidem) (extract 96 - appendices)

'It is my fault. It something happens it is always my fault. There is a young Italian man that lives in this house [the representative of the neighburhood committed in Via Rossa]. He wrote letters to the Municipality. I told him three or four times it was for my shop that the Local Police comes round. He says it is my customers that mess around and it is my fault. If you go to the Questura and check you will find out that they never found anything wrong with my shop, you cannot find a single line that was written on something that was wrong. If someone buys a beer and drinks in front of my shop I tell them not to do it, not so much because I can run the risk of being fined [for disturbances] but because I do not like it either and I want to send them away. (…) The young man called the Local Police more than once and he told them that it was a mess here and when police agents arrived they found nothing at all. (…) There are other people [who live in this street] and they never come to me [and complain]. There is an elderly woman that lives above my shop and she never says anything. She should be the first to complain, because she lives here. (…) And there are a few women that live nearby and always come and buy stuff in my shop. They never complained with me. Every now and then some people stop around their house [in their garden] and drink beer. I told them: 'Do whathever you want, my friend!', because it was far from my shop.Amico, fai quello che vuoi, perché è lontano dal negozio. 'But if you drink please do not leave bottles around in the garden. There is a bin, there is another one I put myself.' (phone centre-owner in Via Rossa, April 24th 2009, Modena) *(extract 97 - appendices)*

The representative described discussions as a unilateral attempt on his side to try and find a solution to cope with residents' complaints. He particularly insisted that alcohol consumption should be banned[282], by encouraging the owner to stop selling alcoholic drinks. No agreement was ever reached between them. Ultimately, the common good under attack was the neighbourhood, '*under siege by immigrants*', as an article titled at the

[282] As he also insisted in two articles published by the press: Gazzetta, Il Comitato di Sant'Agnese. Troppi phone centre Siamo sotto assedio, ostaggio degli stranieri. February 3rd 2008, 5; Gazzetta, Ubriachi e molesti. March 13th 2008, 13.

beginning of February 2008 [283]. Claims were advanced with reference to a civic order of worth. It should be noticed that, in the first extract above, the representative of the committee was not referring to the current phone centre-owner in Via Rossa, but to the owner that managed the shop a few years ago, before she took over. Arguably, the relationship between the representative and the new phone centre-owner very much suffered from the experience the representative had cumulated with the previous one.
In fact, the (current) phone centre-owner mostly confirmed the complaints he advanced when he first talked to her. She was herself suffering from similar disturbances. Yet, she did not agree on the proposed solution. She stressed it would cause a loss to her business, in favour of competitors, thus introducing a market order of worth. The latter was not considered as legitimate. It was interpreted in terms of individual interest, hence as incapable of addressing the common good. Following an initial phase in which both actors were favourably disposed towars each other, no coordination resulted. In particular, the owner got more and more annoyed about the patronising attitude of the young representative. Unsurprisingly this did not help.

The phone centre-owner never welcomed the representative's idea on the ground it was running counter her business, as the owner in Via Bianca had supported. Contrary to her Veronese colleague, she had a rather rigid attitude. Arguably, it can be understood in the measure she felt very much harassed by the representative: he kept on accusing her for supposedly illegal ways of running her shop, while punctual evidence, during police inspections, proved him wrong. During the interview, it emerged she had taken (some) residents' complaints into due consideration.

Following 'gentle' observations by a few elderly women, who live across the street and who regularly buy products in her shop, she bought an extra dustbin to try and ensure customers would not leave any bottles around. She also started paying more attention to the passageway while taking up responsibility to keep it clean. It was also their attitudes that encouraged her to do so. They did talk to her regularly and not only to complain: *'They always buy stuff here and they always inquired about the baby when I was pregnant.'* I had short chat with one of them (March 19th 2009). Interestingly, while she affirmed the young man was known to her as to most neighbours, she had never discussed with him on disturbances, nor did she agree on his actions, similarly to other residents. Again, it is questionable whether he has been effectively representative of residents.

[283] See note 13.

His position was certainly shared by some of his friends. As one of them affirmed, they did agree on complaints as well as on the way to go about them (March 19th 2009). They chose to surpass mediation channels, thus reaching out directly to the Circoscrizione. They also wrote letters to the Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana, in the hope to raise the Local Authority's attention on the situation in their neighbourhood. The reader might recall this office was specifically set up with a number of functions, including that of collecting safety complaints. In line with Kitsuse and Spector (1987), it is reasonable to argue that by contacting this dedicated office the committee could count on a pre-defined safety frame which could easily legitimise their claims as problems worth attention. In any case, their voice was heard: the police started patrolling the area. The committee developed a privileged relationship with police forces, not without consequences: on the one side members asked for their support, which translated in the territory being increasingly patrolled; on the other side police agents expected their collaboration in the informal control of the same territory, with the phone centre-owner suffering from increasing pressure.

The media was another channel they actively used to voice their claims. It was the representative that spoke in their name, even though articles constantly referred to him as a 'member', rather than the representative of the neighbourhood committee of Via Rossa. As he stressed, at times, he did not even need to contact journalists. It was them who called him in the first instance, eager as they were to keep the 'hot' debate on phone centres going (December 4th 2008).

8.2.1 The Coordinamento Comitati in Modena.

The committee in Via Rossa is part of a coordinating body, the Coordinamento Comitati, that was founded a few years ago. It groups together all committees in Modena. Its objective is that of establishing a long-term dialogue with institutions on issues of general interest to Modenese residents. The regulation of phone centres did emerge as a crucial topic in this sense, as it will shown below. Similarly to all individual committees which have joined it, the Coordinamento mainly deals with safety related issues. Nonetheless, any matter relevant for specific neighbourhoods is left for individual committees to sort out, as a few members explained during interviews (see for example April 20th 2009). This is not to say that actions by the latter are characterised by fragmented forms of particularism in connection to nymbyism. At least as far the committee in Via Rossa is concerned,

confrontations at a familiar level can be described as expressions of a common good, as highlighted above.

The Coordinamento Comitati organised regular meetings, which take place on a regular basis, twice a month. The members of all committees are welcome to join, even though it is often the representatives of each committee that actually participate in them. The Coordinamento has rejected any ideological stance to embrace a more pragmatic approach aimed at affirming citizens' rights, rather than delegating this role to institutions or any intermediary body. As Poletti (2003) suggested, the impression was confirmed that such a pragmatic stance is very much motivated by the will to attract popular consensus (April 20th 2009). Nevertheless, members also stressed their belief that a change could actually take place. In fact, they demonstrated a positive perception of the political opportunity structure characterising the Modenese context (see for example December 4th 2008 and May 13th 2009).

Neighbourhood committees have been generally appreciated for their independence with respect to political parties and for their collaborative and proactive attitude (Responsabile Ufficio Politiche per la Sicurezza Urbana, April 8th 2009). In fact, they have represented a crucial resource for local authorities, in the measure they have acted as an important interlocutor. However, against this scenario, a radical change has been observed in the past few years: a few of them, such as that of Via Rossa, have been created with the explicit aim to oppose the Municipality and its policies. According to the Responsabile, well before 2008, cases had been recorded of committees advancing opinions which diverged from that of the Municipality. Yet, she described the new ones as more radical in their position and politicised. This was ultimately interpreted as a sign that a new phase was ahead in the development of this form of social movement. As she added, it was the first time neighbourhood committees were particularly stressing their safety complaints in coincidence with the beginning of the electoral period.

An ability has been shown by the Coordinamento Comitati to present a detailed critique of public policies and interventions (see also Della Porta 2004). To cite an example, members put together a detailed analysis of the status of safety in Modena, with the collaboration of a few trade unions and those of police forces. It supported their request for an increase in the number of police agents in Modena. The document was presented to the Municipality

during a meeting of the Consiglio Comunale, in October 2008[284], after it was sent to the Prefect and the Questore, as well as to other bodies including for example the Comitato Provinciale per l'Ordine e la Sicurezza. The regulation of phone centres is also a case in point.

A few members of the Coordinamento met the Assessore alle Attività Economiche a few times. Committees were not invited to join the participatory process the Municipality set up. Yet, their opinion was called for, in spite of the fact that the trouble had been of direct interest to one committee only: that of Via Rossa. This suggests they are indeed recognised as a relevant urban actor, regardless the rather informal status of both individual committees and of the Coordinamento. In fact, over the years, they have been considerably involved in the context of a variety of matters, including first and foremost urban safety (Responsabile Ufficio Politiche della Sicurezza Urbana, April 8th 2009). The Municipality even encouraged their constitution in various occasions to try and channel new potential forms of engagement (May 12th 2009, see also Allasino et al 2000).

After the Municipality had announced it was going to draw up a local piece of regulation on phone centres, the Coordinamento put pressure for it to be approved. It clearly declared its favourable opinion with respect to it, as well as a number of specific articles within it. This was done through meetings with the Assessore. Another channel was equally used: the press. It served mostly in the quality of a platform to confront with IP Associati. As anticipated, no meeting ever took place between either individual committees or the Coordinamento Comitati and IP Associati. Press articles somehow replaced them. More about this in the next section.

8.3 The press and phone centres in Verona and Modena: zooming on the cases of Via Bianca and Via Rossa.

It should be clear by now that phone centres have been the object of rather negative narratives. They have been continuously associated with forms of urban decay. The boundary between legal and illegal behaviours, by both their customers and owners, has somehow shifted (see also Dal Lago 1999 and Maneri 1998), as they rapidly lost legitimacy in the eyes of residents. These businesses have come to be seen as a locus of criminality,

[284] 'Relazione del Coordinamento dei comitati per la sicurezza, delle associazioni di categoria e sindacati di polizia al Consiglio Comunale aperto sulla sicurezza'. Modena, October 27th 2008.

whereby a common 'enemy' could be identified: newcomers. As it happened, the term 'phone centre' has been progressively used by journalists to refer to the actual owner, as a specific category of deviant im-migrants. This recalls well the '*non-people*' cited by Dal Lago (1999), in his account of newcomers' treatment by the Italian press.

Media have certainly contributed to reinforcing residents' negative narratives, as testified by a systematic press review[285]. News-making apparatus have been operating a symbolic mediation of common sense discourses, thus portraying these activities as particularly problematic. It is hard to demonstrate this thesis. While press messages can be a stimulus for readers, they do not necessarily carry any specific reaction with them. Nonetheless, it can be expected that the more alarming interpretations are put forward, the more constituencies will be alarmed as a result and will resort to ask public authorites for intervention. In the cases under analysis, a similar mechanism was observed while interviewing various residents: they repeatedly referred to newspaper articles to ground and support their opinions that 'something had to be done urgently, as the press demonstrated' (see for example resident in Via Rossa, December 5th 2008, Modena; resident in Via Bianca, June May 16th 2008, Verona).

Next, I will provide some examples of how phone centres have been portrayed. It will soon become evident that it is well comparable to the way im-migrants, in general, have been described. Articles have included these businesses in their topography of '*places of discomfort*' (Alietti and Agustoni 2009). Spatial cohabitation has been very much dramatised and echoed back to residents. Modenese newspapers identified them with a phenomenon '*objectively and indisputably connected to severe problems of public order*'[286] which '*makes citizens feel uncomfortable*'[287]. Veronese ones reported residents' anxieties deriving from these places, considered 'at risk'[288]. The Mayor himself declared these shops were problematic[289]. It should be noticed here that various researchers stressed on the crucial role politicians can have as a a category of policy-makers: they can contribute to the definition of issues and

[285] A systematic press review of L' Arena, the main local newspaper in Verona has been undertaken for the period November 2003 – August 2009. A review was also undertaken for the two main local newspapers in Modena: La Gazzetta and l' Informazione, for the period 2005 – 2008, but due to difficulties with access it could not be systematic.

[286] La Gazzetta, I gravi problemi di ordine pubblico connessi alle attività di questi esercizi, scrive Leoni, di Forza Italia, un dato di fatto oggettivo a incontestabile. November 28th 2006, 10.

[287] L' Informazione, Sono un disagio per i cittadini: rispettino le regole o chiudano. June 27th 2008, ?

[288] L' Arena, Incontro tra il questore Luigi Merolla e i consiglieri della prima circoscrizione. Da risolvere innanzitutto il problema degli alloggi. November 28th 2003, 18.

[289] L' Arena, Controlli a tappeto. Nel mirino di vigili e ispettori Ulss una ventina di negozi di immigrati. (…). July 21st 2007, 11.

possible solutions[290]. The latter can enter the political agenda as well as public debates through the lens channeled by their declarations and/or everyday practices (Gaxie et al. 1999).

La Gazzetta explained their proliferation, in Modena, as '*a [economic] boom full of shadow*'[291]. Similarly, l' Arena di Verona stressed residents' negative allusions to the business and its incomprehensible survival, at a time of recession[292]. Very little attention has been paid to these shops as an entrepreneurial activity. Only two articles by l' Arena followed this line: they informed of a study by Unioncamere (the Union of Italian Chambers of commerce)[293]. In Modena, it was mostly IP Associati that raised this point[294]. In a country characterised by an increasing relevance of 'ethnic entrepreneurialism', with phone centres emerging as a booming activity (see section 4.2), it was rather strange to discover that scarce reference was made to them, in spite of their increasing visibility. Another property of phone centres was barely mentioned: their character as a meeting space which, curiously enough, motivated residents' complaints in the first instance. Journalists, in Verona, gave only a passing reference to their social function. In Modena, it was again IP Associati that throw light on it[295].

Over the years, other aspects were underlined, particularly by the Veronese newspapers. These included the precarious sanitarian conditions of the shops[296]. Otherwise, articles, in both cities, have mostly focussed on inspections, and undocumented [297]. In part, this can be explained with the fact that police forces represent a crucial source of information for journalists. They have long been considered as '*primary definers*' (Hall et al. 1978). In other words, they preliminarly select and frame the type of news to be published by media. This negative depiction was in turn fed by journalists' and politicians' statements, in coincidence with the drafting and approval of the very much debated '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law) alongside the progressive politicisation of the fight against irregular migration.

[290] Mahning 2004, Caponio 2003 cit. Caponio 2006
[291] La Gazzetta, Phone centre, un boom pieno di ombre. August 4th 2005, 1.
[292] L' Arena, Sotto accusa i comportamenti «inurbani» di certi stranieri, le loro attività commerciali 'fuori di ogni regola e controllo'. November 4th 2003, 16.
[293] L' Arena, L'analisi di Unioncamere: il tasso di crescita è del 19% con un saldo attivo di 693 aziende. In testa marocchini, romeni, cinesi e albanesi. March 1st 2006, 7; I dati di Confartigianato sul 2006. April 24th 2006, 6.
[294] See for example La Gazzetta, Fermate la caccia alle streghe. Chiusure fatte su pressione di forze politiche xenofobe'. November 27th 2006, pg. ?
[295] L' Informazione, Phone centre un confronto sui nuovo luoghi di aggregazione. January 29th 2008, 12.
[296] L' Arena, Degrado. Due quartieri accomunati dagli stessi problemi come l'eccessiva presenza di stranieri irregolari e di negozi in precarie condizioni igieniche. Tombetta? Peggio di Veronetta. September 28th 2007, 8.
[297] See for example La Gazzetta, Clandestini al phone centre. September 25th 2005, 19; L' Arena, Clandestini alle Golosine. Nove traditi dal baccano al phone centre. June 29th 2005, 18.

Clearly, the 'world' of phone centres has been interpreted with a cognitive frame based on urban safety. This has fuelled into forms of '*moral panics*' (Cohen 1972), as will be shown. On the one side, residents' protests have been launched by the press which followed them up with a series of dedicated articles; on the other , the attention on phone centres was kept high particularly in specific time intervals. What is most relevant is not the quantitative weight of the phenomenon. It is rather the appearance on the 'press stage' of various actors, including both institutional and non institutional ones. It can be safety argued that indeed they contributed as much as the media to the construction of dominant discourses: while media shouted up warnings, other actors rode symbolic threats, thus certifying and confirming the warning itself. I am referring first and foremost to politicians who managed to strengthen messages. In fact, without political legitimisation media emergencies can hardly survive, nor can they can reach any climax.

The Local Authority in Modena fully recognised that the media's portrayal of phone centre was rather problematic. The Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici suggested the Municipality should try and run counter any negative imaginary associated with either residents or economic activities. At the same time, the scarcity of material resources was indicated as a severe constraint:

'[Phone centres as an activity] have evolved over time and have had an impact that, considering a number of dynamics, residents have felt in their gut. (…) It is important to bear in mind that it is enough for an activity to be at the centre of attention as a problematic activity, for all activities of the same category to be described in an equally negative and problematic way. It is therefore important to work more on their image, even though the typical problem is that municipalities have little time (…). It would therefore be important to get to know shopkeepers [In particular the interviewee specified he had on mind the definition of an ethic code]. It would be important to make sure that all the negative but also the positive aspects of these activities and the way they manage them can emerge. It would also be important to understand to what extent responsibility should be born by shopkeepers or customers.' (October 10th 2008, Modena) *(extract 102 - appendices)*

The above extract highlights that editorial offices should not be held responsible as the unique actor that led to the emergence of negative imaginaries. They also depend on residents. This is not to say their perceptions are sufficient for information to be echoed back by the media. A specific competence is required to deal with them effectively. Some neighbourhood committees have indeed acquired it (Allasino et al. 2000). The one in Via Rossa is no exception. Efforts have been made by the representative to give visibility to the problems suffered by residents. While he did not always succeed in doing so, the press has been a crucial channel to make residents heard and to pressurise the Local Authority into addressing their claims.

8.3.1 Media as a tool to speak up: the voice of phone centre-owners.

The media spotlight is capable of validating actors as important player (Koopmans 2004). As largely discussed in the theoretical chapter, when any reference is made about newcomers in the press, it is often natives or third parties that talk. The cases of Modena and Verona, as well as the specific cases of Via Bianca and Via Rossa testify a much more complex picture. The press has been well understood by all actors, including im-migrants, as a crucial communication channel. To be true, various scholars have started throwing light on this dimension (Mosca 2009). In spite of this, to the author's knowledge, there is scarce evidence of newcomers doing so. Belluati (2004), for example, specifically analysed the unraveling of urban safety conflicts in Turin, through a systematic press review. Yet, im-migrants were never mentioned as protagonists, thus suggesting their voice was excluded from the news (see also Dines 2002). Additionally, no one apparently spoke in their name.

Phone centre-owners have repeatedly used local newspapers to put forward their claims, as yet another form of political engagement. IP Associati, in Modena, has managed to gain some visibility for both its actions and opinions. Apart from this, a parallel debate to that within and outside institutional scenes has developed in the press. It informed discussions that lead up to the approval of the local regulation. In particular, newspaper articles have often represented a tool for Consiglieri Comunali to follow up on members' requests, to collect information on their association and their business[298].

Moreover, as owners grew increasingly aware of the negative image journalists had provided of phone centres, they felt truly outraged. It should not be forgotten that media intervene in im-migrants' individual and collective experience through the stereotypes they spread (King and Wood 2001). This aspect was often stressed during interviews. It is hardly surprising therefore that specific efforts were made to adopt the press not only as a 'residual' form of dialogue, once direct contacts with officers had proved useless, but to present themselves to residents, thus trying to reveal the 'true nature' of their business[299]. They were even more outraged when they realised that their activity was generally suffering from a negative depiction all throughout the country, with little consideration for the

[298] Two Consiglieri (Celloni and Galli, Forza Italia), referred explicitly to newspaper articles in this sense (see Proceedings of the Deliberazione Consiglio Comunale 88, December 17th 2007: *Esercizi pubblici di telefonia, internet e fax – definizione orari*).

[299] See for example La Gazzetta, Fermate la caccia alle streghe. Chiusure fatte su pressione di forze politiche xenofobe. November 27th 2006, ?

contribution they were giving to the local economy and the integration of im-migrants. As a few of them explained, the President had subscribed to a google search tool which showed them well how their shops had been associated with such an imaginary (November 18th and December 2nd 2008).

Modenese articles mostly reported the words of the President of IP Associati, who speaks in the name of the association and its members. In a few occasions, individual owners added to his account with comments[300]. Nonetheless, they were rather weary of expressing their views without 'the support' of the association (November 18th 2008). This is well exemplified by reading through an article that was published in August 2007: a journalist tried to interview some of them on their business. They refused[301], as they were '*guests*' in Modena and would better '*keep silent.*'[302]

The editorial office of the newspaper l' Informazione were indicated as particularly responsive upon their request (President of IP Associati, November 6th 2008). It is a relatively recent newspaper that has come to be appreciated for being particularly attentive to residents' sensibilities. Indeed, all actors were given a comparable space to raise their voice, with no exception for phone centre-owners. Having said this, my review highlighted that il Resto del Carlino and La Gazzetta were no less attentive. Things changed at the end of 2008, instead, with all of them. The last electoral campaign started and it soon became evident, in the view of owners, that it was now harder to gain access to the press (December 30th 2008). Their last protest, on December 18th, was not echoed (see section 7.3.6), nor were their opinions in the following months. Journalists were contacted as usual. No one responded.

