



*Governing Urban Diversity:  
Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities*

## Urban Policies on Diversity in Milan, Italy

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## Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Overview of the political system and governance structure in Italy and Milan .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. <i>The political system and governance structure for urban diversity policy.....</i>	<i>6</i>
2.2. <i>Key shifts in national approaches to policy over migration, citizenship and diversity .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Institutional map in Milan .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<b>3. Critical analysis of policy strategies and assessment of resource allocations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. <i>Dominant governmental discourses of urban policy and diversity.....</i>	<i>15</i>
3.2. <i>Non-governmental discourses of urban policy and diversity .....</i>	<i>28</i>
<b>4. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>38</b>

## 1. Introduction

This report aims at assessing the role of diversity in urban policy in Italy, with a focus on the case of Milan. Even though we will provide a general overview of diversity discourses mentioning a number of different groups and targets, our focus will be mostly on in-migrant diversity. This is due mainly to the fact that – as interviews and policy documents analysis will show – there is no wide-scope, cross-sectoral, general and strategic discourse on diversity and its promotion in the Italian policy and public agenda. Instead, there is a plurality of fragmented discourses concerning specific groups and categories (e.g. in-migrants, Roma and in the Italian case also the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender<sup>1</sup> community, young people, women) that is reflected in an institutional fragmentation. The resulting fragmented policy practice is reinforced by a weak inter-institutional coordination at the horizontal level between departments and policy-specific organizations, usually referred to as “departmentalism” or “silo-culture”.

A similar fracture can be found also at the vertical level (between levels of government), and this may hinder the generalization of good practices (bottom-up) and the effectiveness of national guidance (top-down). Such a weakness is reinforced by the structure of funding and planning of diversity-related measures: they are usually short-term and unstable, thus hindering long-term visions. The subsections on resources in section 3.1. and 3.2. will address this issue.

Following these fragmented targets and policy arenas would result into a gruelling job. Therefore, we will focus just on in-migration diversities. They are explicitly linked to urban policies in interviews and documents and are a much-debated issue, a new and evolving challenge to Italy's political culture, national identity and welfare policy, thus more likely affecting the Italian discourse on diversity in the near future.

After contextualizing urban and diversity policy in Italy (chapter 2), we will critically analyse discourses on diversity in Milan (chapter 3). This analysis will be based on 15 interviews with key informants and documents issued by national and local actors on policy strategies and specific initiatives (see Appendix for details). The analysis will include both governmental (section 3.1) and non-governmental (section 3.2) views on the issue. The relationship between these two views is strongly influenced by the specific role played by non-governmental actors in policy networks and public-private partnerships: they not only implement diversity-related measures, but also contribute to their design, planning and even funding. The relevance of their role becomes evident when we go beyond the “big players” (like bank foundations), and consider small-scale grassroots groups in activating all sort of resources (e.g. also skills, time, social relations) that can improve the effectiveness of diversity policies. All of that implies an intense cross-referencing between sections 3.1. and 3.2. aimed at grasping the mutual influence the different actors exert in the construction of the discourses.

Our **main argument** is that, even if such a wide plurality of actors portraying discourses on diversity is not enough to build-up an explicit policy strategy, quite clear priorities and definitions preferred among most key informants and actors are emerging. This process, however, takes place more **implicitly and incrementally rather than by design**. Especially governmental actors mainly see diversity not as a resource but as a disadvantage that needs to be addressed through policies for equity and redistribution.

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<sup>1</sup> From now on: LGBT.

Social cohesion problems and the risks of ghettoization – mentioned by almost every interviewee – are considered the result of a diversity that needs to be addressed through an **integrationist/intercultural** approach. Diversity can find room in the public space, but mainly as an individual stance, while visibility of group diversity has to be attuned with the concerns (and cultural characteristics) of mainstream society. Diversity is therefore, welcomed especially if it is in a (subordinate?) relation with the majority.

Reference to an integrationist/intercultural approach is slowly declining, in particular at city and neighbourhood levels. There, especially non-governmental actors are paying a growing attention to policies aimed at the recognition of multiple voices and the creation of spaces of encounter, like for instance the creation of dedicated centres to fight discrimination and to make diversity visible. The general frame, however, stays mainly integrationist/intercultural.

## 2. Overview of the political system and governance structure in Italy and Milan

### 2.1. The political system and governance structure for urban diversity policy

Italy, though characterized by very relevant internal divides and diversities<sup>2</sup>, has been traditionally a unitary State. In the last decades, however, its governance structure changed toward a stronger regionalist frame (Kazepov, 2009). We can identify three weaves of decentralization: 1970s; 1990s; 2000s.