Visibility is certainly important, but it is not sufficient in itself. When collective actions do receive some kind of attention, they can influence actors in an unpredictable way. The type of visibility and its effects on public opinion are very much connected to media representations. Accordingly, the representative of Via Rossa, during an interview, commented that IP Associati was not at all a representative association (December 10th 2008). His belief built on a picture associated with a press article reporting on owners' protest in February 2008: it showed only ten of them holding banners[303]. No direct contact

[300] See for example La Gazzetta, Phone centre, pronti a ribellarsi. February 7th 2008, 13.
[301] Il Resto del Carlino, Boom dei phone centre, ma è guerra agli irregolari. August 21st 2007, 8.
[302] 'Qui siamo ospiti, meglio stare zitti'
[303] L' Informazione, Noi capro espiatorio del degrado. February 12th 2008, 9.

had ever been taken with the association. This might explain why he was not aware it actually counted more than 40 members, many of whom did feel represented. Yet, it influenced his propensity to confront them.

Furthermore, the association's President always failed to be acknowledged in his role. This depended on his Italian origins, differently from the large majority of owners. Some policy-makers[304] argued IP Assocati comprises a small bunch of members he 'goobled up' to protest instead of striving for an appropriate civilised form of compromise. In spite of these views, his role, in terms of press coverage, has been vital. First of all, he speaks and writes Italian fluently, as no other owner does. Second, he has developed contacts with journalists, throughout his career as a trade-unionist. Third, he has gained considerable experience as an activist and learnt the importance of communicating through the media. This is not to say members were any less literate in this sense.

On December 18th 2008, while organising their strike, some of them insisted it was overdue time to contact Striscia la notizia[305]. As they argued, in order for anyone to 'exist' at all, in Italy, they must appear on TV. A similar reflection was made by their colleagues in Verona (June 14th 2008), who also considered the idea of 'you-tubing' the video of their protest. Possibly, this reflects two equally crucial considerations: on the one side owners are very much aware of the potential of media, on the other they have become distrustful towards institutions, hence resigning to other channels to voice their concerns (see also Mantovan 2007).

The Veronese scenario is rather different. The voice of phone centre-owners has been overall scarcely present. A similar comment can be made for native shopkeepers. Yet, after the new Mayor took up his mandate, they were granted more space in the section dedicated to residents' letters. Possibly, they soon grew aware that the Municipality was now more focused on safety issues[306]. In my view, this provided them with a motivation to speak up their concern louder (Spector and Kitsuse 2000).

Returning to phone centre-owners, it was at the end of 2008 that the Coordinamento

[304] See for example Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici del Comune di Modena, October 10th 2008, Modena.
[305] This is an Italian TV program that has been run for years. Among other things, it has collaborated with reporters who have repeatedly spoken up the voices and complaints of citizens, at times with good results.
[306] See section 6.1.2

gestori di phone centres appeared in the press for the first - and last - time[307]. It was to stress that these businesses were being harassed. Well before, in coincidence with the first articles published on phone centres, in 2005, a few owners had called journalists to describe what their activity was actually about[308]. The Coordinamento did not exist at the time. Owners insisted that phone centres are not only 'centres of criminality'. They are 'public spaces' accessible to anyone. Interestingly, a voice was given to them, in spite of the fact they were not an 'organised voice'. This is surprising as journalists generally draw information from official '*organised*' sources (Maneri 2009). It is beyond discussion that considerable help came from the legal representative of the Coordinamento Migranti. Yet, a strong desire was expressed by them to 'shout' their concerns, even when his support was missing.

They wanted to fight, as much as their colleagues in Modena did, against the negative stereotypes associated with their activity. In a few other cases, individual owners mobilised in this direction. In August 2007, one of them presented an appeal against a fine which had been delivered to him for his alleged mis-compliance with the Anti-terrorism law. He actually won it. Angry as he was about the inspection and they way it had been carried out - among other things he reported on the patronising attitude by the Mayor who was present together with journalists and police agents - he contacted the editorial office of the main local newspaper and kept them informed about progress on the matter[309]. It was him, as an individual owner, who engaged. He did it not only for the sake of his business reputation. It was also for the common good of colleagues: he felt it necessary to prove to Veronese residents that there was more to phone centres than negative labels placed on them (June 7th 2008).

8.3.2 Verona and the politicisation of the trouble in Via Bianca.

'*In order to regulate phone centres a simple ordinance would do*'. This is what a then Consigliere Comunale of the oppositional coalition - and local leader of the extreme-right party Lega Nord - declared in an article, dating October 30th 2004[310]. He was starting his 'battle' to

[307] L' Arena, Siamo perseguitati e costretti a chiudere. December 8th 2008, 18.

[308] L' Arena, Viaggio tra i centri telefonici della città. Trenta operatori si accordano facendo "cartello" e andranno dal sindaco a chiedere di posticipare la chiusura. August 11th 2005, 11.

[309] Three articles were published overall in summer 2007. In the last one, the phone centre-owner reported that his shop had been eventually de-confiscated (L' Arena, VIGILI. Accolto il ricorso del marocchino. September 7th 2007, 15).

[310] L' Arena, La Lega: Sui phone centre Verona faccia come Novara. October 30th 2004, 16.

regulate the sector which he described as problematic. No other Consigliere of the majoritarian coalition talked about these businesses in this direction, nor did the then Mayor. The first and only time he spoke about phone centres in the press was two years later[311]. It was to point to these shops as troublesome, particularly in relation to their long opening hours and the ensuing disturbances their customers could cause. In 2005, after he was elected Assessore Regionale alla Sanità, the Consigliere Comunale continued in his endeavour and announced he was going to plan a run of inspections to check on phone centres' compliance with sanitary requirements[312]. They started a year later[313], in July 2006, a few months before the electoral campaign was launched. He was to become Mayor in Verona, in 2007. It should be recalled that the whole campaign was based on a securitarian stance, which included among other projects, inspections in phone centres (see section 5.1).

As it resulted from my press review, the trouble of phone centres has been very much politicised both during the electoral campaign and after the new Mayor took up his mandate. In the meantime, Via Bianca had turned into an object of public alarm, with phone centres being increasingly described as 'evil shops'. In the view of the mediators, such a strong media exposition was orchestrated by politicians, including first and foremost the current Mayor (June 12th 2008, April 29th 2008). This area was to become an exemplary case of disturbances and of the way they could be addressed effectively.

A first hint in this direction is provided by the number of relevant articles published by the local newspaper, l' Arena, before and after the 2007 electoral period: a total of 42, more than double of those published a year earlier and almost a triple of those published the following year. Almost a third of them were on Via Bianca, while trouble in other neighbourhoods were hardly mentioned. Just to cite an example, in coincidence with a murder in a phone centre in Veronetta, only two articles were reported[314]. Such an event could have easily represented an opportunity to highlight phone centres as problematic. Apart from the event in itself, it occurred in a neighbourhood (see section 6.1.2) that has become well-known for its high concentration of both immigrant residents and of phone centres.

[311] L' Arena, Il sindaco Paolo Zanotto fa l'elenco dei problemi da affrontare. October 12th 2006, 12.
[312] L' Arena, Tosi. Controlli sanitari nei phone centre. August 7th 2005, 11.
[313] L' Arena, Sanità e sicurezza. La Giunta regionale ha stabilito una nuova normativa per gli esercizi che offrono servizi di telefonia. July 28th 2006, 15.
[314] L' Arena, Omicidio al call centre di Veronetta. November 15th 2005, 16.

Let's take a step back. Summer 2005 was the first period characterised by an intense visibility of the trouble in Via Bianca: five articles were published within two weeks. This is how it all started in coincidence with the passing of the Anti-terrorism decree, together with a new requirement for phone centre-owners: to identify customers prior to their access to telephone and Internet services.

Residents in Via Bianca presented a petition, as anticipated above. The Assessore alla Sicurezza of the Municipality of Verona personally visited the area: it was a first symbolic action to 'make residents feel closer to the Municipality'. Inspections followed, soon after[315]. The President of the Circoscrizione, in turn, reassured residents that the situation was not dramatic. He failed to provide any consistent diagnostic frame, while trying to highlight problems were not serious. As a result of this, no diagnostic frame was proposed either[316]. In parallel, the local leader of the Lega Nord criticised the Municipality for its limited attention to safety issues[317]. A year later, he claimed he had a solution for the trouble of Via Bianca[318]: the Municipality had to follow the sanitarian guidelines he had drawn for phone centres after taking up the position of Assessore Regionale alla Sanità[319]. Here, a prognostic frame emerged. Apparently, it went well beyond any request for further inspections. Yet, it was inspections that were ultimately called for, so as to put pressure on phone centres.

The vast majority of articles, in 2007, reported on inspections. In fact, much more than a half and much more than the previous year. Even when shops were found in compliance with the law, journalists would invariably report that '*more inspections were on the agenda*'[320].Various runs - not only in phone centres – had been planned in Veronetta by the then Mayor - he then lost the elections in May 2007. This neighbourhood was in fact the object of an urban renewal project heralded by the Municipality's strategic plan. Yet, while reporting on inspections, articles had equally highlighted cultural projects and consultation

[315] L' Arena, Controlli nella notte ai phone centre di Via Bassa. August 6th 2005, 12.
[316] L' Arena, Il parroco X invita a essere tolleranti con le diverse culture e a impegnarsi a integrarle. (…). August 6th 2005, 12.
[317] L' Arena, Continuano i blitz antiterrorismo. (…). August 15th 2005, 9.
[318] L' Arena, Sanità e sicurezza. La Giunta regionale ha stabilito una nuova normativa per gli esercizi che offrono servizi di telefonia fissa. Igiene, phone centre nel mirino. July 28th 2006, 15.
[319] Veneto Region, Linee guida regionali in materia di requisiti igienici per l'attivazione di centri di telefonia in sede fissa (phone centre). Deliberazione della Giunta Regionale 2346, July 27th 2006.
[320] See for example L' Arena, Blitz della Digos a Veronetta e Golosine. Chiusi due call centre. Altri trovati in regola. January 13th 2007, 18.

processes that were under way[321]. In other words, an attempt had been made to provide an image of the neighbourhood that went beyond undeniable safety problems. Interestingly, at that time, in coincidence with the introduction of the Anti-terrorism decree, inspections were well under way in phone centres all throughout the town. Yet, owners were not complaining, they did not feel their shops were the target of inspections[322]. Things changed later on. With the arrival of the new Mayor, they started claiming their harassing nature as well as the patronising attitude of the Mayor himself who often accompanied police officers, together with journalists (May 16th 2008). Again this was a very symbolic action to show citizens he was personally taking charge of their complaints.

During the electoral campaign, the press focused on a few isolated episodes of violence and on disturbances that occurred in or close to phone centres, particularly in Via Bianca. In fact, the whole debate around phone centres has been very much constructed around problems in this neighbourhood. It was ultimately used as a political instrument to raise consensus. Pleas by representatives of the Lega Nord were punctually reported - including first and foremost the to-be Mayor. They asked for more inspections[323]. It cannot be denied that episodes of disturbance were occurring as well as a few episodes of violence. Having said this, in the view of the local leader of the left wing party Rifondazione Comunista - who was a Consigliere of the majoritarian coalition in the Circoscrizione of Via Bianca - the situation was well under control and no alarm was justified: inspections had been undertaken and shops had been found in compliance with the law'[324]. To be fair, the issue of phone centres, around the case of Via Bianca, was very much politicised by both right and left wing parties.

Although visibility is a necessary condition for an effective communication, the career of a discursive message is likely to remain stillborn if it does not 'resonate' (Koopmans 2004). In other words, it needs to provoke reactions from other actors in the public sphere. Resonance is indeed crucial as it makes messages travel further. On the contrary, 'dissonance' (ibidem) can be expected to run counter any message, even thought it can equally support them. It can keep a debate going, it can keep it high on the agenda,

[321] L' Arena, Gli assessori Pernigo e Zerbato e il Comandante della Polizia Locale illustrano i dati. January 13th 2006, 14.
[322] L' Arena, Dopo il blitz dei Nas nessuna reazione polemica, anzi per molti venditori è stato un modo per tutelare chi opera onestamente. August 18th 2005, 11.
[323] L' Arena, La Lega chiede verifiche sulla base di una normativa regionale. 'Troppi gli episodi di violenza i phone centre vanno controllati'. January 3rd 2007, 13.
[324] L' Arena, GOLOSINE. 'Via Bassa, i phone centre sono controllati'. February 5th 2007, 13.

regardless of disagreements being expressed in opposition to the message itself. In the eyes of journalists any topic becomes newsworthy whenever it resonates. The case of Via Bianca is a case in point. Discussions involved various politicians. A Consigliere Provinciale of the left wing party Democratici di Sinistra admitted this could not be considered as an isolated case. Yet, he described it as emblematic to support that similar shops were a '*receptacle of drifters and violent people*'[325]. Ultimately, he confirmed they represented an emergency. In the same article he affirmed that left wing parties cared about safety issues even more than right-wing parties did, with specific reference to the considerable pressure exercised on this topic by the to-be Mayor: it was well-known by then that the electoral campaign was going to concentrate on safety. Interestingly, it was the same Consigliere that, a few months later, reproached the candidate Mayor, by insisting that '*discussions could no longer focus within the frame of safety*'[326]. In the meantime, an heated debate had broken out among various Consiglieri Comunali and Consiglieri Provinciali of the same left wing majoritarian coalition[327].

As anticipated above, phone centre-owners, as well as residents were mostly excluded from the overall debate. It was no different for the specific case of Via Bianca, with too few exceptions (see section 8.3.1). As for residents, they did enjoy considerable visibility instead, particularly in August 2005 when they first launched their protest.

In June 2007, the newly elected Mayor took up his mandate. A month later the first run of inspections were already under way: it was 'an unprecedented blitz'[328]. All phone centres and ethnic shops were visited, exactly as spelt out in his electoral program. No inspections was carried out in Italian shops instead, as far as the press review revealed. He did more to demonstrate to voters he was keeping his promise: he took part in inspections himself. Various phone centres were closed down, including that of Via Bassa. The latter was re-opened a week after: the Questore verified the owner was in fact not in mis-compliance with the law.

[325] L' Arena, 'In via Bassa ricettacolo di sbandati e violenti'. In Provincia D'Arienzo sollecita Mosele. December 20th 2006, 12.
[326] L' Arena, Sui phone centre risponde a Tosi. D'Arienzo: 'Spetta al questore chiudere i luoghi pericolosi'. February 28th 2007, 21.
[327] L' Arena, 'Il questore lo faccia chiudere.' Ed è scontro in maggioranza sul phone centre di Via Bassa. December 14th 2006, 18.
[328] L' Arena, Controlli a tappeto. Nel mirino di vigili e ispettori Ulss una ventina di negozi di immigrati. Sigilli al locale di Golosine tra via Caccia e via Bassa spesso teatro di risse. July 7th 2007, 11.

The modalities in which inspections were being undertaken did not go unnoticed: a Consigliere Comunale of L'Ulivo - who was part of the new minoritarian coalition - attacked the Mayor in this sense, claiming it had all been planned as a grateful response to voters for the electoral consensus obtained[329]. In fact, the Mayor did not fail to celebrate the first hundred days of his mandate: residents were informed that his program was being implemented, as he reported in an interview[330]:

'*Within hundred days the situation in town has changed, Veronese resisdents' satisfaction is evident and even at a national level a movement of centre-right and centre-left Mayors is growing who are sensible to the themes that we first started bringing to agenda. This will contribute to positive changes in the current normative framework in the measure it will widen Mayors' powers as far as public order is concerned.*'[331]

Just a month later, he announced the activity of phone centres would be finally regulated with a specific regional law, following residents' continuous complaints on disturbances, as the case of Via Bianca showed well[332]. Again, this was repeatedly reported over time as an exemplary case of disturbances. In 2008, a drastic drop in the number of articles on phone centres was evident: from 42 to 15. More than half of them still related to inspections, only one on Via Bassa. Yet residents were still complaining. The phone centre, on its side, had closed down and trouble seemed to be solved. Was the trouble of phone centres over?

At the end of August 2008, the Municipality issued a press release: the latest inspections had found phone centres in compliance with regulations, but new inspections were on the agenda[333]. In fact, the shops remained in the spotlight. In 2009, only a few articles were published. Yet, in October, during a meeting with a working group on safety policies - comprising 22 Italian municipalities - the Mayor still insisted that inspections in both kebab shops and phone centres were a priority[334]. In other words, the frame used to treat the issue of phone centres remained unchanged over time: it was to do with safety, in spite of the

[329] L' Arena, 'SCERIFFO' A PALAZZO BARBIERI. Il debutto del primo cittadino sembra seguire le orme dell'ex collega trevigiano Gentilini. July 8th 2007, 7.
[330] L' Arena, I PRIMI CENTO GIORNI. Il sindaco assieme agli assessori ha tracciato un bilancio sui provvedimenti presi in questo inizio di amministrazione a Palazzo Barbieri. September 27th 2007, 7.
[331] 'In cento giorni la situazione in città è cambiata, la soddisfazione dei veronesi è evidente e anche a livello nazionale si sta creando un movimento di amministratori di centrodestra e centrosinistra, sensibili ai temi che per primi abbiamo portato avanti, che potrà determinare positivi cambiamenti nel quadro normativo vigente verso 1'ampliamento dei poteri dei sindaci in tema di ordine pubblico.'
[332] L' Arena, GIRO DI VITE. Approvata dal Consiglio regionale la legge per questi esercizi commerciali, spesso fonte di proteste. November 8th 2007, 15.
[333] L' Arena, LOTTA AGLI ABUSI/1. La polizia municipale ha riscontrato l'irregolarità in via XX Sett Bambina di 9 anni gestiva il PC. August 28th 2008, 11.
[334] L' Arena, CARTA DI PARMA. Si è riunito nella città emiliana il tavolo permanente col ministro dell'Interno Tosi: 'Serve una nuova legge per la lotta alla prostituzione'. October 15th 2009, 7.

outcomes of inspections, the introduction of the new regulatory framework and a considerable decrease in complaints.

8.3.3 Modena: the non-case of Via Rossa and the tentative identitarian shift of phone centre-owners.

As in Verona, some peaks of visibility were recorded. Differently, the electoral period was not among them. When it started, at the end of 2008, the local regulation on phone centres was becoming effective. Concern was expressed by both policy-makers (Responsabile Ufficio Politiche della Sicurezza Urbana, April 9th 2008) and phone centre-owners (November 6th and December 2nd 2008) that the whole issue would be politicised, particularly by some neighbourhood committees members and a few Consiglieri Comunali, including first and foremost the leader of the political party Forza Italia. He was a Consigliere Regionale who signed the first proposal for a regional law on phone centres and he had repeatedly spoken in the press to voice his concerns on the sector, since 2005. He had also pressurised the Local Authority into drawing up a normative framework, even though he was not content with the result. In spite of concernes, hardly any article cited phone centres in the months preceding the 2009 elections.

Much visibility was given to the sector in coincidence with runs of inspections, in September 2006, 2007 and 2008. In September 2006, in particular, more than an article per week was written. Much more resonance to the actual debate was given a year earlier, when the regulation was being passed. It started off with a protest by the residents in Via Rossa. They were not voiced in the press, not directly. It was a Consigliere Comunale - the one cited above - which reported on them. They supported his claim for more severe laws[335]. The Assessore alle Attività Economiche, in turn, declared a new regulation was under way. This is how the Municipality was responding to residents[336]. He did not specifically mention the case of Via Rossa, nor was it ever specifically mentioned in any other article. It did not serve as an emblematic case, contrary to Via Bianca in Verona. The debate was kept alive by other actors that intervened in the press. A few Consiglieri Comunali of the majoritarian coalition (the leaders of Verdi and Rifondazione Comunista) invited the

[335] Il Resto del Carlino, Un fuoco sotto la cenere: servono leggi più severe. August 21st 2007, 7.
[336] La Gazzetta, Phone centre: ecco le nuove regole. July 21st 2007, 13.

Assessore to rethink the regulation and in particular some of the more strict requirements introduced[337].

Phone centre-owners, on their side, refused to be interviewed on the topic, in a first moment. As anticipated, they preferred to '*keep silent*', because they were '*guests*'. Later on, in December 2007, they called for the Municipality to consult them and take their opinion into due consideration[338]. The President added that a vademecum had been agreed and signed by all members, thus showing their will to address residents' requests. An alternative prognostic frame was advanced here. Yet, the debate still focused on urban safety. Furthermore, differently from the Veronese case, much attention was put on the actual technicalities of the local regulation. In other words, the press certainly provided the stage for phone centre-owners and all other actors to make their voice heard even though, in as far as discussions took place in more institutional scenes (see section 6.3), any concern with politics proper was mostly ignored.

The debate continued well into the first months of 2008. In late January, IP Associati accused the Municipality for what was defined as an hypocrite law which was mainly aimed to closing their shops[339]. The day after, a similar article was published in another newspaper, La Gazzetta[340]. The Assessore alle Attività Economiche responded to both, by arguing the economic sustainability of the business had been taken into consideration[341], and all interested parties consulted adequately[342]. Soon after, it was the turn of neighbourhood committees to speak up. A representative responded to IP Associati to express his indignation with respect to the Municipality's charges for racism[343]. Interestingly, he spoke in the name of residents, not of committee's members. He also spoke in the name of the Municipality, as a citizen who felt invested with accusations. The Coordinamento Comitati also expressed its opinion. It positively commented on the regulation, while supporting the decision taken by the Local Authority[344]. The safety frame was again confirmed. Another point should be made. A few days before the local regulation was approved, on February 2nd, a street fight took place in front of a phone

337 La Gazzetta, Nuovo regolamento discriminatorio per i phone centre? November 21st 2007, 13.
338 L' Informazione, Il Consiglio ci deve ascoltare. December 9th 2007, 13.
339 L' informazione, Phone centre: questo regolamento ci fa chiudere. January 27th 2008, 13.
340 La Gazzetta, Così si chiudono i phone centres. January 28th 2008, 8.
341 L' Informazione, Phone centre, nessun intento punitivo. January 29th 2008.
342 La Gazzetta, Prampolini: Sui phone centre il confronto è stato approfondito. February 13th 2008, 17.
343 L' Informazione, Stanchi di vivere tra i phone centre'. February 2nd 2008, 3.
344 La Gazzetta, I phone centre? Hanno privilegi. February 3rd 2008, 16.

centre[345]. Shopkeepers lamented the frequency of similar episodes and made a plea for more inspections. No reference was made to the regulation instead: the legislative 'debate' was running in parallel with the 'everyday street debate'.

After the regulation was approved, it could hardly be expected for any actor to put forward any prognostic frame. Surprisingly, the President of IP Associati did so. He invited neighbourhood committees to meet them the association's members. His proposal was that of defining a shared 'chart of the rights and duties of phone centres'[346].

How did actors, and in particular phone centre-owners, presented themselves? How did they define themselves in official declarations? What is most interesting is how they played with identitarian frames, in the effort to overcome the negative imaginary associated with their business. In November 2006, IP Associati appeared in the press for the first time[347]: the President announced the association had just been formed. This article took the shape of an '*identitarian claim*', in the measure that it affirmed a new actor was now on the stage (Tilly and Tarrow 2008). Other types of claims were advanced over time, including also '*claims of position*' (ibidem): they stated owners belonged to a specific category, entrepreneurs, and were therefore entitled to some kind of rights, such as that of being adequately consulted on the pending regulation. They arguably set the basis to claim their working rights. It will be interesting to see whether similar forms of protest by im-migrants might follow a similar line in the future. In fact, a case in point can already be reported: that of im-migrants who took part in the national strike organised on March 1st.

During their protest, in February 2008, phone centre-owners talked about themselves as '*families without a job*', thus highlighting owners have entire family units to support[348]. IP Associati also brought to the fore their social function, as important meeting places[349]. The reader might recall that the Modenese authority had indeed considered this aspect while drawing up the regulation. It did so in a preliminary phase, it did not eventually succeed in legislating on this point (see section 6.3.3). By the time the regulation was being approved, discussions had been evolving around the specific articles of the regulation, to the point that press resonance was focused on it, as an article signed by the Coordinamento Comitati

345 La Gazzetta, Rissa davanti al phone centre. February 8th 2008, 9.
346 Il Resto del Carlino, I phone centre si ribellano al regolamento comunale. March 31st 2008, ?
347 La Gazzetta, Fermate la caccia alle streghe. Chiusure fatte su pressione di forze politiche xenofobe. November 27th 2006, ?
348 Il Resto del Carlino, 'Phone centre 'costretti a chiudere'. February 12th 2008, 11.
349 L' Informazione, Phone centre un confronto sui nuovo luoghi di aggregazione. January 29th 2008, 12.

shows well[350]. In spite of the above, it is evident that, at times, it was phone centre-owners themselves that kept the debate going along a securitarian frame.

In an article published in February 2008, in an attempt to demonstrate their 'balanced' behaviour and their readiness to co-operate, they affirmed no more complaints had been advanced on their business. It ultimately highlighted they had done their best to address residents' grievances[351]. Somehow, they were lingering onto a safety frame. They did again so in other follow-up articles, in which they insisted for their activity to be dissociated from any label of criminality and international terrorism[352].

To conclude, in spite of the clear efforts made by phone centre-owners, it is hard to say that they really benefited, in either city, from positive discursive opportunity structures. Their collective actions could hardly find any fertile ground in the press. I have tried to show that im-migrants' access to media was not automatic, nor necessarily effective, for reasons that are partly independent from both their efforts and the local context in which they are situated. Needless to say, the national scenario has surely not provided phone centre-owners with an ideal discursive framework. Immigration and safety have come to be seen as national emergency number one, with all the implications explained in the theoretical chapter. As for the local level, Veronese owners acted within an institutional setting characterised by a strong securitarian stance, including a very negative disposition towards im-migrants in general and phone centres in particular. The electoral period further went to the detriment of phone centre-owners. The evidence provided suggests, in fact, that these businesses and the clear repressive stance adopted towards them has been used to raise consensus both prior and after the electoral campaign. The case of Via Bianca, on its side, represents an emblematic case that was actively used in this direction.

The Modenese discourse was different and included the voice of all actors. IP Associati provided an important channel for phone centre-owners to speak up their concerns and to try and overcome the negative imaginary associated with their business. As they came to occupy the centre of the scene, their capacity to act was very much constrained, for two main reasons. First, the whole debate centred on safety, thus preventing any other frame from occupying the stage. As Koopmans (2004) highlighted, reliance on the mass media makes actors dependent on what is defined as legitimate or not. In addition, discussions

[350] La Gazzetta, I phone centre? Hanno privilegi. February 3rd 2008, 16.
[351] La Gazzetta, Phone centre, pronti a ribellarsi. February 7th 2008, 13.
[352] La Gazzetta, Protesta in consiglio comunale. Comitato: dovete vigilare. February 12th 2008, 11.

slowly drew attention to the actual local regulation. No space was left for politics. It was more the preoccupation with the technicalities of the new regulatory framework that emerged. Interestingly, the same frame provided politicians with a privileged occasion to show residents they could govern perceptions of unsafety, thus raising their consensus.

8.4 And now?

After the petition was presented, in spite of insisting inspections by police forces, the occupiers of the apartment building above the phone centre were still lamenting disturbances. No specific action was undertaken to stress their concerns. In June 2008, the shop had to close down. The rental contract was coming to an end and the owner did not want to renew it, following pressures from occupiers.

A year after, I returned to the fieldwork in this neighbourhood and had a word with the same interviewees. The shopkeeper - who was also a Consigliere of the Circoscrizione - declared himself very satisfied about how the situation had evolved. In his view, it had been crucial to remove benches as to impede any customer from hanging around in the public park:

'Now it is heaven! Yes, yes… since, excuse my French, the Gentilini method started, they removed park benches and these people disappeared… we did not get rid of them, they moved elsewhere because there is no way to get rid of them but they do not aggregate here anylonger, they do not create problems here.' (May 16th 2009, Verona) *(extract 99 - appendices)*

No such park existed anymore. A parking space had been created instead. Gentilini's way[353] proved again effective, as the shopkeeper argued. Residents seemed to be happier too: no drug addicts nor drunk were around anymore. They had moved to another area of the neighbourhood. Interestingly, the phone centre had been closed before any of these works were undertaken. Even more interestingly, none of the interviewees referred to its closure to explain why the situation had improved.

According to another Consigliere, it was important to close it down, even though problems were not solved completely: the second phone centre is still open.

[353] Gentilini was the then mayor of Treviso, a city in the Veneto Region. He became well-known over time, as one of the sheriffs of the north.

'The situation has improved. One of the shops [the phone centre] closed down. In via x (name) we solved it all and people are satisfied but at the end of the street there is another one and it is the same old story (…) So we decided to install CCTV cameras (…). We did not solve it all, some inspections are still under way, but people are more relaxed now.' (April 17th 2009, Verona) *(extract 100 - appendices)*

Indeed a second shop, which is situated close to the public park, never closed. It was never a phone centre, as I specificied above. Yet, in the imaginary of residents it continued being 'treated' as such, since it was perceived as a problematic shop, in spite of the fact disturbances had been reduced. An alternative strategy was ready to cope with it. It can still be classified within the category of spatial control interventions: CCTV cameras were installed. The phone centre-owner was very satisfied about such a resolution. She was quite content of having a camera right in front of her shop, as she testified: *'At least now they will see it is not to do with us [immigrants and phone centres].'* [354] What happened to the other phone centre-owner? He opened a new shop, in another neighbourhood. Things are going well there, for the time being.

In Via Rossa, the situation is similar, in part. A local ordinance was passed in the first months of 2010[355] to ban alcohol consumption in the streets. As in Via Bianca, a spatial control type of approach was privileged. The ordinance was not specifically passed for Via Rossa. It covered the whole urban territory. Possibly, the pressure of the Coordinamento Comitati was important in this sense. The representative of the committee in Via Rossa, together with other representatives did press for the Municipality in this direction[356].

In the meantime, efforts are still being made to embrace a mediation stance. Meetings have been organised by the mediators with the leaders of immigrant communities in order to ask their collaboration in raising ethnic shop-owners' awareness as far as potential disturbances are concerned. The Responsabile Ufficio Politiche della Sicurezza Urbana (April 8th 2009) commented she was well conscious that these leaders are not necessarily representative of their respective communities. At the same time, she pointed to a difficulty on their side to identify the right interlocutors. For this very reason, mediators have also met some owners in person - in particular those whose shops where mostly targeted for complaints - and provided them with a vademecum (see section 6.3.3) with suggestions on how to run their business and how to cope with difficult customers. Furthermore, a course was planned for ethnic shops-owners to improve their Italian. In other words, the Municipality in Modena

[354] (April 22nd 2009, Verona) (extract 101 - appendices)
[355] Comune di Modena, 2010. Modena Muncipality Ordinance 2306/2010 11th January 2010: *Ordinanza in materia di sicurezza urbana per contrastare l'abuso di alcol negli spazi ed aree pubbliche*'.
[356] From a telephone chat on March 12th 2010.

is still very much investing into mediation types of activities. They all carry with them potential forms of innovation, especially whereby direct confrontations take place with interested parties and safety frame are re-visited.

CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSIONS.

In the last decades, Italy has turned from a traditional country of emigration to one of im-migration. This has become evident particularly in northern regions, where the immigrant population is by far concentrated[357]. According to data by Caritas (2009), the highest percentages are recorded in the Veneto (11,7%) and Emilia Romagna (10,8%)[358] regions. Since 2008, the incidence of newcomers has risen above the European average in these areas, even though we have not reached the percentages of other European member states, such as Germany and Spain. Against this scenario, forms of exclusion can be traced in all spheres of life. These include also the political one. Im-migrants are excluded from access to formal rights. Yet, they are political actors and, in spite of their condition, they do act at both individual and collective level, thus challenging power games. It might well be their levels of participation are extremely low. There might be even cases in which they amount to nothing, but it is an assumption and it cannot be taken for granted. Any hint on agency can shed light on power dynamics and hence should be emphasised. As it was argued in section 2.2.6, an absence in itself can be significant after all: it can point to power asymmetries.

Urban theory has been very attentive to interactions and dynamics between groups and it has taught us that weak and marginal individuals tend to undertake contentious forms of action. It has reached beyond a normative interpretation of what can be held as a 'just' city, to highlight various forms of engagement. Contentious interactions are inevitable and they have been monitored accordingly, alongside more conventional ones. It is indeed a necessary condition for the making of an urban theory in the first place. The work presented here can be positioned within this tradition.

The city is certainly an ideal site for investigation. Conflicts take place there. The choice of the fieldwork built on this awareness, hence I decided to look at a city, that of Verona, to then take up a second study, that of Modena, in order to carry out a comparative work. I looked at two conflicts on the same issue: disturbances blamed onto im-migrants'

[357] It is in the North that 62,1% of the total immigrant population live, with respect to 25,1% in the Centre and 12,8% in the South.
[358] Veneto follows the Lombardy region (23,3%) and Emilia-Romagna follows Lazio (11,6%).

entrepreneurial activities, and in particular phone centres, that is to say shops that offer Internet and telephone services for customers who are mostly of immigrant origins. I reported on constituencies' complaints and on the regulatory measures adopted to address them. In this sense, due consideration was given to policies and actors at various territorial levels, not to fall into the '*local trap*'. To be clear, this thesis cannot be described as a micro-sociological analysis. Well beyond residents' gut feelings and local institutional responses to them, I have been investigating contentious dynamics. Italian scholars have mostly failed to do it, so far, with a few exceptions (see for example Allasino et al. 2000, Vitale 2007, 2008, 2009,), as reported in section 2.2 .

My main intention was academic but also very much political in nature. As a PhD student and an activist, I wanted to try and put im-migrants back on the agenda, as political actors, thus giving them a voice. I wanted to question narratives that all too often refer to them as criminals, in a binary mode which sees them, as well as marginal people, as either 'our *problem*' or 'their *problem*'. This is particularly evident if we look at urban safety conflicts, as those investigated in this thesis, that is to say conflicts that associated with two main features. While they cannot be intended as a completely separate entity from other types of urban conflicts, they include forms of protests by citizens to complain about a general worsening of quality of life. Additionally, they best exemplify the increasing tendency in Italy (Diamanti 2000), but not only, to link a supposedly growing diffusion of micro-criminality and anti-social forms of behaviour to the presence of newcomers.

Against this background, it can hardly be expected that any space exists for them to exert forms of agency. The research question that guided this project followed similar lines: 'If citizenship (political engagement) is an unstable and highly contested institution which emerges in specific places in response to specific struggles, can its dynamics be highlighted through the analysis of specific urban (safety) conflicts? What are the conditions for the emergence of citizenship practices (forms of engagement) that fall outside official institutional channels?

The previous chapters demonstrated that, yes, immigrant residents do exert forms of agency and, yes, relevant dynamics can be observed through an analysis of urban safety conflicts, as will be stressed in the following sections. No claim is made for generalisation with respect to the overall Italian context. Yet, I believe that the work presented here provides with interesting hints on the trends at work within the national scenario and

beyond including first of all a prevailing interpretation of many urban conflicts through the lens of 'safety', with little space for forms of normative innovation to make it through the policy process: local and national institutions' responses to residents' claims for the right to safety seem to privilege spatial control and policing types of interventions. Second, the voice of im-migrants is mostly absent in these conflicts, not only in institutional but also in press and academic accounts. Some more possible trends were highlighted. They will be recalled all throughout this chapter.

9.1 Contentious dynamics in Verona and Modena, in a structural light.

Im-migrants' political engagement has been mostly studied in a structural perspective. Many scholars still agree in saying that the structure of political opportunity (POS) provides with crucial explicatory variables (see for example Garbaye 2000, Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2000, Caponio 2006). The research presented here has demonstrated that while a structural perspective can provide with some useful hints, it largely fails to explain the whole picture. Vitale (2009a) commented in a similar line in his work on policy instruments targeted at Roma and other nomads. Yet, he specified that little systematic evidence is available to support this position. I will provide some in the following paragraphs.

If we look at the national level, it is evident that POS are certainly weak for phone centre-owners - as much as for im-migrants in general: they do not have access to any formal political right, nor are discursive opportunities favourable to them. Unprepared as they were to cope with it, politicians have consistently 'treated' immigration it in terms of emergency. The same has applied to the phenomenon of micro-criminality. This has carried with it a series of non negligeable implications: related discussions have invaded media debates and alarmist campaigns have been organised all over the country, thus feeding into a vicious circle that Dal Lago (1999) defines as the tautology of fear. In other words, the explosion of actual alarms have ultimately served to demonstrate what they denounced in the first place, in an autopoietic process. Newcomers, on their sides, have been invested with the role of 'scapegoat of insecurity' (see section 2.2.4 and 2.2.4.1). Clearly, without political legitimation media emergencies would have died out quickly. They did not. Government agencies have '*certified*' (Tarrow and Tilly 2008) them and hence legitimated them further through the introduction of a variety of measures such as the '*Pacchetto Sicurezza*' (the National Safety Law), as far as im-migrants in general are

concerned, and a specifical national, regional and local regulatory framework as far as phone centres are concerned, as I will recall in later paragraphs.

A more complex picture emerges if we shift to the local level. To start with, it should be reminded that Verona and Modena have been generally associated with opposing political subcultures. The former has long been governed by Christian Democrats and has recently seen the rise of the extreme-right party Lega Nord. Modena, on the contrary, has been known as the heart of the Communist tradition. It is now governed by a centre-left coalition, even though it has lost consensus over time, in favour of other parties, such as the Lega Nord.

No doubt, left-wing coalitions are expected to be more 'open' with respect to immigration related issues. In a research conducted by CNEL in 1996, Modena was even described as a national laboratory in field policies. Against this background, however, towards the end of the 1980s, the theme of quality of life grew increasingly politicised, following the pressure exercised by oppositional parties. The Municipality, on its side, faced by the necessity to demonstrate its unchanged capacity to govern, adopted symbolic and repressive forms of policies, targeted at im-migrants too. Urban safety entered the local political agenda and political opportunities grew certainly more unfavourable for newcomers, even though, with the beginning of the new millennium, increasing focus was put on an inclusive mediation type of approach. On the other side, the Municipality of Verona, and in particular its Mayor, are known for their anti-immigrants stance and for the efforts they put into the implementation of a safety policy program. In fact, the entire electoral campaign that supported the Mayor's candidacy was built along these lines. It called for spatial control interventions including, among other things, inspections in phone centres and kebab shops. This clearly testifies that phone centre-owners in the two cities have been subjected to very different POS. Nonetheless, they have engaged in similar forms of action, alongside trajectories characterised by unexpected dynamics and outcomes. I will recall a few points in details, to make my position clearer.

The Modenese Local Authority has been very attentive to the emergence of complaints around phone centres. A participatory process was set up to accompany the drawing up of a local legislative framework and IP Associati, the Modenese association of phone centre-owners, was involved in it too. In principles, participatory instruments should facilitate actors' access to a public arena. In this case, it rather showed the 'Janus face' of those

governance tools that are short of codified rules defining participation. This was the perception of phone centre-owners at least. The process did provide them with some space to speak up and they did manage to undertake successful negotiations, at a first stage, but they felt they were not given enough opportunities for an adequate confrontation with local officers.

A mediation service was also developed by the Local Authority, to cope with neighbourhood conflicts including those relating to 'ethnic shops' and phone centres. It was another opportunity, for a few individual owners, to express their concerns. As De Leonardis (2008) stressed, similar tools of mediation are often celebrated for their virtues, such as the emphasis they put on communication and confrontation, their support in the creation of shared spaces to address problems and experiment solutions as well as bottom-up forms of participation, whereby even divergent positions are welcomed. They can be precious tools in the measure they try and reconstruct or consolidate relationships of proximity, even though cases are rare in which any agreement is reached among parties, as the officer responsible for mediation projects confirmed.However, I want to highlight two specific limites similar projects can carry with them: they can be short of dispositives for actors to rise in generality (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), hence leading to a polarisation between conflicts that can be somehow mediated and forms of antagonism that grow exasperated because of the lack of a 'normative third' (ibidem). This was evident in Modena whereby, in the specific case of Via Rossa, following a first run of successful confrontations, the group broke up: a few members left and joined a neighbourhood committee, in the hope their claims would be taken into due consideration. Another point should be made here. Unfortunately, the mediation process run in parallel with the participatory one mentioned above, it did not complement it, hence preventing any 'real' participation of members, particularly phone centre-owners, in the decision making process. Institutional channels proved ineffective for the second time: first they did with the participatory project, then with the mediation one. The Municipality, on its side, failed to acquire a 'full picture' of the phone centres trouble.

Looking beyond the specific preoccupation with phone centres, it should not be underestimated that well before the launch of the participatory process, a Consulta degli Stranieri had been set up in Modena. The President and Vice President are regularly invited to attend the Consiglio Comunale. Needless to say, some doubts can be raised on the representativeness of this body, not to mention its effectiveness - considering it only has

advisory powers (see also Però 2007). At the same time, it cannot be denied it is a channel for newcomers to filter their opinions. The President joined Council meetings whereby Modenese Local Regulation 188/2007 was discussed. He supported the endeavours of phone centre-owners. In spite of this, his suggestions were not taken to the agenda. Possibly, this can be understood in relation to the 'totalising effect' that prevailing concerns on safety had, as well as to the fact that discussions were increasingly focused on the technicalities of the regulation itself, as will be further discussed. Of course, it was not without implications: little space was left for owners to speak up. This might seem a paradox in Modena. In fact, in counter-tendency to many Italian cities, the Modenese Local Authority organised a survey, a few years back, to collect their views on urban safety. This exercise does demonstrate it has been experimenting various avenues to facilitate immigrants' integration and to take their needs into serious consideration - as it does with native residents. Evidently, as far as the trouble of phone centres was involved, it did to a certain extent only.

A rather different scenario was found in Verona. Immediately after the last elections, in 2007, a number of measures were passed: they were clearly of a discriminatory nature and they included harsh runs of inspections in phone centres and kebab shops. Among other things, the Mayor also refused to meet the representatives of the Consulta degli Immigrati, thus frustrating newcomers' expectations.

A lack of openings was also evident for the airing of grievances by phone centre-owners themselves. Nothing similar to a participatory process was ever set up, nor any mediation project in neighbourhoods that experienced troubles with these shops. Moreover, the relevant ordinance was drawn up within the institutional scene, without any consultation with interested parties.