Italy started its decentralization process in the **1970s**, with the establishment of Regions and the devolution of some administrative responsibilities to municipalities (e.g. in the area of social assistance). This trend was limited by centralized public expenditure, controlling local financial autonomy and policy planning through severe budget constraints.

Centralized investment and redistribution policies, also aimed at addressing the gap between disadvantaged and successful areas of the country, proved not to be so effective: a low degree of institutionalization and institutional performance was coupled with a high degree of local variation. As a consequence of 1970s reforms, in the 1980s a wave of Regional laws devolved further tasks from Regions to Local Authorities (e.g. in social and labour policies), with an increase of institutional fragmentation (Kazepov, 1996; Fargion, 1997). Priorities of the Regions were hardly coordinated and different regional policy-making styles started to sum up to long-lasting territorial divides (Burroni 2001).

A renewed attention for the territorial dimension of public policies and for cities was back in the **1990s**. The establishment of the short-lived Ministry for Urban Affairs (1987-1993) was an effort to govern the process of devolution that started in 1990 with the framework law on Local Authorities. In 1993, the direct election of mayors was introduced and intra-city district councils were reformed first in 1990 and then in 1999<sup>3</sup>. Established in 1976, intra-city district councils foresaw innovative forms of political participation and civic engagement.

Between 1991 and 1996, new area-based tools were also defined to intervene on neighbourhoods and the urban fabric (mainly aiming at networking and public-private partnerships for redevelopment purposes) and for local development (mainly aiming at coordinating local labour and economic policies).

In 1997-98 laws reforming the public administration devolved many responsibilities to regions and local authorities, enforcing the principle of subsidiarity and reaching the maximum level of decentralization possible with the then-existing Constitution. Some 40 per cent of State functions were devolved to Regions, Provinces and Municipalities (Raimondo, 2001), with a cutback of external controls, the introduction of bargaining arenas between the State and local authorities and the increase of financial autonomy. At the same time, a concern for equality and rights

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<sup>2</sup> We can mention, in particular, the North-South divide, but also social class disparities, Italy being one of the Western European countries where social mobility is lower and inequality higher (Pisati and Schizzerotto 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The long-term outcome has often been a loss of role and of effectiveness in providing services and representation. We can see it in the case of Milan. The 20 local councils set in the 1970s were aggregated in 9 districts in a Bundt-cake shape – the “hole” being the city centre, and 9 slices putting together diverse semi-central, semi-peripheral and peripheral areas of the Municipality. These larger and mixed areas had less power and were less representative, not corresponding to existing neighbourhoods.

produced an attempt to provide general and policy-area framework laws (indicating roles and relations between different territorial levels), e.g. on childhood policies (1997), immigration (1998) and social services (2000). These framework laws created national earmarked funds, to be transferred to Regions according to national policy guidelines.

This coordination attempt was severely challenged by the **2001** Constitutional reform that paved the way to the most recent decentralization wave. The new institutional setting gave Regions the exclusive legislative power on all policy areas not listed as State responsibility in the Constitution itself (including social policy), and a concurrent legislative power in many other policy domains (e.g. education, planning). In addition, “metropolitan cities” – a new government level for the ten larger urban areas in Italy, including Milan, introduced by the 1990 Law on Local Authorities – entered in the 2001 Constitutional Reform. Aimed at providing a more coordinated planning and management of urban policies in metropolitan areas, where many tasks are up to individual municipalities,<sup>4</sup> and at substituting Provinces, their implementation has not yet started.

With the Constitutional reform, the traditional local fragmentation of Italian policy found a further source of institutional differentiation (Kazepov, 2008, 2010). The difficult implementation of the 2001 Reform led to highly conflictual relations between State and local authorities, as the dramatic increase of the number of appeals to the Constitutional Court shows (more than 100 in 2002). At the same time the opportunity to define national minimum standards of quality and policies in some fields (e.g. social policy) (Barberis, 2010) has not been taken up to now.

Within this frame, also the role of private actors was redefined. On the one hand the trend toward local autonomy, flexible local planning and the use of New Public Management tools brought about an increased market regulation within public policy (Gori, 2011). On the other hand, a growing formal acknowledgement of the role of voluntary associations, social cooperatives and association of social promotion took place from the 1990s onwards. This trend climaxed in 2000, when the framework law on social services granted social partners and NGOs the participation in local social planning.

Partnerships and multi-actor agreements were often required, in order to involve social parties and relevant stakeholders in the new policy programmes – be it social policy, development policy or urban regeneration measures. The laws passed from the 1990s onwards legitimize this change of paradigm as both an increase in social participation and an effort for more efficiency, while not rarely the involvement of private organizations has been necessary to complement scarce resources.