When investigating the structure of political opportunities, POS scholars suggest we should dwell onto (forms of) repression too. Similar forms have been adopted in both cities and have taken the shape of harsh runs of inspections (officially) targeted at phone centres to check on compliance with the national, regional and local legislative framework. In section 7.4.5, their impact on owners and customers was largely explained: they suffered from increasing pressure which considerably affected the business of the former, while restricting fruition of services by the latter, not to talk about humiliating experiences they both recalled. Moreover, many owners have grown afraid that any complaint on their side

might result in forms of retaliation. Having said this, in the case of Verona, discriminatory practices were blatantly evident, as owners reported and successful legal appeals testify. Positive results in this sense could encourage them to take their actions further. Unfortunately, sentences often arrived far too late, well after some of them had closed down their shop or when their spirit was irremediably low, due to the progressive decline of their business and the feeling that the Municipality would not stop harassing them.

The presence or not of influential alliances represent another variable invoked by POS scholars in their analysis of contentious dynamics. In the cases presented here they were mostly missing. In Modena, IP Associati could count on LAPAM (a federation of local associations that represents all various entrepreneurial sectors in Modena) and two Consiglieri Comunali. The latter were contacted when they felt there was little hope for them to stop the local regulation from being passed. In fact, it was eventually passed. Contacts with LAPAM were made as soon as IP Associati was founded and support was granted accordingly. However, it was in a low profile, as members were not very sympathetic with im-migrant entrepreneurs and in particular with the category of phone centres, thus considerably constraining any chance for consistent influence on policy makers.

According to the general thesis, when the institutional channels of access to the decision-making process are closed to challengers, the latter will resort to unconventional, extra-institutional forms of action to make their voice heard. This largely widespread assumption can be hardly confirmed. In the cases of Modena and Verona it is was more the other way round. Protests were carried out in both cities. Such actions were definitely privileged in Modena, where political opportunities were more favourable. Two of them were organised, as a last resort, in coincidence with the introduction, first, and the approval, later, of the local regulation. It could be argued this points to changing opportunities and I do agree, in part. Yet, if we compare more carefully the two case studies, we can observe that Veronese owners joined only one demonstration - that claimed im-migrants' rights in general. Their rejection of contentious actions cannot be explained by looking at political opportunities alone. Their repertoire choice can be better understood in relation to their conviction that a pragmatic approach would be far more beneficial. This was largely linked to their negative past experiences. Indeed, it was not the first time they had been encouraged by the Coordinamento Migranti to set off for protests, but none of them had brought any positive outcome for them.

More generally, against diverging POS, phone centre-owners in both cities engaged in forms that are very much similar and which include actions that go well beyond contentious ones. Even though institutional participatory devises were available to them, Modenese owners went down the same path of their Veronese colleagues: both largely engaged through informal and familiar channels, regardless the more or less favourable contexts they were faced with. I will come back to this point later. The legal way was also chosen as part of their mobilising efforts, in different stages of their collective actions. In Verona, owners started contacting lawyers individually, as soon as they experienced the first troubles with inspections and consistently continued to do so over time, alongside a variety of other forms of engagement. They did try to maximise efforts and bring all appeals together so that a few lawyers could follow all of them and keep track of any progress. For a variety of reasons, it never happened and appeals are still in the hands of various professionals.In Modena, the legal way strongly emerged after the local regulation was approved, in the effort to prevent its coming into effectiveness. Owners were full of hope, because of a favourable decision by the Constitutional Court which resulted in the cancellation of the relevant Lombardy Regional Law. An appreciation of changing opportunities can be observed in this case, even though it does not relate to the local but the wider regional/national level.

What about discursive opportunity structures (DOS)? Did they follow similar lines in Verona and Modena? In the Veronese context, owners were faced with an institutional setting characterised by a strong securitarian stance, including a very negative disposition towards newcomers. Against this background, the voice of owners was hardly voiced, with a few exceptions. On the contrary, the Modenese discourse was very different. It was more diversified, in spite of a similarly prevailing safety frame which prevented alternative narratives from enjoying more resonance with the wider public. In addition, the press debate provided space for all actors, including owners and IP Associati. Having said this, it cannot go unnoticed that access to media space is not automatic, nor necessarily helpful in supporting mobilisation. A (negative) safety frame prevailed which portrayed phone centres as 'evil shops' being constantly inspected by police forces. In the case of Verona this was particularly noticeable, as the case of Via Bianca was gradually turned into a public alarm. Apparently, it was instrumental to raise consensus both prior and after the electoral campaign, because it demonstrated the effectiveness of interventions by the to-be Mayor, before the elections, and the Mayor, when he took up his mandate.
Modenese owners certainly had many more opportunities to speak up their concerns and

this is undeniably connected to the specific competence the President of IP Associati has of the 'media world'. In fact, the association did gain some visibility. In spite of it, with the beginning of the electoral campaign, discursive opportunities changed: it proved harder for owners to reach out for editorial offices. Additionally, all throughout their mobilisation, the President failed and still fails to be recognised as truly representative of the association. This ultimately constrained opportunities for owners themselves. In short, it is hard to support they really benefited from DOS, nor that their actions found any fertile ground in this sense. Yet, they did use the media to put forward their claims, as yet another form of engagement. They did understand them as a crucial channel to make their voice heard. Undoubtedly, the media were mostly used in a collective fashion, in Modena, while Veronese owners adopted it more individually. In any case, owners in both cities clearly showed their overaching aim to put across messages that could promote a more positive narrative of the sector of phone centres and of immigrant entrepreneurs.

9.2 A pragmatic reading of phone centre-owners' engagement.

A superficial reading of the above might suggest that the respective Municipalities have largely dominated the public scene. On the contrary, this thesis demonstrated that the conflicts explored have not unravelled against a background of mere domination. Power games are undeniable and yet the dynamics of politics observed in Modena and Verona are much more complex than a structural interpretation allows for. In between the cracks of power, spaces did emerge for phone centre-owners to engage in a variety of forms. A pragmatic approach has been crucial to highlight them, as will be argued next. In particular, it helped me answer the second part of the research question that guided my work: 'What are the conditions for the emergence of forms of engagement that fall outside institutional channels?

I was searching for both a theoretical and methodological approach which could help me investigate on dispersed forms of engagement and I gradually adventured into the French pragmatic stance. I did not embrace it fully, but chose to borrow from it with a '*pragmatically sensitive*' attitude (Cefaï et al. 2009). The latter is characterised by an overarching interest in a world in transformation, whereby public action is observed, through an ethnographic lens, as 'politics in action'. This requires an inquiry into operations, actors, principles as well as dispositives which constitute a given world, in the effort to take distance from sociological and political perspectives focused on public policies alone. My concern was not to report

on the results of collective actions *per sè*. I wanted to elaborate on the process that accompanied them, regardless of any outcome. I wanted to try and overcome a narrative of domination that can ultimately reinstate power asymmetries. A change of perspective was needed in this sense.

For standard sociology reference to power goes hand in hand with the identification of asymmetries, but they are different, partial, local and transitory (Boltanski 2009: 16). Critical theories of domination (see Bourdieu 1972) stress on durable and deep asymmetries that colonise 'reality' overall. Dominants and dominated are seen everywhere. Similar theories look at a world which is already 'made', rather than one which actors build up through their performances. Of course such a perspective is both legitimate and (scientifically) valid. However, it results in a description which is, to say the least, incompatible with that of a pragmatic reading. In fact, scholars that adopt it focus on the constraints that weigh on actors. They observe a certain social order and extract a normative position from it, to show the forms of domination it is entrenched with. This requires them to explicit the moral expectations of actors as they are revealed through their performances. But such an idea of domination is too vague. It assumes that actors are cultural dopes and that they are dominated without knowing it. No space is left for the uncertain nature of action, thus pre-emptying the concept itself (Boltanski 2009). In fact, it is not uniform, it is scattered with traps, exposed to machinations and revived through manoeuvres and projects. It often takes unexpected trajectories (Cefaï et al. 2009).

In a pragmatic perspective, it is more actors that matter and their capacity to adapt to a given context and to modify it incessantly. This can be called a '*métacritical position*' (Boltanski 2009: 76) and it requires different tools of analysis than those used to investigate power relationships alone. It pushes towards a sociology of action. It does not define actors by searching for stable attributes, nor by endowing them with interests and dispositions inscribed in their bodies and capable of generating objective and unconscious intentions. This perspective shows the efforts they make to elaborate discourses (Boltanski 1990a) and it strives to reconstruct their competence in terms of producing arguments that are acceptable for others. Along these lines, researchers are called to take their claims to justice seriously, by focusing on the '*inquiétude of coordination*' and the difficulties it carries with it (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). The latter cannot be assumed to be governed by routines, nor rules, nor any social norms.

I am not suggesting that a pragmatic observation is antagonist to structural ones. It rather insists on looking at actors as active protagonists, in the measure they possess a '*critical capacity*' (Boltansky 1990) and are capable of advancing criticism. In other words, pragmatic scholars show how they shift from a form of justification to another, while applying them in various situations in a quasi-permanent way and by constructing claims that refer to a precise '*order of worth*' (Boltansky and Thévenot 2006), that is to say a conception of justice which is not pre-determined by means of a normative glance. Particularly when I zoomed on the specific cases of Via Bianca and Via Rossa, I showed how phone centre-owners advanced criticism with reference to civic and industrial orders of worth. The former was found in justifications that weighed the common good in terms of sacrificing particular and immediate interests, the latter in terms of performance, functionality and efficiency (see chapter 8) . In many cases owners actually shared their position with residents, even though they did not agree on whom was to be ultimately held responsible for disturbances and this affected coordination efforts negatively were not passed. At the same time, when advancing a market order of worth, which insists on market competition, owners were often criticised. This is unsurprising as the latter is often confused with a denial of the common good, because it is intended as the promotion of subjective interests, as explained in section 8.1.1; 8.1.2.

When I looked at the ways in which phone centre-owners advanced a critique or were subjected to it, it became evident that '*tests*' were not passed, as they failed to achieve an agreement based on shared forms of generality. Cases were not missing in which tests were not even staged. For instance, when Modenese owners attended the third meeting organised by the Local Authority - as part of the participatory process – no chance was given to them to speak up their concerns. A '*test of power*' was enacted here, because no opportunity was provided for actual confrontations to take place on the basis of forms of generality. Additionally, when the President of the Consulta degli Stranieri presented his arguments on the phone centre regulation at the Council meeting - as recalled above – he '*sneaked off the test*' as he failed to refer to any precise order or worth.

In these last two paragraphs, I have reported on phone centre-owners engagement with specific attention on tests enacted or not in the public sphere. However, recognising fully the potential of every actor to exert some form of agency, means more than this. It also means exploring the plurality of regimes in which they engage, while shedding light on the thorny path they undertake to open up to a public arena. A pragmatic lens helped me

observe the field attentively and take all actions seriously. What I mean here is that the risk is always high for researchers to discard some of them on the ground they are not as relevant as others that have made it to the public arena, nor relevant to explain processes at work. On the contrary, in this thesis, much attention was put on every single step phone centre-owners undertook. Moreover, the effort was made to see them in perspective and to recall the path they walked. For example, it was argued that the first steps made by Modenese owners predisposed them to the foundation of IP Associati, even though the new adventure was met with some mistrust deriving from negative memories of previous associational experiences.

Bolstanki (2002) criticised sociologists for being too focused on what they intend as public action. Far too little attention is paid to other '*regimes*' in which actors engage, particularly the '*familiar*' one, which exceed the definition Tilly and Tarrow (2008) give of contentious politics and that can be referred to personal attachments and environments (Thévenot 2001). This regime tends to be discredited by scholars as incompatible with claims for a common good (see for example Trom 1999, Ion 2001). Yet, it might contribute to its construction, even though it is often actors themselves who do not take their engagements seriously. In various interviews I came to realise that what I intended as yet another form of engagement was not considered as such by phone centre-owners. I am referring to informal meetings among fellow entrepreneurs in their own shops to discuss on business issues or on the then pending regulatory measures for their sector.

A wealth of other examples of familiar engagements were digged out of the research field. Phone centre-owners searched for confrontations with residents, without awaiting for facilitative support by the Municipality. Interestingly, some 'new' actors appeared that had not been identified when focusing on the public arena alone. Yet they had a crucial role in contentious dynamics, regardless of outcomes. These included for example the mediators in Verona and neighbourhood committees in Modena. furthermore, in some of these cases, institutional channels were actually surpassed: it was explained, for instance, how the neighbourhood committe in Via Rossa was created after a few residents moved out of a mediation project, in search as they were for a more effective and rapid way to have their concerns addressed.

Owners also engaged with policemen, during inspections in their shops and this eventually encouraged them to take their action further by asking them for meetings in which their

difficulties could be debated at large. Their 'resistance' to the application of the Anti-terrorism decree and the 'treatment' of undocumented in the country has been all the more significant, in that it has shown an overarching moral preoccupation that went well beyond any concern for their business, as I explained in section 7.4 and will resume in section 9.5

Owners' actions were clearly multiple and fragmented. They cannot be classified as inexorable responses to power structures, nor can they be interpreted in a straightforward stimulus-response dynamic. In fact, they also engaged autonomously, in a proactive fashion. An excellent example is provided by the fact they started meeting informally well before the explosion of a conflict in Verona and Modena, even though they initially did so in the effort to regulate their business and to avoid the drawbacks of competition. Academic research generally focus on formal organisations. Informal ones leave few traces in archives. Arguably, an ethnographic approach was essential accordingly, as it supported an in-depth analysis of phone centre-owners' engagements. Another example of proactive action is represented by the inquiry owners undertook with tourists to try and understand their negative reactions when asked for their ID - before accessing Internet and phone services. What is all the more interesting in this example is that tourists are normally intended as a category of actors which simply 'pass through' cities and 'consume' them for a short period of time. They are not expected to be very relevant as far as urban politics are concerned. Yet, they played their part, unexpectedly.

Casual dynamics were equally observed, thus recalling Hirschmann (1980) in his call for '*possibilism*' and the discovery of paths that probabilistic attitudes would ignore. The reader might remember that Vanni, the President of IP Associati, accepted to take up his role after he entered the business of phone centres. His arrival in the sector was rather fortuitous. He did not have any previous contacts with owners, nor any specific ambition to open such a shop. It was an investment he made in the belief it would be financially rewarding. Yet, his presence and support, once he helped found the association, certainly contributed to the evolution of owners' collective action. A part from this, not to be underestimated are missed opportunities, that is to say actions that did not take place at all - such as alliances with supportive actors, as LAPAM or im-migrants' associations. These might represent the seeds of future action. At the same time, they shed further light on power and contentious dynamics. The same can be said for phases of contention that scholars tend to relegate to processes of '*de-mobilisation*' (Tilly and Tarrow 2008). The literature associates them with a decrease in resources and the more or less gradual dying

out of a conflict. Taking a distance from such an interpretation, a pragmatic approach encourages researchers to keep observing what happens, without expecting 'the fire' to either extinguish or not. In Verona and Modena, against a scenario characterised by general discouragement, scattered forms of collective action could still be retrieved. In Modena, owners are still meeting, at irregular intervals. A few of them have been reflecting on critical mass, others have been thinking of writing to the Municipality to raise awareness on the difficult economic situation they are facing, while trying to achieve a compromise on opening hours and days. It cannot be denied that, at the moment, it is work related issues that prevail in their thoughts. With a severe economic crisis on top of all of us this can be easily understood. After the local regulation was passed, competition among them increased, because each one of them has tried 'to survive'. For their Veronese colleagues, apart from some meetings, collective action has gradually slowed down, for now, but the (apparent) exhaustion of the conflict does not necessarily reflect negligence on their side, as it should be clear by now.

The preceding paragraphs do not wish to 'nobilise' actors in any way, nor to overestimate the engagement of phone centre-owners, as repeatedly underlined. Their limits have been equally acknowledged. The most active members were and remain a small group. It has been hard to motivate all of them into action and associations in both cities continued being characterised, over time, by fragility and discontinuity, similarly to their Italian counterparts. Practical difficulties such as lack of time and a shortage of spaces to meet have further frustrated the efforts and good will of members. Internal conflicts have added up too and yet actions, fragments of actions, chains of actions have been enacted.

9.3 On immigrant entrepreneurialism as a form of engagement.

When talking about the proactive attitude of phone centre-owners, a specific comment is worth making as far as their entrepreneurial activity is concerned. As it was mentioned in section 4.2, phone centre-owners launched their business due to their limited job mobility. It represented an alternative solution for an easier renewal of their permit to stay. In fact, newcomers can apply for a residence permit or their renewal only if they have a regular job contract. This makes them clearly tied up to their job, unless they take the risk of 'falling into irregularity'. Many owners have chosen to adventure into an entrepreneurial activity for other reasons. A number of them insisted it was their chance to redeem their right to citizenship, to shrug off prejudices which present them as incapable of any professional

achievement. Are these not all forms of actual and potential political engagement in the first place?

Are these not a form of political engagement in Italy, where the access to a residence permit is closely linked to a permanent job? Are these not all forms of political engagement in the north-east of Italy, glorified as it is for its alleged self-made entrepreneurial history? In section 4.1.1.1, I explained that Modena and Verona are both situated in this part of the country which has been repeatedly proclaimed as a model of economic success, based on the diffusion of small to medium sized enterprises. Immigrant entrepreneurialism has been thriving too, as in other Italian regions, but their activity has not been promoted as much as that of their Italian counterparts. In the case of phone centres it has been even regulated further. This might seem a paradox, but it is not. The National Government has tried to find ways to centralise power back into its hands. A focus on immigration related issues has been instrumental in this sense. Relevant normatives have produced a symbolic effect towards the achievement of a 'social order' which has succeeded in raising consensus. In other words, by acting on immigration the State has demonstrated it is a problem. Most importantly, it has demonstrated it has the capacity of addressing it. The same has happened at a local level, following the devolution of increasing powers to mayors and the Local Police which has come to be entrusted with more and more responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, therefore, policy approaches have largely failed to promote immigrants' integration, not to talk about immigrant entrepreneurialism.

Yet, phone centres have represented a way towards settlement in the host country. As some authors noticed, 'economic leaders' (Ambrosini 2008) can emerge within entrepreneurial networks: these are important actors that actively contribute to the economic integration of fellow countrymen by employing them in their own firm or by introducing them to their networks while sharing the competence they have matured. Similar economic 'figures' are present also in Verona and Modena, in the sector of phone centres. Cases are not missing in which phone centre-owners took up even more important political roles, thus opening associations which offer services for newcomers and organise trainings and activities to promote positive narratives of im-migrants and co-habitation with them. I have a particular case in mind: that of a phone centre-owner who became the President of a phone centre-association in Milan and who, in the meantime, set up the Fondazione Ethnoland.

9.4 The politicisation of phone centres: an opportunity for voice and visibility against (missed) normative innovation.

The conflict in itself has provided phone centre-owners with a chance to raise their voice (see also Allasino et al. 2000), both in Modena and Verona, in spite of diverging political and discursive opportunities. Paradoxically, an excessive politicisation of the phone centres debate, an increasingly 'obsessive glance' at this entrepreneurial activity, lead to the opening up of conventional and non conventional channels for owners to mobilise. Phone centres have become increasingly visible. Forms of moral panic have contributed to accentuate boundaries between what were considered as legitimate and illegitimate forms of behaviours in the metropolis and, as a result, between the guardians of mainstream values (native residents) and excluded others (phone centre-owners and customers). In coincidence with the unravelling of the conflict, these social cleavages have been marked by an inversion, whereby those who are usually on the outside have come to occupy the centre of the stage. Such an inversion has exposed power relations and partly reversed them, as spaces for action emerged.

In other words, as Voirol (2005) suggested, the '*hierarchy of visibility*' (19) can change through conflicts and follow various directions. In this sense, it should be explored as a category of contention in its own right - even though it cannot be the only dimension of analysis, as Melucci (1996) clearly indicated. Whatever is visible or becomes visible can reveal crucial information on (changing) power dynamics. Of course, visibility is not intrinsically positive and the case of phone centres trouble shows it well: the increased negative visibility of these shops, as a result of residents' narratives, which were further fuelled and legitimised by the press and by politicians - through the passing of a specific regulatory framework - has (partly) contributed to the crisis of the sector. It has also subjected owners to increasingly frequent inspections - with cases in which they were even harassed. At the same time, it was the conflict in itself that provided them with an opportunity for speaking up.

If we look at institutional forms of engagement, it is evident that Modenese phone centre-owners were partly involved in the decision-making process that accompanied the drawing up of the local regulation. Initially, they successfully negotiated with the Municipality and were granted the permission to continue operating a money transfer service, besides the more traditional phone and Internet ones. IP Associati was also very active in its attempt to

problematise the debate and shift it away from safety towards entrepreneurial issues. Members did so not only during meetings with local officers, but also through an intense press debate. The latter actually informed the decision-making process in its various phases. Unfortunately, as it progressed, it increasingly focused on the technicalities of the specific instruments that were to be adopted. The same had happened at a regional level, both in Veneto and Emilia-Romagna. An analysis of the proceedings of Council meetings suggested it was mostly a symbolic political gesture. The Municipality was to make its power manifest. It was to demonstrate its capability to resolve a deadlock and break away from a perceived immobilism - which derived from an apparent policy vacuum for the sector of phone centres. In Verona, no space at all emerged for owners, within the institutional scene. No participatory tool was introduced to facilitate consultation with them.

To take a step further, this thesis has given an example of how policies and politics can be studied in a continuum, by investigating contentious dynamics. As widely explained, if we embrace a pragmatically sensitive lens, attention can be focused on actions 'en train de se faire', on the 'in-situ conventions' that govern actors' engagements in the face of a (policy) issue. In particular, an investigation into tools and instruments that emerged during the various phases of the conflicts threw light on policies while highlighting the implications they carry with them in terms of politics. One of the characteristics of contemporary societies resides in the fact they have broken up with a simple model of domination in which institutions take up positions aimed to the rejection of any change and the conservation of the status quo (Boltanski 2009). Complex models of domination have emerged and restricted the spaces for criticism. In particular, the technical character of the measures which are typically adopted within this regime - and those of phone centres are no exception - opened up to a form of *'governmente through norms'* (Thévenot 2004 cit. Boltanski 2009) which reabsorbed any criticism within discussions on institutional tools and their technicalities, while shunning away any concern for politics and de-politicising debates.

Indeed, similar dispositives are far from being mere neutral devises. They point to specific interpretations of the social world and they can prevent alternative narratives to make it through the debate, while discouraging forms of innovation. Some Consiglieri Regionali and some Consiglieri Comunali, in Modena, did point to other ways of looking at phone centres. For instance, they recalled their property as a meeting space, while stressing a

shortage of such resources can be highlighted in urban contexts, particularly for im-migrants. The participatory process in Modena was initially built on this awareness, but it only resulted in further limits being imposed on the sector, such as the creation of a waiting zone within the shop. Vitale (2009) suggested that processes of innovation can only emerge when they are reflexively recognised by the actual protagonists of innovation, that is to say experts and politicians. Innovation must derive from a form of institutional learning (De Leonardis 2001 cit. Vitale 2009), whereby the latter transforms the conventions and normative frames that structure knowledge and organisational action thanks to exploration of alternative and inedited ways of acting and learning (Donolo 1997, Bifulco 2002). Looking back at the cases under analysis, while this process was well under way, it gradually faded away. Again, the debate was reabsorbed within the technicalities of instruments. No space for any 'normative third' emerged. In this sense, it seems that the conflict of phone centres was rather exasperated by regional and local governments with the ultimate goal of showing constituencies that their claims were being addressed, thus building consensus.

Interestingly, Vitale (2009a) hypothesised that it is not so much local government coalitions in themselves that explain political choices[359]. In his work the author argued it is more their modality of searching and constructing consensus that can be held as an explicatory variable. Such a modality can in turn influence coalitions' selection of the policy objectives and instruments that are to guide public action. If we zoom on the cases under analysis, it appears that Verona recalls a '*demagogic mode*', while Modena can be partly assimilated with an '*incremental mode*'. The former rests on the general assumption that the introduction of social policies does not foster consensus. Additionally, short-term actions are privileged as well as simple interventions because they easily carry with them positive perceptions on the side of residents: inspections undertaken by police forces provide us with the best example in this sense. In fact, short-term actions are perceived as successful as far as they are actually implemented, while simple interventions are attractive for the media and hence more likely to resonate in public opinion. Last but not least, a demagogic mode entails the idea that the physical presence of politicians in 'troubled places' can positively affect their reputation. It was repeatedly highlighted that both before and after he took up his mandate, the Mayor accompanied police forces in their inspections and invited journalists to join as to 'prove' he was keeping his promise: he was addressing residents' complaints personally. The specific case of Via Bianca, testifies this point even better. An incremental mode, on

[359] He specifically reffered to Roma and nomads policies.

the other side, is based on the assumption that the construction of consensus comes first, before any policy action, and that it must necessarily accompany the implementation of interventions as well as follow them. Moreover, government actors promoting this mode tend to stress small steps taken by them, in coherence with their set objectives. They also tend to highight the successful individual trajectories taken by the targets of their policies. The Modenese Local Authority certainly showed its concern in involving all interested parties and in achieving consensus with all of them. However, we cannot fail to notice that the decision to draw up a regulation had already been taken before the participatory process actually started and that consensus was gradually lost along the way, at least as far as phone centre-owners are concerned. Furthermore, the Local Authory was punctual in communicating residents it was keeping its promise to regulate the sector of phone centres but no evidence was found of any attempt on its side to promote a positive narrative of these businesses, nor of any successful individual trajectory.

What does the above tell us about the state of the *res publica* in Verona and Modena? '*Any local political order occupies a stratified terrain and that terrain can shed light on how inclusive such an order is*' (Stone 2009: 264). '*If a basic aim of institutional design is to nurture a sense of shared fate among citizens, local political institutions are failing badly*' (Macedo and Karpowitz argued (2006: 59). It seems to me that a need emerges in both case cities for broader political inclusion, as much as a need to address the fact that these localities contain populations that are disconnected from the mainstream governance. Protests on the side of owners were not enough to promote a lasting change. The latter is rather a matter of establishing a new political settlement, new durable relationships that become an integral part of a system of governance. Policy is not what is formally enacted. It is implanted and it cannot be separated from the people affected (Honig 2006). Yet, as it should be clear by now, '*below the surface of political order lies a set of contested arrangements through which state, civil society and market intersect.*' (Stone 2009: 268) It follows '*we cannot reduce citizenship to membership in a political audience*', not even as far as im-migrants are concerned.

9.5 Phone centres: the genesis of a space through the unraveling of a conflict.

Customers and owners have re-appropriated phone centres in ways that created new (temporary) meanings and uses. It should be clear by now that they have rapidly evolved from semi-public commercial premises to a veritable (public) meeting space (see section 4.2), whereby newcomers often go to make telephone calls and also to search for (informal)

job and housing advise.

There has been a tendency in both sociology and political science to linger on analytical definitions of public space, while insisting on its normative character (Colombo 2007), as if it could be captured in a sort of freeze-frame. At the same time, it is now widely accepted that urban space is not the neutral setting of everyday human activities and that its fabric is an expression of a well-established rationality of policy makers. Yes, it is not always recognised that a myriad of other actors engage in it.

Cefaï and Joseph (2002) proposed to reflect on urbanity not as the dreamed destiny of the city, but as a repertoire '*des modalités d'accommodements socio-spatiaux*.' According to them, urbanity needs to be studied in all its complexity, in its entangled nature, by focusing on contentious dynamics that emerge and unravel in urban space and that can ultimately help move beyond a normative level of analysis. This can allow to observe the city 'en train de se faire', and to interrogate the various forms of urban democracy that appear. I believe phone centres provide with an excellent example of how researchers can account for urban space, while being attentive to the dynamics of urban organisation and the (potential) transformations that traverse it.

It all started with residents complaining on disturbances and urban decay and blaming them onto phone centres, their owners and customers. The media have had a crucial role in emphasising negative perceptions on these shops. Discourses associating safety and immigration, as part of a binary relationship, have been spreading throughout the peninsula and have probably further contributed to the poor image of phone centres. Residents' demands have been in turn legitimised through the implementation of specific forms of regulatory control, including an increase in inspections and the adoption of legislative measures.

Why has the debate on phone centres made it, among other possible problems, in the 'race' for access to the public agenda? What had made a difference is the '*problem stream*' (Kingdon 1984 cit. Vitale 2009a), that is to say the modality with which actors have mobilised about it - we can think about the insisting stress that not only local institutions but also residents and neighbourhood committees in Modena put on it to 'accredit' the trouble. A number of other factors contributed further in this direction: the dramatic intensity attributed to their representation of the problem itself, the modality through which the latter has been

legitimised by highlighting its technical nature, the combination of actors present in the institutional scene - including neighbourhood committees in Modena, for example, which enjoy wide legitimacy in the eyes of the Local Authority - and the level of coherence with the values that prevail in public opinion - in relation to binary relationship between immigration and anti-social behaviour.

It is hard to identify clear-cut frames to describe how the deriving conflict was managed in Verona and Modena. Various issues emerged ranging from market and economic ones, to pacific cohabitation. They were mostly absorbed in a wider debate on urban safety.
In fact, safety issues have had a totalising effect over the whole debate of phone centres, with any any space left for any alternative interpretation of it. Yet the safety frame did not emerge from the conflict, it was *de facto* attached to it a priori. Arguably, this depends on the fact that immigration issues tend to be invariably framed in terms of territorial control. Unsurprisingly, therefore, discussions around phone centres, which are in themselves a mere economic activity - not to underestimate their significance for both customers and owners - have grown alongside wider implications. As Sayad (1999) suggested, we need to look at immigration as a 'total fact', not because of any intrinsic dynamic if this phenomenon, but for the specific political 'treatment' it has been reserved.

The analysis of various sessions of the Consigli Regionali and of the Consiglio Comunale in Modena (see section 6.3), highlighted that the property of phone centres as public spaces was clearly identified and introduced by various actors in different phases of the legislative process, as indicated in the previous section. In Verona, where the decision-making process unravelled within the institutional scene only, this was equally evident: phone centres were described as meeting spaces in the ordinance that was passed in 2009. In other words, an alternative interpretation has been advanced that went beyond an idea of urban safety. Some policy suggestions derived and fed into the actual normative framework.

In the case of Verona, it translated in the revision of owners' license, to ban the distribution of food and drinks, in the attempt to discourage any form of gathering, particularly in the evening. In Modena, a similar requirement was introduced. Additionally, a peculiar one was added which is worth recalling: owners were asked to create a waiting room inside their shops as to provide customers with the most comfortable conditions while waiting for their call to be made. Undoubtedly, policy makers acknowledged phone centres are a public space. The outcomes of their measures are discussable, however.

Rather than aiming to put to value this property, it seems they strived to '*domesticate*' it (Zukin 1995). Forms of spatial organisation were apparently sketched out to avoid conflicts in the first place, to neutralise it and prevent it from emerging. Here, spatial distance was actively used to create a distance that was social but also physical. In this way, opportunities for interaction, dissent and confrontations were largely removed to be substituted by distance (De Leonardis 2008). This is a clear expression of the legitimacy that the frame of spatial 'risk' enjoys (see also Pitch 2007). Yet, it could be expected that efforts by the Veronese and Modenese Local Authorities were likely to go unfulfilled. In fact, they did. In the case of Modena, it was rather naive to think customers can be 'forced' to wait inside a shop, particularly if we take into consideration we are talking about very small ones. As for restrictions of opening hours, in Verona and Modena too, they might only result in other places acquiring the function of a meeting spot, thus simply moving disturbances away to another site.

If we examine carefully the dynamics at work, it seems that a process of categorisation, whereby phone centres have been identified as 'the evil shops', has guided actors' policy strategies by transposing ways of classifying social reality into practices of distinction. Eventually, they lead to the approval of a specific regulation for the sector. No similar regulatory frame has been adopted so far for any other commercial activity in either Verona or Modena. Things might change soon, as will be discussed in the next paragraph.

From the research an interesting point emerged on phone centres as entrepreneurial activities. Apart from the crisis that invested the sector due, among other things, to the increasing competition by mobile operators, it became clear that these shops can represent a viable business only as far as they provide with a variety of services, including phone and Internet ones, food and drinks, money transfer, etc. Apparently they can be economically viable in the measure they imitate the model of the 'bazaar', rather than that of a 'typical' Italian mono-activity business. This aspect was not seized by any policy-maker. It was repeatedly mentioned by phone centre-owners, however, and by the Secretary of LAPAM (a federation of local associations that represents all various entrepreneurial sectors in Modena). when I interviewed him, he explained he had discussed about it with the Assessore alle Attività Economiche, by pointing out similar activities should be promoted. Even more interestingly, he had tried to raise his awareness on the fact that phone centres are often located in areas that were left deserted by natives' foodstores - as a result of competition by shopping centres - and that the im-migrants' entrepeurial investments

should be therefore supported, on the basis of natives' interests, and in particular those of elderly people, who have limited mobility, and young people, who often look for cheap food provision.

They failed to undertake a learning process in this direction that could help rethink phone centres in all their complexity. It was a missed opportunity for innovation. As I argued, such a path is beset with obstacles and no automatic outcome can be expected from it. Two main reasons can be advanced for failures in Modena and Verona. First of all, the scarce legitimacy enjoyed by phone centre-owners as non-citizen and even more as problematic ones - considering the claims advanced on their activities - prevented them from having their voice heard. Second, as already indicated, the whole process that lead up to the approval of a specific legislative framework was very much fuelled by increasing pressures residents put on the Regional Authorities and the Municipalities. The latter had to demonstrate their capacity to act and this represented their overarching goal.

To be fair, it should be noticed that innovative practices can be observed in the Modenese context, in relation to pubs. In section 6.1.2, I explained they are the source of similar problems to those experienced with phone centres. Interestingly, while disturbances relating to these two commercial categories emerged in the same period, they have been dealt with in a different way. No specific regulation was passed for pubs. At the same time, shopkeepers were invited to share their ideas on how the situation should be managed and their suggestions were welcomed and translated into practical interventions, including the introduction of the '*steward di strada*' (see section 6.3.3). This suggests differential treatments were applied, even though I think another trend is more worth our attention. A few months ago, an ordinance was introduced to ban alcohol drinking from the streets. It did not target im-migrants, nor young people going to pubs, nor anyone in particular and yet all of them. This alerts on a progressive erosion of the right to the city and the liberty of residents to enjoy it. Without going too far into this discussion, which would certainly require more in-depth analysis, I want to highlight how similar decisions have been welcomed by residents and have gained legitimacy over time: they are seen as measures that 'control others', as the representative of Via Rossa observed. I believe they might well over target 'others', but who else might be targeted next? Who else is actually a potential target already? What has not been stressed yet is that the 'experiment' of phone centres has apparently served as a 'picklock' to legitimise and open up to similar policy interventions. This is particularly evident in the case of Verona, where new measures of a similar kind -

they are not as strict but they still recall a spatial control type of approach - are under analysis for other shops, including kebab and sexy shops. It calls for researchers to take Thomson's (2009) suggestion seriously when he insists that race should become central to the field of urban politics, rather than a diversion from social and economic issues. In his view, by paying more attention to how local actors conceive and manage racial tensions, urban theorists can provide new insights into the role of race in cities and sharpen empirical inquiry. In the cases under analysis the overarching question that emerges is: who is next in the safety agenda?

From the above, it seems that the potential for policy innovation in the sector of phone centres was largely left unexplored, at least in Modena and Verona. Nonetheless, some positive experiences were identified in other parts of the country. They testify it is indeed possible to propose alternative narratives even when residents' claims pressurise Local Authorities into taking action. I am referring to the case of Arezzo, a city in Tuscany. Here, a reward certificate was issued, as part of a wider safety project. It was delivered to phone centre-owners upon their agreement to comply with a set of requirements, including the following: the creation of an 'information corner' with news relating to public concourses, competitive bidding, information for tourists and residents; the cleaning up of the space immediately outside the shop; collaboration with the Local Authority and the Local Police by reporting on situations that cause any form of disturbance; the willingness to have CCTV cameras installed with the financial support of the Municipality. The delivery of this certificate also entails the authorisation for owners to have their opening hours extended till 10 pm, and 11 pm during the summer, and to attend specific courses targeted at entrepreneurs. The property of phone centres as a public space is recognised here too, to the extent they are asked to provide with an information corner. However, it is a constructive narrative that emerges here and not the search for domestication according to 'native standards'. The reader might contest the fact that specific courses are available to entrepreneurs at large and yet limited to phone centre-owners who comply with certain requirements. The reader might also reasonably say that opening hours should not be the 'prize' for good conduct and that in fact it is still a safety frame that prevails overall in Arezzo. These are certainly all legitimate observations. Nonetheless, against the very limited information I collected, it seems that the whole phone centres issue, in this case, has been interpreted with a more visionary approach that opens up a few more chances for these shops to keep functioning as more than mere commercial activities.

Going back to the case studies. What contribution have given phone centre-owners in the transformation of their shops as an urban space? They have not been the mere recipients of a policy conceived by others (Cefaï and Pasquier 2003). They have spoken up their concerns, both through familiar engagements and institutional channels (when available like in Modena). Attempts have been made by various owners to come to terms with residents by trying not to sell alcoholic drinks and by taking increasing care the passageway would be kept clean. In Modena, they also confronted local officers to explain their disagreement on the possibility for a waiting zone to be useful and effective at all. Most importantly, other familiar forms of engagement have been enacted to 'resist' the Anti-terrorism Law and what I have defined as a 'residual practice of expulsion power', that is to say the progressive targeting of phone centres as potential sites of undocumented.

Some owners have actively challenged them through direct confrontation with police officers, during inspections, as well as through the adoption of various low-profile strategies (see section 7.4.6). A widespread sense of solidarity emerged very clearly in this context, particularly with respect to undocumented. Many owners actually took the risk of being fined - or even having their shop confiscated - in order to allow undocumented access telephone and Internet services, as convinced as they were it was not for them to lead the fight against irregular migration, not to prevent any customer from using their services. There is another side to the picture. Some owners were simply overwhelmed with anxiety and fear to do anything about it. They resigned to taking up a policing role, by keeping 'unwanted customers' at bay. In spite of varying attitudes among owners, most of them have tried 'to preserve' the shops and all its properties as a meeting space. So far they have partly succeeded in doing so, with some difficulties. This testified that while public space is progressively 'annihilated by law' (Mitchell 1997), such risk can be counterbalanced by forms of resistance.

At the time of writing, a number of factors, including the impact of frequent runs of inspections on owners and customers, the negative image that has come to be associated with phone centres, the strict requirements of the new legislative framework and the fierce competition of mobile operators are provoking the slow disappearance of this urban artefact. Clearly space 'is always in a process of being shaped, reshaped, and challenged by various groups and individuals' (McCann 1999: 168). What will happen next remains certainly to be seen. Unfortunately, prospects are far from being rosy and I do wonder whether any lesson will be learnt from the trouble of phone centres and how it was (un)managed. Yet, it is people that make history...

Mamadou is striving increasingly harder to get his phone centre going. The last police inspections - at the end of last year - were still rather harassing, in his case. When he first arrived in Italy he worked as a '*vu cumprà*' (street seller). He was once arrested for goods' forgery. The label of criminal is now indelibly attached to him - I am not giving any value judgement in this sense, I rather want to point to the difficult path of im-migrants' integration. Sidy seems to be very business oriented. His phone centre is hardly no phone centre at all. The shop is still open, he laments a considerable loss of business but, on the other side, he has been looking at different venues: he has developed forms of collaboration with mobile operators and with insurance brokers. In this sense the phone centre has served more as 'an office' for him to be contacted. Javed is a young boy, full of energy. He is a (school) drop out. He used to do very well at school in his country of origin and also in Naples, when he first arrived in Italy. Things changed when he moved to the north. His school integration was not smooth enough to motivate him to study. This is how, encouraged also by his father, he took up his phone centre-business. So far, he is doing well, even though he is very worried for future business prospects. Adriana manages a phone centre, together with a friend of hers. When she first arrived in Italy, in 2000, she took up jobs as a care-giver. A few years ago her husband joined her in Italy and she decided she wanted to take a step forward in terms of professional advancement. She also had a baby, a year ago. Yet, she is still among the most active phone centre-owners and she still insists their actions should be taken further. In fact, she was asking my opinion on a few ideas she has on mind, some months ago. Lu Xun manages a shop a few yards away from my flat. He was visited twice by police forces in the past months. '*Thank God they left me alone*', he said with a sense of relief. '*But, Michela, do you know anyone that might want to buy my phone centre? I cannot carry on with it, these new regulations have messed up the business!*' (field note May 31st 2010) Karim has been taking up a course to adventure into the business of solar panels. '*Well, I need to do something now, this business is just not working!*' (field note December 2nd 2009) Rasul manages a phone centre very close to Lux Xun. I pass by it whenever I go to the town centre. The last time I bumped into him he told me: '*Michela, I wish I had enrolled at school when I first arrived in Italy. It was easier then for im-migrants. Look at this mess now!*' (field note November 1st 2009) He disappeared some time last December. I asked Sidy about him. Rumours are discordant. Some collegues say he was together with the 'wrong' girl that put him into trouble, others said he put himself into trouble as he could not survive anymore out of the phone centre-business alone. He was in jail for a few months, till very recently. Apparently he was not found guilty. He then moved back to his country of origin and will be back in Verona at the end of the summer…

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APPENDICES
ORIGINAL EXTRACTS OF INTERVIEWS QUOTED.