Notwithstanding this clear-cut path towards downscaling, the actual effectiveness of local policy-making has been jeopardized by the lack of a clear fiscal autonomy. The strong devolution to local authorities was accompanied by weak coordination tools, a relevant delegation to private (profit and non-profit, depending on the policy area) actors, an unclear funding – and a consequent fragmented governance and passive form of subsidiarity (Kazepov, 2008).

In recent years, we can acknowledge a renewed attention for coordination and worries for the territorial and institutional fragmentation associated with the regionalist devolution. From 2011, the political agenda started to prioritize the problem of cohesion and national standards: in urban policy, with the role given to the new Ministry of Territorial Cohesion (without portfolio) and the effort for a national plan for cities and for disadvantaged areas in welfare policy, with new inputs

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<sup>4</sup> The future Metropolitan City of Milan, and the present Province of Milan, has 134 Municipalities.

on national standards. However, no conclusions can be drawn yet, since these efforts are at an early stage of the policy process.

## 2.2. Key shifts in national approaches to policy over migration, citizenship and diversity

Italy is characterized by lacking explicit diversity policies. An exception – addressing internal minorities – was the establishment in the 1948 Constitution of five “special” regions (Sicily, Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia-Giulia) recognizing their cultural and/or linguistic specificity. The Constitution also protects religious<sup>5</sup> and linguistic<sup>6</sup> minorities at a very general level. A translation into positive rights is promoted – especially in the case of Alto Adige/Südtirol – through a quota system granting to the three main groups living there (German, Italian, Ladin) multicultural rights. The regulation of in-migration diversity is comparatively recent and due to late in-migration flows. Tab. 2.1. summarizes the key shifts in in-migration policies since the mid-1980s.

**Tab. 2.1: Summary of key shifts in national immigration policy**

Period	Main trends and laws	Discourses/approaches
Till 1985	No law regulating in-migrant diversity, but the Consolidated Law on Public Security (issued in 1931) and few international agreements	Non-policy
1986-1997	Setting the stage: first regulation and politicization of the issue; focus on racism and security; starting of long-lasting trends, e.g. matching of integration and security discourses; emergency management; mass regularizations. 1986: first law on immigration labour 1990: first law on immigration policy 1992: new citizenship law 1993: first anti-discrimination law 1995: decree on yearly quotas and deportation of undocumented migrants	Mainly guest worker policy, with nuances of integrationist/intercultural policy
1998-2001	Effort to build a national model of integration based on “interculturality” 1998 Consolidated law with more organic coping of immigration and immigrant policy 1999 Implementation rules of 1998 Consolidated law	Integrationist/intercultural policy, with nuances of guestworker policy
2002-today	Ambivalence between exclusionary and intercultural policy 2002 New restrictive immigration law + large regularization (650,000 persons) 2003 National Anti-discrimination Office (transposition of an EU Directive) 2004-2005 Decrees based on EU Directives on asylum seekers and refugees 2006 Ministry document on “the Italian way to intercultural education” 2008-2009 Security laws 2011 Appointed the first Minister for integration	Integrationist/intercultural policy, with strong nuances of guestworker policy

<sup>5</sup> Every denomination enjoys a set of constitutional rights. However, some religious groups enjoys multicultural rights according to specific agreements with the Italian State. The one with the Catholic Church (modified in 1984) is even mentioned in the Constitution. Between 1984 and 2007, the Italian State agreed understandings with Waldensian, Seventh-Day Adventist, Jewish, Baptist, Lutheran, Orthodox, Mormon, Buddhist, Hindu and two Pentecostal national institutions. The agreement with Jehovah's Witnesses has been signed but not approved by law yet.

<sup>6</sup> Even though the term used is “linguistic” minorities, the protection applies to ethno-cultural national minorities. As of today, according to a 1999 law, “historical” minorities officially protected are 12: Albanian; Catalan; German; Greek; Slovenian; Croatian; French; French-Occitan; Occitan; Sardinian; Ladin; Friulian. “Historical” means that not every person speaking one of these languages enjoys multicultural rights, but just those belonging to historically rooted groups (e.g. Albanian-speaking people is protected, but just those belonging to so-called Arbëreshë minority, that settled in Southern Italy between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century).

*Setting the stage: a brief outlook of migration flows to Italy*

In-migration grew substantially in the last two decades. Adding up foreign residents, non-resident regular stayers and an estimate of 400,000 undocumented migrants (Ismu, 2012) we totalize some 5 million foreigners that live in Italy today (8% of the population). They were 1.3 million ten years ago, and less than 400,000 in 1991 Census. Even though the economic crisis has been slowing down new entries, present-day numbers are still increasing. This growth has been paralleled by a swift change from a transient to a labour migration, and from labour to permanent settlement. Immigration to Italy is also characterized by a relevant plurality of origin countries, mostly not post-colonial: according to Istat,<sup>7</sup> nowadays Romanians account for 1/5 of foreign residents, while the first 5 nationalities (Romania, Albania, Morocco, China, Ukraine) account for some 50% of the total.