(1) 'È un posto in cui le badanti si trovano quando hanno il giorno libero, tanti si trovano qui con amici e per fare due chiacchiere (…) [ed è un posto che] apre a social networks: quando immigrati arrivano qui per prima volta e cercano casa e job information vengono spesso qui per trovare. (…). È qui che trovano anche aiuto per compilare documenti per tradurre. E qui trovano a bit of comfort, reassurance' (December 9th 2008, Modena)

(2) 'Ci sono gruppi di immigrati disoccupati e fannulloni che passano tutto il loro tempo davanti ai phone centres e parlano a voce alta, continuano a bere alcol, abbandonano bottiglie vuole sul marciapiedi, che usano spesso come bagno (...) e, forse, fanno anche roba illegale, come spacciare droga.' (resident, July 2nd 2008, Verona)

(3) 'Tutte le sere si trovano là e pisciano nel giardino delle persone, lasciano bottiglie vuote sul marciapiedi, ascoltano la musica ad alto volume. (…) Ci sono tanti clandestini che girano lì intorno, soprattutto quelli che prima andavano nel parco, fino a quando la polizia ha cominciato a fare dei controlli regolari.' (resident, December 4th 2008, Verona)

(4) 'Be, c'è pieno di clandestini dappertutto qui e non dovrebbero proprio esserci nel Paese!' (resident, December 4th 2008, Verona)

(5) 'Sono stata spesso accusata di razzismo (…) ma io penso che Veronetta sia un bel quartiere e vorrei che restasse bello! Quando siamo in un quartiere guardiamo all'altezza degli occhi e quindi sono i negozi del piano terra che vediamo ed è importante che si presentino bene, anche i negozio degli stranieri. E poi si dovrebbe evitare che i loro negozi siano tutti concentrati nella stessa zona e allora si risolverebbe il problema.' (shopkeeper, May 28th 2009, Verona)

(6) 'Non è nemmeno giustificabile avere tre phone centres così vicini, considerando il numero di stranieri che c'è qui. Ci sono tre palazzi pieni, però due phone centre e un altro vicino non sono giustificati. (…) Problematici comunque lo sono stati tutti. Quello di Via (…) è frequentato da questi moldavi qua, tra l'altro è in una posizione nascosta e quindi se non passa la volante lì… lì effettivamente… Loro si mettono lì, fanno quel cavolo che

voglionoo e quindi insomma chi abita lì non è proprio contento. (…) E poi il problema è l'alcol, l'alcol, l'alcol… quanto bevono! La polizia dovrebbe venire qui molto più spesso!' (resident, December 12th 2008, Modena)

(7) 'Il problema è che devono rispettare la legge… e anche i kebab [devono rispettarla]! O vendono una cosa o l'altra. Non è che vendono alcolici nei phone centre o hanno nel seminterrato un parrucchiere. Il discorso è generico: bisogna rispettare una legge quando c'è (…). La prima regola per vivere in un Paese ed essere accettato è di accettare le regole altrimenti sei tu che vuoi essere emarginato. Nessun negozio di Vodaphone o Tim si sogna di vendere birre o spacciare droga o mettere sù un parrucchiere! Nei phone centre invece sì! Prima di chiedere i diritti bisogna rispettare i doveri….' (resident and Consigliere di Circoscrizione, November 30th 2009, Verona)

(8) 'La sicurezza, il contrasto per la sicurezza e il degrado (…) in questa ottica, direi (…) vengono all'attenzione anche queste realtà [i phone centre]. Vengono all'attenzione perché si inseriscono negli spazi che l'edilizia lascia liberi, sono spesso ex negozietti che non hanno più un'appetibilità perché ci sono i supermercati (…). Questi sono contesti urbani e fragili perché se magari lo vado a fare all'interno di un condominio (…) e poi gli spazi sono piccolini, sono angusti, la gente si intrattiene fuori e questo luogo in cui si va a telefonare diventa un momento di incontro perché lì si trova la sera, finita la giornata di lavoro. Io parto dal presupposto che ci sono un sacco di extracomunitari che sono persone eccezionali, ecc a fronte di una bella fascia di statistiche che dimostrano che ci sono anche delinquenti (…) ma tra 100 frequentatori tranquilli, belli come il sole, arriva anche quello ubriaco che vive in stato di degrado e beve molto più di noi e poi magari si ferma anche davanti alla scala dell'ingresso del condominio, arriva a casa la ragazza di 18 anni la sera, insomma… ci sono situazioni che, parlando anche di insicurezza percepita, hanno creato delle situazioni di grande tensione.' (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008,Verona)

(9) 'Ora che siano in periodo elettorale qualsiasi cosa viene sfruttata in un verso o nell'altro, sfalsano molto le percezioni dai giornali che poi creano gli allarmi (…). Per il momento non abbiamo grosse difficoltà. In alcune zone aumenta la concentrazione e quindi abbiamo dei problemi però siamo ancora abbastanza nell'ordinario (…). In questo momento lamentele ne abbiamo comunque perché sono in posizione molto critiche (…) La posizione è fondamentale! [richiamando un caso specifico] in questa Via hanno avuto la brillante idea di

aprire un phone centre nell'androne di un condominio… è ubicato sotto tre palazzi ad alta densità di stranieri: quello riesce a creare problemi anche quando è chiuso!' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena)

(10) 'Un po' di anni fa quando [i phone centres] sono stati aperti erano anche un punto di ritrovo (…) ora non è più così e comunque noi abbiamo anche cercato di fare in modo che non fosse così. Io ho cercato di gestire quest'attività per evitare che ci fosse troppa gente che staziona, anche in virtù di ciò che mi è successo [multa] … che comunque la concentrazione non mi piace perché poi si ha confusione e quelli che sono sopra si lamentano per il disturbo, quindi più se ne vanno velocemente dal negozio [i clienti] meglio è così si evitano anche problemi con il vicinato perché a Modena quelli che hanno dato più addosso a questa attività sono i vicini. A Modena sono nati dei comitati per la sicurezza e quindi i negozi etnici e i phone centre li hanno praticamente massacrati. Noi [l'intervistata e proprietaria del negozio di cui parla e i suoi dipendenti] questo prob non l'abbiamo mai avuto. Inizialmente quando il condominio [sopra il negozio] ha saputo che qua ci veniva un phone centre, ho saputo per vie traverse - non me l'hanno detto direttamente - che hanno organizzato una riunione per decidere cosa fare. Ma poi sapendo che comunque sono italiana (…) non hanno fatto nulla (…). Noi ci impegniamo comunque al massimo per fare in modo che i vicini non abbiamo da lamentarsi. Puliamo se ci sono le cartine delle ricariche, facciamo il possibile per il quieto vivere per non creare problemi perché poi lo capisco [i vicini] ….' (phone centre-owner, November 18th, Modena)

(11) 'A creare problemi nei phone centres sono gli arabi, i marocchini e i tunisini e per colpa loro il Comune ha fatto un regolamento. E comunque non tutti i phone centes fanno problema, dipende anche da zona. Il Comune dovrebbe accordare con i gestori e chiedere loro di dire se qualcosa non va e non punire gestori perché non siamo poliziotti! Anche nei bar e nei pub ci sono casini ma il Comune non fa niente per questo. Si fa differenza tra immigrati e italiani ecco perchè succede questo! E questo non solo a Modena ma anche in Italia!' (phone centre-owner, December 11th, Modena)

(12) 'Vicino a me [vicino al negozio] alcuni signori [vicini e negozianti] non si trovano bene e allora chiamano i controlli. Loro dicono che il negozio dà fastidio perché arrivano gli stranieri. Io ho chiesto: 'Va bene, non solo qua, in tutta Italia ci sono degli stranieri.Ma questi signori hanno fanno un po' di casino. Loro chiamano sempre la polizia municipale. Dipende da loro quando vengono con i controlli. Io ho spiegato che io mando via clienti

che non comportarsi bene, ho sempre spiegato a loro, due o tre volte ma loro non vogliono capire. Non tutti, solo qualcuno.' (phone centre-owner, December 2nd 2008, Modena)

(13) 'Pensano che phone centres non regolati abbastanza, che hanno orari speciali.' (phone centre owner, November 17th 2008, Verona)

(14) 'Il problema di disturbo dei residenti ce lo danno i phone centre ma sicuramente meno dei bar fracassoni. (…) La differenza è forse anche un problema dell'ignoto, dello straniero, che le frequentazioni dei phone centre sono più preoccupanti (…) perché magari gli stranieri sono mal vestiti, insomma onestamente… con delle connotazioni diverse ma i phone centre si collocano tra quelle attività che dove si inseriscono, se non sono in locali adeguati ecc. possono creare anche disturbo alla quiete pubblica, incidenti ecc. ma non meno di locali e bar fracassoni.' (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona)

(15) 'Lamentele [arrivate] qui per i phone centre a dire la verità no. Sui bar fracassoni ne arrivano a raffica. Il cittadino ci contatta. Su qualche attività artigianale come kebab e piadinerie ne è arrivata qualcuna. E poi comunque i gestori di phone centre sono più attenti, lo sanno di essere sotto l'occhio del mirino.'(Dirigente C.d.R. Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona, February 3rd 2010, Verona)

(16) 'Io reputo che questa sia una città che è anche assetata di sicurezza e con questo termine mi riferisco al fatto che, ma qui avrei bisogno di almeno una settimana per spiegarglielo, faccio riferimento al concetto di percezione (…). Assetata di sicurezza non è in senso dispregiativo ma nel senso che la percepiscono come priorità. Non c'è solo la sicurezza urbana ma quella stradale, sul posto lavoro. (…) Se io non dessi delle risposte credo che nessuno chiederebbe il mio aiuto [Non solo perché non saprebbe a chi rivolgersi] ma perché quest'amm. mi dice: 'devi risolvermi questo problema, se riesci bene lo dobbiamo dire al cittadino come l'abbiamo risolto (…) se non riesci a risolvere questo problema mi devi dire perché non l'hai risolto. Noi stiamo lavorando molto perché è un concetto che a me piace… [quello di percezione]. Io parlo spesso con il personale dicendo che per me è importante anche la segnalazione della panchina divelta o l'erba alta nel giardino o anche il fatto che un comitato di quartiere mi chieda l'installazione di una telecamera perché io vado a constatare nel tempo che se l'erba viene tagliata (…) quel problema viene risolto e il cittadino ci ringrazia (…). La percezione è importante perché se

poi andiamo a verificare i dati sulla criminalità magari non è stato commesso uno scippo o alcun tipo di reato. (…) Ma l'ambito è quello della sicurezza legato spesso anche alle notizie di stampa. Domandiamoci perché oggi il cittadino si sente più insicuro. Vent'anni fa (…) non esisteva il telegiornale con 50% delle notizie… è stata scippata, è stata fatta la rapina! C'erano le classiche notizie di cronaca che erano raccolte dal valido cronista sul territorio ma non erano divulgate poi nei massimi telegiornali nazionali si parlava più di politica o di cultura adesso la cronaca fa da padrona e in ogni territorio nazionale ma soprattutto nel Nord Italia una notizia negativa va poi a far credere ai cittadini che quel territorio o area urbana o periferica ha un problema di sicurezza.' (Comandante of the Local Police, January 21st 2010, Verona)

(17) 'Noi abbiamo diverse forme di comunicazione [diretta con i cittadini] che vanno dal nostro sito per cui una casella email attiva sempre, abbiamo un numero di telefono con risponditore automatico, anzi una Centrale Operativa aperta 24h su 24 (…) che è un ottimo strumento che ci consente di sgravare i nostri operatori. E quello più usato è assolutamente il telefono chiamando direttamente il numero verde. Poi abbiamo un front office a cui vengono un centinaio di cittadini ogni mattina e quindi se non avessimo altri canali sarebbe dura insomma! (…) Abbiamo l'URP che funziona bene anzi anche troppo bene perché ci carica di richieste. (…)Di canali secondo me ne abbiamo anche troppi. (…)I cittadini chiamano, si rivolgono alla segreteria del sindaco e questo è il miglior feedback che possiamo avere [sulle loro percezioni]. Le ricerche possono anche lasciare buchi ma noi sappiamo subito [cosa succede]. Percepiamo gli umori. (…) E poi gli interlocutori che abbiamo sono tanti e ci fa piacere. Credo molto nella rete, che è rete non solo istituzionale ma tra più soggetti, intesi come attori del territorio e quindi parliamo con associazioni, sindacati, ecc.' (Comandante of the Local Police, January 21st 2010, Verona)

(18) 'Il sindaco ha creato un suo staff come segreteria del sindaco che naturalmente ci gira quello di nostra competenza e pretende che arrivino delle risposte. Quindi il sindaco una delle sue forze è proprio quella di rispondere (…) con fax, email, sms, di solito dà una risposta anche veloce. (…) Non ci sono più i tempi nei quali dicevano 'non mi hanno più risposto, non gliene frega niente. (…) Penso che abbiamo anche troppi canali. (…) I residenti chiamano qui, chiamano la segreteria del sindaco e questo è il miglior feedback che possiamo avere. Il lavoro di ricerca può lasciare dei vuoti ma noi sappiamo immediamente. Noi percepiamo gli uomori della gente. (Comandante of the Local Police, January 21st 2010, Verona)

(19) 'Non ho competenza su questo, non sono un avvocato, ma anche guardando ad Israele – voglio dire, parlo di Israele! Non si trova questo requisito anti-terrorismo là… non c'è niente di tutto questo! Ho parlato con un un tipo che conosco, un Senegalese che ha contatti in Israele e lavora nel campo dell'informatica e ha riso per questa legge. Purtroppo l'Italia è l'unico paese in tutto il mondo in cui la gente deve essere identificata prima di usare i terminali! Tanti dei nostri membri hanno contatti anche in altri paesi in Europa e non hanno mai sentito nulla di tutto questo.' (President of Internet Point & phone centre associate, November 6th 2008, Modena)

(20) [Ci hanno dato] un obiettivo ed è quello di dare uno stato attuale della situazione per poter provare a capire le effettive problematicità, con l'eventuale, che era poi anche sotteso per dire la verità (…) [di] arrivare lì con un determinato percorso che era assoggettato dalle richieste dei cittadini, dalle problematicità riscontrate ecc. (…) , dall'aumento costante di queste attività di phone centres, dalla nascita di phone centres combinati ad altre attività commerciali. Quindi c'era anche una tipologia nuova (…). Ovviamente con le tensioni che ci sono rispetto a, come dire, ad un ventaglio di posizioni (…). Parliamoci chiaro: 'Chi vorrebbe chiuderli tutti il giorno dopo con una chiave magica e chi dice invece: 'Vanno bene così'. (…) In mezzo c'è stato il ragionamento per vedere cosa effettivamente rappresentavano e cosa un impatto di regolamentazione comportava. (…) Una delle difficoltà (…) è cercare di dare una risposta trasversale laddove la problematica richiede l'appoggio di diversi settori competenti (…). [Ha richiesto] un'integrazione e un intervento plurisettoriale (…) un percorso non sempre facile in un'organizzazione complessa (…). Noi che lavoriamo nella pubblica amministrazione ci troviamo giustamente ad avere degli obiettivi di semplificazione di qualità di servizio, ecc ecc. che io condivido pienamente dall'altro, parallelamente, ci si chiede di intervenire, anche lì giustamente però con processi che sono il contrario della deregolamentazione (…) la verità è forse nel mezzo (…). (Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici of the Municipality of Modena, October 10th 2008, Modena)

(21) 'Avevano [i gestori di phone centres] interpretato che si poteva dare sia internet che telefono ma l'amministrazione ha detto no. (…) Dove c'è un margine di discrezione può subentrare la parte politica, capisce, con chiari intenti… anche per la Questura era sì perché i phone centre sono sottoposti ad una duplice autorizzazione (…). Noi ci siamo confrontati con la polizia e anche loro non vedevano come poteva essere interpretabile in questo modo e anche la Camera di Commercio, tanto che loro hanno elenchi unificati di Internet point e

phone centre. (…) [Alla Giunta] per altro ho mandato una relazione dissentendo nel senso che per me, la mia era un'interpretazione tecnica. Lì si trattava semmai di trovare delle formule per poter usare internet solo per telefonare, cioè io ti lascio accesso sempre sul programma di skype, voip.'(Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona, February 3rd 2010, Verona)

(22) 'Al Comune sarebbe piaciuta la pianificazione cioè impedire in un quartiere che ci siano dieci phone centre in due vie, ma è stato considerato illegittimo sotto il profilo costituzionale. Adesso ci stiamo avvalendo di un'altra norma diciamo per calmierare, limitare i nuovi insediamenti per lo meno nelle aree storiche e nelle aree tutelate. In questo caso ci appelliamo non più alla sicurezza, perché lì ci sono appunto questi procedimenti [il riferimento qui è alla decisione della Corte Costituzionale], ma al decoro cioè diamo per scontato che questi abbiamo una pianificazione in materia di… fronti commerciali, si chiama. Cioè che la legge 15 regionale del 2004 che dà ai Comuni il potere di costituire una pianificazione per impedire gli scempi commerciali nei quartieri tutelati (…) creando un impatto all'immagine complessiva della città (…) Stiamo per avviare le riunioni (…) chiaro che è un tentativo estremo… capisce quando le dico che se ci viene impedito dalla norma di fare una cosa cerchiamo gli strumenti per farla da un'altra parte? Quindi lì se passa in Consiglio, perché dovrà superare varie tappe, diremo che sono vietate tutta una serie di attività [in queste aree] anche negozi come i sexy shop (…) I phone centre finiranno in questo (…) Perché cerchiamo di dimostrare con questo provvedimento che portano degrado estetico (…) sono brutti da vedere, perché loro non hanno assolutamente la cura, non hanno il gusto di rendersi carini, non gli interessa proprio (…) poi sembrano delle forme di razzismo ma…' (Dirigente C.d.R Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona, February 3rd 2010, Verona)

(23) 'E poi forse anche il fatto che io sono militante. Hanno [i gestori di phone centre e altri immigrati] sempre usato il mio locale come sede per mobilitarsi. Da qua abbiamo anche mandato lettere alla questura e non so se questo ha anche giocato per me per i controlli. Ci siamo trovati all'inizio con i gestori perché ho cercato di coinvolgerli (…). Poi i negozianti quando hanno visto i controlli più frequenti abbiamo cercato di organizzarci ancora meglio.' (Rudy, May 2nd 2008, Verona)

(24) 'Il coordinamento migranti da sempre urla tanto ma a cosa serve urlare? Politica politica politica senza aiutarli e sostenerli [i migranti] davvero ma li hanno illusi e prima o

poi se ne accorgono! Li sbattoni in prima linea senza pensare a quelle che possono essere le conseguenze.' (trade unionist, April 22nd 2009, Verona)

(25) 'Qui è successa una cosa un pò casuale… c'è stato un matto italiano che lavorava alla CGIL e che si è licenziato ed ha deciso di comprare un phone centre il quale si è trovato con un'altra ragazza di Modena che non si sa perché nelle mille professioni possibili ha pensato ad un phone centre. Sono diventati automaticamente i leader.' (Secretary of Lapam, March 4th 2009, Modena)

(26) 'Come gestori all'inizio ci siamo organizzati con delle riunioni per competition, I explained them it would be important to agree on prices, però in riunioni alla fine abbiamo visto che alla Prefettura e alla Questura non interessa. Siamo andati anche a parlare con sindaco. (…) Se in Italia organizzi e alzi la voce ti reprimono ancora di più. Abbiamo organizzato meeting con questore e lui ha detto 'venite non c'è problema' ma il problema è che qui non abbiamo rights e quindi non possiamo protestare. È difficile [per gli italiani] vedere foreigners working, sai? A Sassuolo abbiamo fatto un meeting con il sindaco e abbiamo chiesto due domande e non hanno nemmeno saputo rispondere. (…) Hanno risposto che c'è questa legge e che è per disciplinare i phone centres. Loro avevano già deciso che era così. (…) Let me be honest with you, you cannot do anything about it because the politicians decide. I'm not saying you should change job because God recognizes honest people but leave it really…' (Jalil, April 28th 2009, Modena)

(27) 'Io sempre vado fino infondo anche se non mi fido… io sono sempre così! Questi 14 anni che sono qua ho sempre potuto partecipare ad associazioni… siamo noi [immigrati] che le abbiamo messe in piedi. (…) La sera dopo aver lavorato come operaio mi trovavo per cercare di organizzarmi con gli altri. Faccio parte dell'associazione dei senegalesi. (…) E' per questo che la moglie non è tanto contenta! Ma sa che sono una persona che piace andare fino infondo, avere il diritto… io sono una persona così! Anche se non me lo danno sempre io vado a cercarlo. Sono sempre così. Tutte le cose degli immigrati quando le fanno io mi metto in piedi e vado… ' (Mamadou, June 6th 2008, Verona)

(28) 'Da quasi un anno [siamo organizzati] mais ce n'est pas… non è ancora una cosa veramente forte perché i ragazzi [gestori di phone centre] non ci credono tanto. Ognuno resta nel suo angolo, perché l'immigrato anche organizzarlo non è troppo facile. Non ci credono alle cose perché una persona che si prende tanti… come posso spiegarti…

vengono [a fare i controlli] per la multa (…) Non fanno cose che sono adeguate alla legge e allora [gli immigrati] credono che domani vengono [la polizia e le autorità locali] e poi dopo domani ancora e ti perseguitano in altro modo… et moi je comprends bien qu'ils croient qu'on ne peut pas fair grande chose…mais moi c'est different pour moi…' (Sidy, June 14th 2008, Verona)

(29) 'Quello che vogliono è che ci sia sempre qualcuno che gli risolva i problemi. In prima persona loro non hanno questo spirito collettivo di dire: 'Insieme siamo una forza.' Per cui dicono: 'Io incarico questo e lui mi deve risolvere i problemi.' (President of IP Associati, November 6th 2008, Modena)

(30) 'L'abbiamo scelto proprio per la lingua. Perché bene o male è un vantaggio. Noi possiamo anche parlare benino italiano ma l'accento non lo perdiamo mai…' (phone centre-owner, December 9th 2008, Modena)

(31) 'Non tutti vedono sempre Vanni. Chi conosce bene Vanni è perché carica da lui voip' (phone centre owner, December 30th 2008, Modena)

(32) 'Vanni piace perché lascia spazio a tutti ma… a Bologna le cose funzionano perché c'è uno che comanda. Non è che comanda tutti. Come a Modena che comandiamo tutti, capito? Se c'è qualcuno vecchio vecchio [rispetto all'arrivo in Italia] e capisce tutto e parla italiano magari vorrebbe comandare lui... A Bologna, se c'è un mio paesano che comanda tutti rispettano. Qui se c'è uno comanda un altro dice: 'Io sono più senior di te.' A Bologna vanno avanti. Qui quando Vanni dice: 'Facciamo questo lavoro', uno dice 'Va bene, sono con te', un altro dice: 'Vanni chi è?' (phone centre-owners, April 28th 2009, Modena)

(33) 'Così è stata esposta [come un processo partecipativo], ma in realtà l'idea è stata questa: 'Noi vogliamo fare il regolamento, voi poneteci le vostre esigenze'. Noi abbiamo esposto le nostre esigenze, quali sono i nostri obiettivi ed abbiamo ribadito che tutti i locali sono a norma secondo l'aspetto igienico-sanitario, ecc ecc. Loro ci hanno posto una bozza di regolamento che noi abbiamo cancellato dal punto di vista molti degli articoli (…) facendo anche sapere le nostre motivazioni. L'Assessore assieme al Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici ha detto che avrebbero preso in considerazione queste cose qui e che l'avrebbero portato in Commissione e discusse per poi riportarci il risultato. Non hanno accettato nessuna delle nostre modifiche al regolamento. L'unica che hanno

accettato è quella del money transfer. Tutto il resto niente.' (phone centre-owner, November 7th 2008, Modena)

(34) 'Cioè ci hanno ascoltato, quando siamo andati per far sentire le nostre ragioni, subito c'era una bozza di regolamento comunale che doveva essere approvato e poi ci hanno dato appuntamento per esporre le nostre idee e dire cosa non ci andava bene e l'Assessore si è segnato tutti i punti che avevamo contestato e gli ha portati in Consiglio e hanno fatto il possibile, ci hanno detto, per venirci incontro ma ci sono delle cose che non hanno assolutamente accettato, nulla a parte il money transfer.' (phone centre-owner, November 18th 2008, Modena)

(35)'Sia noi che i colleghi della CNA che abbiamo trascinato su questa tematica siamo andati dall'Assessore [alle attività economiche] e abbiamo detto: adesso fermati un attimo e lasciali in pace. Con risultato che della robetta brutta l'abbiamo portata via. In alcuni casi abbiamo portato a casa situazioni dirompenti [in cui i gestori non potevano fare lavori nei loro negozi a causa di limiti strutturali] in cui abbiamo detto: questo non farlo. Cose anche gravi… ora non ricordo.' (Secretary Lapam, March 4th 2009, Modena)

(36) 'Nel primo Consiglio [Comunale] utile, siamo stati in Consiglio e abbiamo esposto i nostri cartelli dicendo 'Ci dovete ascoltare'. Siamo una categoria piccola, ci dovete ascoltare, rappresentiamo una parte di business della città (…). Anche noi eravamo d'accordo con stendere un regolamento ma non una limitazione.' (phone centre-owner, November 6th 2008, Modena)

(37) 'Quando sono subentrate queste norme hanno cominciato a venire qui come le formichine e c'era stato un caso ma ora non ricordo bene… era venuto un avvocato che è un noto avvocato a tutela delle fasce deboli diciamo. Veniva qua urlando però noi alla fine non è che ce l'avessimo con quel titolare… non era in regola! (…) Noi li avevamo contatti tutti, non con riunioni esplicative come mi chiedeva Lei, ma con una lettera anche perché onestamente visto che spesso loro non sanno la lingua è meglio che vadano dal loro consulente, il sindacato o il commercialista a farsi spiegare. (…) Non lo facciamo di norma ma in quel caso abbiamo mandato una circolare cercando anche di usare un linguaggio meno tecnico possibile e devo dire che loro molto disciplinatamente sono venuti un po' con gli occhi sbarrati a dire: 'Oddio adesso magari mi tolgono la licenza.' Sono venuti qui ma devo dire bravi e ordinati, vero, cioè una volta venivano con la letterina per chiedere

chiarimenti, tanti avevano qualcosa di non conforme. Di solito venivano da soli, anche senza il consulente. (..)' (C.d.R. Commercio e Attività Produttive of the Municipality of Verona, February 3rd 2010, Verona)

(38) 'Assolutamente sì [c'è stato un contatto diretto con il Comune], sia con noi che con l'ufficio commercio. Anche i vari controlli che si sono susseguiti ne hanno risentito. Il numero di sanzioni anzitutto è crollato ma soprattutto vi è la volontà di seguire attentamente le indicazioni. Tenga conto che i nostri ormai sono controlli di routine. Loro sanno che ormai noi stabilmente due tre quattro volte in un anno andiamo a verificare se registrano i clienti, se hanno le varie autorizzazioni della questura. Loro sanno che c'è un'attenzione da parte dell'Amministrazione.' (Comandante of the Local Police, January 21st 2010, Verona)

(39) 'Non abbiamo avuto grandissimi risultati… l'incontro con il questore in parte è in andata in porto in parte no perché c'è stata maggiore chiarezza ma non ancora abbastanza… e così siamo temiamo ancora i controlli perché non sappiamo come possono andare. Ma noi non desistiamo! Ci riproveremo!' (phone centre-owner, November 6th 2008, Modena)

(40) 'Abbiamo cercato di agire il più pacificamente possibile (…). Abbiamo solo cercato di fare capire che se questo continua così noi non accetteremo più pacificamente tutto perché se ha ragione di essere ok ma non è possibile che noi dobbiamo subire subire subire e se va avanti così magari cercheremo anche di coinvolgere gli stranieri.. non vorremmo arrivare a delle rivolte ma se è necessario….' (phone centre-owner, December 30th 2008, Modena)

(41) 'I gestori adesso devono pensare ad azioni pratiche! Va bene fare politica, i gestori ci tengono a portare avanti i diritti degli immigrati, è chiaro, ma solo quando non hanno everyday practical problems possono farlo.' (phone centre-owner and member of the Comitato gestori di phone centres, December 14th 2008, Verona)

(42) 'Puoi aver problemi con qualche cliente (…) cioè, quando trovi il clandestino o la persona che cerca di svincolare al controllo appena ti vede arrivare è chiaro che inanzitutto non è bello se ti scappa (…) perché ne va della tua credibilità. Non puoi andare a fare un controllo facendoti prendere in giro. È il mio mestiere! Non è un'affermazione così banale. È estremamente difficile riuscire a vedere all'interno di un locale tutto e tutti (…) e tutto

ciò che ti scappa la volta dopo sta sicuro che lo ritrovi. È come se tu gli avessi dato un lascia-passare (…). Tra i criteri dei locali [dei phone centres] c'è quello della sorvegliabilità quindi blocchi la porta, controlli i documenti di tutti, fai gli altri controlli, ridai i documenti.' (Inspector of the Local Police, April 24th 2009, Modena)

(43) 'Può essere giustificato il fatto di identificare le persone e può trovare una sua razio il problema è come viene applciata e interpretata la normativa e come vengono fatti i controlli…'. (lawyer, May 20th 2009, Verona)

(44) 'Perché molto dipende dagli esercenti, dai titolari perché se il titolare comincia a far la voce grossa o gestisce la cosa in un certo modo va tutto a posto, se il titolare se ne frega perché gli fa anche gioco averli fuori la gente così perché gli fa una telefonata in più invece che in meno… però poi ne paga anche le conseguenze perché quando poi mi diventa un problema di ordine e sicurezza pubblica io lo chiudo applicando naturalmente la norma *ad hoc* che prevede questo tipo di attività.' (Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa of the Questura of Verona, December 16th 2008, Verona)

(45) 'Serve un intervento organico, con due o tre pattuglie [riferendosi a vari corpi di polizia] (…). Noi ci assicuriamo che non ci siano irregolarità dal punto di vista normativo e amministrativo, poi controlliamo che vengano rispettate le varie norme del settore.' (Local Police Inspector, November 21st 2008, Verona)

(46) 'Ci viene comodo fare i controlli insieme perché la problematica grossa di tutte le polizie municipali d'italia è la gestione dello straniero: che comporta un'identificazione formale, quindi foto segnalazione, impronte, ecc… fino a qua ci possiamo arrivare, siamo abilitati e lo facciamo dal nostro comando. Da lì in poi ci dobbiamo appoggiare a loro e secondo i canali ufficiali che utilizziamo normalmente comporta aggravi di lavoro per gli operatori e quindi diminuzione dell'efficacia perché vuol dire che in un giorno invece di 6 controlli ne fai solo uno.' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena)

(47) 'Noi le segnalazioni dei cittadini le riteniamo come prioritarie, cercando di capire che problema è e cosa fare. Questo lo facciamo per tutte le segnalazioni. Non è tanto di quel che fa una chiamata ma magari lo si mette in calendario e nessuno toglie che se si fa questo controllo (…). Cerchiamo di calibrare i nostri interventi in base alle richieste dei cittadini.' (Vice Comandante of the Local Police, November 21st 2008, Verona)

(48) 'La nostra programmazione prevede che i phone centre vengano controllati tutti un minimo di due volte all'anno, due volte all'anno è una cosa che non va a incidere più di tanto sull'attività. Considerando che è un'attività con licenza del questore diciamo che è una media che ci può stare. Si dà comunque priorità a quelli da cui provengano la maggior parte delle segnalazioni.' (Local Police Inspector, April 24th 2009, Modena)

(49) 'Il discorso è che c'è ancora confusione nei discorsi di phone centre. Io come ti parlo, parlo anche così alla polizia. Loro sai cosa mi dicono? X, noi non sappiamo niente, dobbiamo andare a fare il controllo. Addirittura l'ultima volta, pattuglia che vengono mi han detto mi hai dato il numero del loro capo e mi han detto: tu ogni settimana chiamalo, e dici: che novità c'è?' (phone centre-owner, June 14th 2008, Verona)

(50) 'Mamma mia, al mese vengono quasi 4 volte! Ci sono tutti che vengono: Finanza, Carabinieri, ogni mese, ogni volta tutti insieme, ogni volta uno alla volta. (…) E poi ogni volta polizia trova una scusa per darti una multa. Anche se trova clandestino fuori il negozio. Non gliene frega niente, ti fanno pagare le multe.'(phone centre-owner, June 26th 2008, Verona)

(51) 'Non so tanto italiano ma lo capisco ma sulla descrizione della multa la polizia ha scritto che sul marciapiede hanno trovato un clandestino (…) allora questa persona era lì per i suoi motivi. E questa cosa di clandestino è un problema di sicurezza pubblica. Noi abbiamo detto: ma questo era sul marciapiede ma non ho il diritto di chiedere i documenti ad una persona che è sul marciapiede. Chi sono io per farlo? Se lui è a rischio per la sicurezza pubblica allora cosa posso fare io?' (phone centre-owner, November 18th 2008, Modena)

(52) 'Oggi un terrorista dovrebbe essere stupido per fare delle chiamate in un phone centre. Tutti sanno che ci controllano di continuo.' (phone centre-owner, June 14th 2008, Verona)

(53) 'Quando è iniziato il boom dei phone centres e hanno cominciato a capire che ci andavano tanti immigrati, loro [polizia e Comune] hanno fatto queste misure repressive e il business ha cominciato a peggiorare. Le famiglie rispettose, e penso anche a immigrati regolari e italiani, non vogliono venire nei nostril negozio più perchè se vengono qui con figli e moglie e la polizia chiede loro i documenti e li perquisisce. Non è bello, ti assicuro,

non è un'esperienza che una famiglia rispettabile vuole fare e non vuole che lo sappia la comunità nemmeno.' (phone centre-owner, June 6th 2008, Verona)

(54) 'Quando è successo a me di essere lì [in un phone centre durante un controllo], ho visto entrare cinque poliziotti nel phone centre. Hanno chiesto subito a tutti di smettere quello che facevano, anche il gestore e ogni cliente. A tutti hanno chiesto di uscire dalla cabine, senza lasciare tempo di salutare la persona al telefono. Anche persone che erano là solo to accompany them were stopped. Anche children! Hanno chiesto a tutti loro ID e permesso di soggiorno. Così per un ora più o meno. Nessuno poteva uscire da negozio durante controllo. Non è divertente, sai!' (phone centre-customer, May 12th 2009, Modena)

(55) Quando arrivato Tosi è iniziato un'altra storia. (…) [Quella volta] è venuto quando sindaco di Verona. E c'era tutti. USL, finanza, polizia municipale, carabinieri, polizia… c'è tutti perché qua 9 macchine. Tutti insieme! Noi non c'è. C'era mia suocera, io fare spesa. Un mio amico mi ha telefonato e ha detto: 'C'è tanti poliziotti nel tuo negozio'. Ho guidato molto veloce sono arrivato e una cosa strano: quasi 15 persone! (…) Ho detto: 'Ma perché?' Ho tornato, ho visto Tosi con la sua giacca ed ho pensato: 'Mamma mia, oggi è ultimo giorno!' Ho guardato tutti. Tosi ha aperto la bocca ed ha detto: 'Chiudi il negozio subito!' (…) Ho preso un po' di latte per mio figlio, un po' di cose, ho preso monete… e allora ho chiuso. È c'è gente [clienti], quasi… 30 persone. Io piangere. Io, bimbo, bimba e moglie manda noi fuori come animale. (…) E loro andato via. Non so cosa devo fare. (phone centre-owner, May 16th 2008, Verona)

(56) '[Loro] perdono tempo a inspect phone centres e crimini grossi ci sono in giro da altre parti.' (phone centre-customer, June14th 2008, Verona)

(57) 'Quando vengono a fare i controlli ci trattano come se fossimo già colpevoli di qualcosa. Non hanno rispetto per noi, per niente proprio. (…) Loro vengono dentro, chiudono la porta e colui che è dietro al bancone lo mettono da una parte… sono loro che devono così.. ti mettono un ambiente di paura, di panico… nessuno può far niente, nessuno si muove… .' (phone centre-owner, November, 21st 2008, Modena)

(58) 'Non hanno mai trovato niente fuori posto, mai dato multa a me. Io sono fortunato. Credo che, qui in Italia, se polizia vuole dare una multa loro trovare sempre qualcosa anche inesistente, così danno multa.' (phone centre-owner, April 28th 2009, Modena)

(59) 'Diciamo che adesso si è un attimo pacificata la situazione (…). Ci è voluto un periodo di rodaggio… (…) ci sono degli investimenti e nel momento in cui vengo e ti chiudo per un mese, beh … ci pensi bene [prima di non identificare i clienti]. Così come non diventa pagante prestarsi ad un certo uso delle apparecchiature perché basta che io ti becchi una volta e ti dò una mazzata che ti passa la voglia… insomma per… il futuro.' (Dirigente Polizia Amministrativa of the Questura of Verona, December 16th 2008, Verona)

(60) 'Non prendono seriamente il Giudice di Pace, non lo considerano come un giudice vero (…) E poi i controlli dipendono dalla politica fatta. La polizia dipende dal Prefetto che deve seguire la politica (…). L'ho toccato con mano quando ho avuto contatto con il Prefetto di Verona.' (Lawyer, December 1st 2008, Verona)

(61) 'E' il governo che deve controllare e gestire i clandestini! Io non dovrei chiedere loro documenti, e sicuro non permesso di soggiorno! Chi sono io per non fare entrare loro nel mio negozio? Non sono e non voglio essere poliziotto! Forse entrano e chiedono solo informazione, vengo per trovare amico, per usare bagno! E se hanno bisogno di usare il telefono o internet, come altre persone possono fare perché non dovere lasciare loro? Non sono criminali!' (phone centre-owner, May 27th 2008, Verona).

(62) 'Perchè fanno arrivare clandestini a Lampedusa, danno loro pane e acqua e poi lasciano perdersi in città, invece di fare come Inghilterra e Spagna dove mandano loro di ritorno o aiutano loro a trovare lavoro e danno documenti? Voglio che risponda a queste domande il Comune! Perchè in questa situazione vengono e cercano clandestine in mio negozio? Prima fanno entrare loro e poi se vengono in questa città and in mio negozio deve essere mia colpa?(…) Ma non è 100% giusto perchè quando un clandestine vive in un paese questo decreto non aiuta in positivo … se sono clandestine e non ho documenti validi [con riferimento a permesso di soggiorno] ho bisogno ancora di vivere giorno per giorno. Ho bisogno di andare in negozi, non solo in phone centres.' (phone centre-owner, December 2nd 2008, Modena).

(63) 'E poi non è giusto che certi lavori vengano delegati. La sicurezza dei cittadini non è il nostro lavoro e quindi non è giusto che ci venga accollata questa cosa (…) Poi per i controlli mettono in piedi delle strategie e cercano di beccare periodi in cui pensano di beccare più stranieri… se sanno che c'è stato più afflusso di stranieri e lo fanno apposta per venire e trovare chi non è in regola.' (December 12th, Modena)

(64) 'Se clandestini vanno in un supermercato, invece che phone centre, non chiedono loro documenti e sono lasciati in pace. Perchè la polizia non prova a prendere clandestine in strada invece di insistsere con phone centres e fare gente uncomfortable? (phone centre-owner, December 11th 2008, Modena).

(65) 'Io so what it means when they stop you and search you, anywhere, quando tu cammini solo per strada, solo perchè hai faccia da straniero o solo perchè sei sfortunato essere là (...) Tu suddenly sentire allarmato, anche se hai documenti validi o aspetti rinnovo permesso soggiorno' (phone centre-owner, November 17th 2008, Verona).

(66) 'Perchè non chiudono semplicemente my business? Stanno facendo questo comunque! Se alla fine mi costringere a chiudere e f*** up my business, investimento di tutta mia vita, prometto che brucio il negozio e mostro loro che non sto lì senza fare niente!'. 'Sono così stanco di avere sempre paura ... non sai mai quando viene nuovo controllo (…) non sai quando nuovo regolamento arriva... . ' (phone centre-owner, June 14th 2008, Verona)

(67) 'Io sempre molto attento e faccio sicuro che controllo tutti nel mio negozio. Se clandestino entra io mando loro via. Se clandestino fuori da mia porta negozio li mando via anche lì. Non capisco perché io devo responsabile per questo ma se polizia viene e trova loro qui dà colpa a me e mi dà multa e io corro rischio che mio negozio sia anche chiuso.' (phone centre-owner, August 10th 2008, Verona).

(68) 'Io ho cercato di gestire quest'attività per evitare che ci fosse troppa gente che staziona anche in virtù di ciò che mi è successo [fa riferimento alle multe prese] (…) comunque la concentrazione, lo stazionamento della gente non mi piace perché poi si ha confusione e semmai stanno fuori e quelli che sono sopra si lamentano li disturbano e non li vogliono e qui più si muovono meglio è che si evitano anche problemi con il vicinato...' (phone centre-owner, November 18th 2008, Modena)

(69) 'Da quando ho questo negozio non ho mai sentito di phone centre coinvolti in qualche modo nel terrorismo, a parte un phone centre a Roma. (...) Comunque, va bene per me se il governo fa una legge control il terrorismo per proteggere i cittadini dalla minaccia del terrorismo. E sono felice di aiutare il Paese in questo se posso fare qualcosa in questo senso. Ma visto che tutti sappiamo da dove viene il terrorismo perchè non ci chiedono di

registrar solo le persone di una specifica nazionalità? (phone centre-owner, December 11th 2008, Modena).

(70)'Comunque ti dico è servito e serve perché anche quando abbiamo avuto gli incontri con l'assessore… se vai là e se un'associazione bene o male ti considerano. Se vai tu singolarmente come gestore di phone centre, beh… poi quando dici la parola magica 'phone centre' ti guardano tutti come se avessi la peste… Abbiamo creato l'associazione perché è un punto di forza. (…) Magari ora quello che aiuterebbe tantissimo è un po' coinvolgere oltre ai gestori anche gli stranieri stessi o i cittadini della città per far conoscere quello che sta accadendo per dire che siamo vittime dell'ingiustizia… per avere una voce in più a nostro favore, magari organizzare degli incontri non solo tra noi ma anche con loro...' (phone centre-owner and member of IP Associati, March 30th 2009, Modena)

(71) 'Senza costui [il Presidente di Internet Point and phone centre associati] noi non ci saremo mai occupati di loro[phone centre] perché non li avremmo manco mai contattati. C'era stato un questionario nazionale mandato anche a loro per intercettarli come nuove imprese. Hanno fatto il questionario tre o quattro anni fa e poi non hanno fatto seguito per non scontentare altri soci.(…) Nonostante quindi una politica di adesione rivolta esplicitamente al coinvolgimento degli imprenditori stranieri, resta tuttavia problematica per noi l'inclusione nell'associazione del settore dei phone centre. Tali attività attirano infatti la diffidenza e la contrarietà. (…)[Li abbiamo aiutati] in modo laterale cioè informale dando sale e aiutandoli a costituirsi come organismo e ad eleggere un presidente, però facendo un po' tutto sottobanco evitando il rigetto di categorie da parte nostra. (…) Non sono piccoli imprenditori a creare problemi, né artigiani, né industriali, ma commercianti.' (Secretary Lapam, March 4th 2009, Modena)

(72) 'Io li aiuto come volontario, non voglio nessun pagamento per questo, lo faccio solo per dare una mano e lo faccio volentieri. Io sono abbastanza apposto con il lavoro perché ho anche altri lavoretti.' (Bengalese phone centre-owner, December 19th 2008, Modena)

(73) 'Di solito aiuto molto perchè la nostra religione ci insegna di aiutare gli altri. Ora ho poco tempo ho casini miei e tra poco torno in Senegal e non riesco ad andare alle riunioni.' (Senegalese phone centre-owner, September 5th 2009, Verona)

(74) 'Tanti non si interessano di queste cose. Tanti ghanesi, per esempio, sono cristiani evangelisti e frequentano le chiese e i loro pastori dicono: 'tu lascia perdere, cerca di occuparti della tua famiglia e non cercano di capire perché succede questo o quello'. Poi il fatto è che per non rischiare di perdere il lavoro accettano di tutto. (Ivorian phone centre-owner, May 2nd 2009, Verona)

(75) 'Io penso ancora che serve [mobilitarsi]. Il problema è che secondo me, il problema degli immigrati… io uso le mie analisi per quello che so dell'Italia, di politica… i trattamenti che noi subiamo, il posto che la società italiana ti lascia è una cosa voluta dalla politica nazionale, dai media, che alla fine educano il popolo italiano a trattare gli extracomunitari in questo modo (…) A volte penso anche perché questo Paese non ha tanto da offrire neanche alla gente di qua e quindi diventa pesante pensare che qualcosa venga dato agli stranieri. E non vedo niente che venga fatto per contrastare questo… ' (Mamodou, May 2nd 2008, Verona)

(76) 'Sono contenta dell'associazione ma ci vorrebbe ancora più partecipazione… più che altro perché sono nuova e quindi non posso imporre, non sempre ci sono tutti i gestori però man mano che mi conoscono magari faccio sapere il mio punto di vista. Si potrebbe fare molto di più, siamo solo all'inizio. Bisognerebbe anche motivare i gestori a partecipare in modo più unito anche perché è difficile che tutti siamo d'accordo su qualcosa e bisogna far capire che è l'unico modo per venirne fuori. Io vado avanti!' (phone centre-owner and member of IP Associati, December 29th 2008, Modena)

(77) 'Poi la mentalità è sempre quella di Tosi. Io di Tosi ne parlo sempre male perchè lui mi ha detto delle bugie e fino a adesso a me non piace. Ci siamo visti allo stadio, mi ha detto: 'Io, se prendo Verona, qua lavoriamo tutti insieme, non c'è colore (…)'. Quindi se lo vedo la prima cosa che gli dico: 'Tu sei un bugiardo!' Non me ne frega niente. Ho visto che ha solo usato gli immigrati. Quando si parla di sicurezza, soprattutto quei vecchi che non fanno niente, quando vedono uno dicono: 'Mamma mia, guarda questi tanta gente! Tutti criminali!' E non è così. Ha vinto per quello. Cosa vuoi che facciamo noi [gestori di phone centre]?' (Mamadou, December 30th 2008, Verona).

(78)'Non sono convinti di fare ancora qualcosa perché questa gente [police offices and the mayor] quando si alza la mattina e vogliono farti chiudere chiudono. Così, senza legge, non gliene frega niente della legge.' (Mamadou, June 6th 2008, Verona)

(79) 'Sotto casa mia in contemporanea ha aperto una pizzeria di un ragazzo tunisino e un phone centres di in indiano lì accanto. Praticamente in pochi mesi si è creato il bronx sotto casa! Uno perché la pizzeria in realtà non era una pizzeria perché nessuno ha mai visto uscire una pizza o un fornitore portare niente. E non si capiva cosa facessero. Di fianco ha aperto questo phone centre… tenevano aperto fino alle 22, vendevano alcolici a prezzi abbastanza contenuti e quindi soprattutto gente dell'est, perché sotto casa mia il problema è nato con quelli dell'est, i moldavi soprattutto, han cominciato a sceglierla come sede loro, come quartier generale. Quindi tutte le sere erano lì, andavano a urinare nei giardini della gente, buttavano le birre nei giardini. (…) Poi andavano un po' dal phone centre, un po' dal pizzaiolo, che era loro amico, poi magari musica alta. Più che altro era un degrado che era venuto fuori. Questo è iniziato più di un anno fa.' (resident, December 4th 2008, Modena)

(80) 'Il conflitto va avanti da un anno, direi. [Si tratta di lamentele] assolutamente puntuali rispetto a quella zona [riferimento a Via Rossa], a quel negozio (…). È emerso un singolo problema ma quando riemerge il livello di tolleranza cambia… Arrivavano lamentele scoordinate tra loro alla circoscrizione o alla polizia municipale (…) quindi problematiche di convivenza di vicinato e cose di questo genere piccoli segnali di necessità di manutenzione, parlare forse di degrado è un po' eccessivo. Nello specifico questo in Via Rossa crea problemi per concentrazione di persone ma è la mera presenza dello straniero crea disagio. (…) Se poi si pensa a certi contesti urbanistici che non si prestano proprio… cioè piccola strada tipicamente residenziale con forte concentrazione, difficoltà di mobilità… non è tanto il phone centre di per sé ma tutta la situazione attorno (…).' (President of the Circoscrizione, December 3rd 2008, Modena)

(81) 'Al parchetto c'era gente che si tirava giù i pantaloni (…) facevano i loro bisogni nei giardini delle persone… (…) Poi questi dell'est che io ormai non li tollero più. In più noi avevamo in quartiere un parco che c'è davanti alla chiesa di S. Agnese che è il parchetto in cui sono cresciuto (…) quasi tutte le sere vado lì in compagnia. Le stesse persone [che si trovavano davanti al phone centre] erano anche lì. Si era creata questa situazione intollerabile nel quartiere perché la gente faceva quello che voleva.' (resident, December 4th 2008)

(82) 'Nel 2007 in primavera si sono fatti i lavori (il Comune) per sistemare la piazza. I giardini sono sempre stati un punto di ritrovo anche perché accanto alla chiesa tradizionalmente nei quartiere la gente si trovava. Negli anni 80 era diventato il punto di

riferimento per gente che … (…) quella [statua della]Madonnina lì ne ha viste di tutti i colori. Tanti giovani sono morti per overdose. (…) [Questo quartiere ha] la fama del Bronx! In quel periodo si è creato un gruppetto di italiani sui 40-50 anni (…) dicevano che non si drogavano più ma bevevano. Li avevano cacciati da tutti i bar del quartiere perché li conoscevano e non erano più autorizzati a bere o andavano a comprarsi da bere al supermercato. Poi hanno scoperto che il phone centre era anche più economico. Compravano lattine o bottiglie e la bevevano lì. Spesso la mattina si trovava il deposito nei giardini. E non erano immigrati, ghanesi o nigeriani ma italianissimi. Nel fine settimana si vedevano anche africani perché durante la settimana lavoravano e tornando alle 6 di sera visto che era scuro non andavano. (…) Io avendo abitato lì dico che il problema non erano assolutamente loro.' (priest, May 16th 2009, Verona)

(83) 'Quando tensione al negozio, io chiudo immediatamente. Quando c'è troppa confusione nel giardino io chiamare polizia. Loro dicono io dovere parlare con chi disturba e chiedere loro di abbassare voce ma rispondono che non cavoli miei. Area verde è pubblica e accesso è per tutto libero! Io non posso impedire gente – tanti sono italiani – comprare birra da mio negozio e si fermano lì. Non è facile nemmeno per me'. Loro [residenti] pensano mio negozio fa problem. Ma io visto loro [i clienti problematici]. Loro vengono e comprano qualcosa. Poi fanno 'business' [spaccio di droga] fuori, in parco. Io denunciato questo a polizia. (…) Non mia colpa se loro ubriachi, se loro disturba! Io faccio solo mio lavoro e vendo cibo e bere. Io anche aiutare loro perché usano mio bagno! O pisciano fuori. Fino anno scorso non c'era neanche panca per sedere, nel giardino' (phone centre-owner Via Bianca, May 18th 2008, Verona)

(84) 'Venivano da me perché sanno che sono qui da tanto e che sono Consigliere in Circoscrizione. Mi hanno visto il giorno che hanno chiuso il phone centre perché ero con il sindaco e con i vigili e quindi hanno visto che sono la persona che conosce la situazione. E con chi vado a sfogarmi? Con qualcuno che ha contatti con il sindaco e le forze dell'ordine.' (shopkeeper and Consigliere of the Circoscrizione, April 16th 2009, Verona)

(85) 'Io ho cercato subito di mettermi in dialogo nel senso che mi sono fatta subito rispettare e tutto sommato mi hanno portato rispetto. Ho cercato di parlare con loro. Ho fatto delle petizioni perché era giusto che ci fosse… mi sono resa conto che non era stato il loro problema ma di chi gli ha dato licenza di aprire due phone centre in una via così… erano per ordine pubblico perchè c'era gente che litigava. Ma sono stati i condomini [del

condominio sopra al phone centre] più che altro a raccoglier firme e l'hanno presentata direttamente in Circoscrizione, non hanno costituito un comitato'. (shopkeeper, April 22nd 2009, Verona)

(86) 'Sembrava che poi l'unico problema del quartiere fosse quello lì e quindi ogni giorno polizia, carabinieri, guardia di finanza venivano chiamate dai residenti, da qualche (sottolineato) residente. (…) È stato auto-esaltare un problema che da piccolo è diventato grande.' (parish priest, May 16th 2009, Verona).

(87) '[Ci siamo chiesti] È giusto e normale che quel posto [con riferimento al phone centre] diventi un punto di aggregazione e che lo diventi perché non ce n'è un altro che possa svolgere bene le proprie funzioni di aggregazione? Forse questa è la domanda che ci dobbiamo porre!' (President of the Circoscrizione, December 3rd 2008, Modena)

(88) 'Si è iniziato con fare qualche intervento per mostrare ai cittadini, con interventi spot ma concreti, come aumentare l'illuminazione o spostare la panchina e cose di questo genere, insomma piccoli interventi di riqualificazione, che eravamo attenti alle loro richieste. Nel frattempo sono state messe in cantiere iniziative più sistematiche. Una di queste, per mera coincidenza, è quella sulle mediazione della residenza e sul tema della casa. È entrata anche a far parte di un progetto regionale. Tra gli interventi c'è stato quello del coinvolgimento di punto d'accordo e in altre occasioni c'è stato il contatto con i cittadini. (…) Subito dopo le ferie [di natale] faremo un'assemblea specifica con i cittadini per fare il punto e presentare il progetto a 360 gradi.' (President of the Circoscrizione, December 3rd 2008, Modena)

(89) 'Anche gli sgarri minimi devono essere segnalati perché gli occhi sono puntati. (…)Hai dei periodi in cui si riesce a convivere meglio, degli altri in cui succede qualcosa. Poi sai quando le persone hanno l'attenzione focalizzata diventano ipersensibili e quindi qualsiasi miglioramento non viene notato perché rientra nella normalità, al primo sgarro tu hai ancora addosso tutto il vissuto precedente e torni ad arrabbiarti come se non fosse mai successo niente. (…) Questa è un po' la difficoltà della mediazione territoriale in genere.' (Officer responsible for mediation projects, December 12th 2008, Modena)

(90) 'Ne abbiamo fatto parte nella misura in cui era utile avere modo di contattare, in modo morbido i gestori, e quindi non con la polizia municipale tout-court, e nel momento in cui

c'era bisogno anche di mediatori per interloquire con questi gestori.' (Officer responsible for mediation projects, December 12th 2008, Modena)

(91) 'C'è un gruppo che ha provato ad impegnarsi nel sociale (…) Da lì c'era questa specie di catalizzatore per le persone sensibili a certi temi. Quando il parroco è partito per la missione e poi per una serie di difficoltà di trovare un leader, un obiettivo comune, questo gruppo si è un po' sfaldato rimanendo in contatto solo a livello informale per un po' di tempo. Poi nel nel 2004, abbiamo iniziato una nuova avventura di una festa legata alla parrocchia come spazi come fondamento ecc e comunque voleva essere in generale una festa di quartiere. Ci teniamo a chiamarla festa e non sagra per qualificarla per qualità e proposta ecc. in questa ottica di qualità di proposta abbiamo sempre pensato di dargli un tema portante. Negli anni, nei primi anni, la linea guida è stata la pace che abbiamo interpretato sotto vari punti di vista ospitando persone, approfondimenti, ecc. Uno dei temi toccati è stata la pace interna al quartiere cioè l'integrazione sostanzialmente visto che stava nascendo in modo evidente il problema (…) con il primo phone centre (…) Beh in sostanza abbiamo iniziato con questa scusa della festa ad entrare nel merito dei rapporti interpersonali tra immigrati e italiani (…). Con questo tema si è anche detto che era abbastanza ridico fare un discorso sull'integrazione senza coinvolgere gli africani e quindi abbiamo pensato, così molto informalmente, di approcciarli, andando a spiegare le nostre intenzioni (…) e capire da loro cosa poteva essere l'argomento di interesse per incontrarci. Ci siamo visti un bel po' di volte e da questa cosa è nata una prima serata (…) in cui praticamente abbiamo fatto una specie di mondiali di calcetto (…). C'erano Ghana, Nigeria e Italia e lì abbiamo capito che non potevamo affrontare alla leggera la cosa. Poi sono intervenuti i capi riferimento delle associazioni locali. Questa prima esperienza (…) è stato un successo travolgente nel senso che abbiamo avuto un'affluenza incredibile. (…) Quel giorno ci è servito per fare un bagno di realtà. Non è tutto così facile e neppure così logico approcciarci direttamente senza avere una preparazione (…). Ma avevamo già iniziato a preparare una seconda serata (…) avevamo invitato un gruppo di musicisti africani e la comunità (…) ci siamo approcciati un po' con… vi organizziamo noi la cosa e non è piaciuto proprio per niente. (…) Abbiamo fatto qualche errore 'culturale' nella scelta del gruppo. Diciamo che dopo abbiamo avuto qualche mese di difficoltà nei rapporti di relazione perché uno dei gestori di phone centre si è un po' risentito. (…) Il nostro punto di crescita di gruppo è stato lì. Cioè abbiamo iniziato a ragionare su cose molto più complesse cioè sui tipi di modi di rapportarsi. Abbiamo coinvolto anche un mediatore africano per presentarci le realtà (…). Poi abbiamo organizzato vari incontri per capire

esattamente quali erano le loro esigenze. (…) Da lì purtroppo è successa una cosa che ha superato le nostre teste. (…) Si sono incrinati fortemente i rapporti tra loro e la comunità veronese per una serie di attacchi che hanno cominciato a subire da parte della comunità italiana (…) e con controlli tutti i giorni da parte della polizia.' (Mediator, April 29th 2009, Verona).

(92) 'Si sono uniti in comitato a partire dal percorso che abbiamo fatto noi. Il gruppetto era partito benissimo e, ad un certo punto, aizzato da un personaggio che si è messo in politica, ha fatto un comitato. È uscito completamente dalle logiche del percorso che avevamo impostato, che era di dialogo, mediazione (…). Noi abbiamo fatto sicuramente i nostri errori (…). Loro praticamente hanno continuato e continuano tuttora a dare queste letture… a strumentalizzare i mezzi di informazione.' (Officer responsible for mediation services, December 12th 2008, Modena)

(93) 'No, no, no, assolutamente non mi sono mai occupato di politica. Io sono sempre stato uno che gli piaceva comunque essere aggiornato (…) Poi questa cosa qui è nata… E' stato per il mio quartiere… anche perché non ho mai sopportato la gente prepotente e quindi vedere questa gente [con riferimento a campanelli di immigrati] qua io non riuscivo ad accettarlo, capito? Quindi ho cominciato a scrivere sui giornali, ci siamo trovati qualche volta con amici e vicini, ci siamo scambiati email e telefoni…' (representative of the neighbourhood committe in Via Rossa, December 4th 2008, Modena)

(94) 'Non ho mai trovato nessuno che mi desse contro, assolutamente. Mi ringraziano tutti per il lavoro che faccio, so che c'era stata qualche lamentela quando andavo sul giornale, ma penso fosse più che altro qualche proprietario di casa che voleva vendere e quindi non facevo un buon servizio…' (representative of the neighbourhood committe in Via Rossa, December 4th 2008, Modena)

(95) 'Quindi poi io una sera sono andato a discutere con questi ragazzi qua e poi per un periodo quando scendevo mi offendevano… per fortuna non è mai successo niente però insomma. Loro sono stati aggressivi, in nessun modo collaborativi.' (representative of neighbourhood committe in Via Rossa, December 4th 2009, Modena)

(96) 'Gli ho detto [al gestore di Via Rossa]: 'Almeno prova a togliere gli alcolici, non ti dico di chiudere'. 'No, no, no, finchè io posso vado avanti', mi ha risposto. A parte che era anche molto aggressivo quindi ho capito che non c'era nessun tipo di ascolto. Un altro in via x (name) (…), invece, mi ha dato ragione, ha messo anche un cartello fuori sulla questione dell'alcohol, che non è legale, ma almeno ha mostrato una certa sensibilità alla cosa... ha fatto un gesto che è anche simbolico ma fa capire che ci ha provato…' (representative of neighbourhood committe in Via Rossa, December 4th 2009, Modena)

(97) 'Colpa mia. Se succede qualcosa è sempre colpa mia. C'è un ragazzo italiano che abita in questa casa [il rappresentante del comitato cittadini di Via Rossa]. Lui ha scritto al Comune. Io gli ho detto tre o quattro volte che non fanno questo lavoro [i controlli] per me. Lui dice che i clienti fanno casino per colpa mia. Se vai in questura a controllare se mai hanno trovato davanti al negozio qualcosa che andava male, non trovi mai una riga di scrittura di qualcosa che non andava bene. Se qualcuno prende una birra e beve qui davanti io gli dico di no, non per la multa [per disturbo] ma perché dà fastidio a me e lo mando via. (…) Ha chiamato la polizia più volte dicendo che c'era casino e quando arrivava la polizia non trovava nulla. (…) Ci sono altre persone [qui nella via ad abitare] e non vengono mai nessuno [a lamentarsi]. C'è una signora anziana che abita qui sopra e non dice mai niente. Dovrebbe per prima dire lei qualcosa, abita qui. (…) E le signore qui vicino vengono sempre a comprare la roba. Mai mi hanno detto qualcosa. Ogni tanto c'è qualcuno che va da loro [nel loro giardino] e bevono birra. Io ho detto: 'Amico, fai quello che vuoi!', perché era lontano dal negozio. 'Se però bevi quando finisci non buttare [la bottiglia] nel loro giardino. C'è la mia pattumiera, ce n'è un'altra che ho messo io.' (phone centre-owner in Via Rossa, April 24th 2009, Modena)

(98) 'Comprano sempre cose qui nel mio negozio e mi chiedono sempre come stava il bambino quando ero incinta.' (phone centre-owner in Via Rossa, April 24th 2009, Modena)

(99) 'È diventato un paradiso terrestre. Sì sì… da quando, scusa il gergo, metodo Gentilini, hanno tolto le panchine sono spariti… non gli abbiamo eliminati si sono spostati perché non gli elimini però non fanno più questa aggregazione che crea problemi insomma.' (shopkeeper and Consigliere of the Circoscrizione, May 16th 2009, Verona)

(100) 'E' migliorata ma è ancora una situazione serena. Uno [phone centre] ha chiuso. In via x (name) abbiamo risolto e la gente è contenta ma di là dalla strada ora ce n'è un altro

ed ha cominciato con la stessa storia (…) Allora abbiamo installato le telecamere (…). Non abbiamo risolto, ci sono ancora controlli ma la gente è più tranquilla' (Consigliere of the Circoscrizione, April 17th 2009, Verona)

(101) 'Almeno adesso vedono che non dipende da noi [immigrati e phone centre].' (phone centre-owner, April 22nd 2009, Verona)

(102) '[I phone centre come attività] ha avuto un'evoluzione nel tempo ed ha avuto un impatto che per tante dinamiche è stato sentito dalla pancia della gente. (...) E' importante tener presente che basta che un'attività venga messa sotto i riflettori perchè in qualche modo problematica perchè tutte le attività della stessa categoria vengano descritte in modo altrettanto negativo e problematico. È quindi importante lavorare di più sull'immagine, anche se il solito problema è il fatto che le amministrazioni hanno poco tempo a disposizione (…). Si dovrebbero quindi avviare dei percorsi di conoscenza con i gestori [In particolare l'intervistato ha pensato di lavorare per la stesura di un codice etico] Sarebbe importante per far emergere non solo gli aspetti negativi ma anche positivi di queste attività e del loro tipo di gestione, così come sarebbe importante far emergere le responsabilità relative alla gestione piuttosto che all'utenza.' (Dirigente Servizio Interventi Economici, October 10th 2008, Modena).