It is prominently a labour migration, mainly inserted in low skilled, low-wage, labour-intensive jobs, with features that place it within a “Mediterranean” model (King, 2000). Almost half of the migrant workforce is inserted in the tertiary sector, i.e. transport and storage industry for males and cleaning and care for women.<sup>8</sup> However, “*Italy is in a more advanced phase of the migration transition*” (Baldwin-Edwards, 2012: 150) than other Southern European countries: immigrants are employed also in industrial sectors – reflecting Italy's manufacturing specialization – and show growing figures even during the crisis. Immigrant's employment rate is still higher than natives'. Their unemployment rate is lower than the EU average, and not much higher than natives', too: in 2012, 12% for Italians and 14% for immigrants, according to Eurostat data.

However, Eurostat also shows that in EU-15 Italy is second just to Greece in the share of adults at risk of poverty and social exclusion – both for nationals and for foreigners (46% vs. 38,9%). This implies that foreigners are the weakest group of a weak labour market.

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<sup>7</sup> Data can be downloaded at: [http://demo.istat.it/index\\_e.html](http://demo.istat.it/index_e.html)

<sup>8</sup> The latter shows also that immigrants contribute to the welfare system as a stopgap solution to structural problems in the provision of services for children, families and the elderly (Tognetti-Bordogna and Ornaghi, 2012). Due to their socio-demographic characteristics, immigrants are also contributors of Italian welfare also in other terms: Italy is among the countries with the highest migratory net direct fiscal contribution (Oecd, 2013).

*Developments in immigration and diversity policy*

As an emigration country, immigration was not really an issue in the Italian political debate. For a long time a in-migration was just regulated by very discretionary norms included in the Fascist consolidated law on public safety (1931). We can identify a turning point of this state of affairs in the 1980s, when immigrants clearly outnumbered emigrants. At that time, as in other Mediterranean countries, immigration flows took place “*largely without planning and without a legal framework*” (Peixoto *et al.* 2012, 133).

After some circular letters in early 1980s and a first law in 1986, that unsuccessfully tried to regulate immigrants' access to the labour market, the first structured law on immigration was approved in 1990. These first laws had some liberal provisions (e.g. formal equal labour rights for those having a regular labour position), but were allocated with inconsistent resources and were translated in weak measures to implement them. This resulted in a limited equal access to any welfare provision. Some of the changes were aiming at reciprocity effects, i.e. to protect Italian expats by implementing international agreements on the rights of migrants (Barberis, Cousin and Ragazzi, 2009). The legacy of the country's “emigration” background can be traced in the 1992 citizenship reform – passed when immigration was already quite a hot issue in the political debate. In particular, its exclusionary character is even stronger than the then-operating 1912 law: strongly based on *jus sanguinis*, the 1992 law was aimed at easing naturalization of Italian expats and their descendants, but paved the way to the creation of a large number of denizens<sup>9</sup> with immigrant background in more recent years.

Immigration became in those years more and more an issue that needed to be regulated, with contrasting positions focussing on security and humanitarian issues. After some hate crimes – the first Italian anti-discrimination law was passed in 1993, showing signs of a change in the attention to diversity issues. In 1993, also the debate that led to the most organic law on immigration started (Einaudi, 2007). This law was approved in 1998 and has an explicit dual focus on security (restrictive immigration policy) and social integration (open immigrant policy), with an integrationist approach. The basic structure of this law is in force today: the following right-winged modifications in 2002 and 2008-2009 strengthened the restrictive side (reinforcing a guest-worker dimension of immigration policy, e.g. with shorter permits of stay, tougher family reunification rules, ...) without changing the section on integration rights. Though, the worsening of the political climate and of immigration policies produce an **actual** increase in restrictive practices in immigrant policies, in the access to social rights, notwithstanding **formal** social rights stayed almost the same. For example, with restrictive rules in the enrolment into the municipal registry (Gargiulo, 2011).

The political and media discourses towards immigration have seen a frequent negative politicization, usually associated with a media hype on undocumented migration and/or crime – with an influence on law enforcement and on the actual practices to diversity and immigration. This grounds the fact that policies for recognition – and not rarely policies for equity – have been often limited by a “control agenda” (Grillo and Pratt, 2002). Recently, this has been the case with migrant flows following the North-African and Syrian crises: the management of these cases showed that for some targets – e.g. asylum and refugee policy, voting rights and, in many respects, antidiscrimination policy – the Italian approach could be placed in-between a non-policy and a guest-worker policy.

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<sup>9</sup> We use the concept of *denizenship* in the wake of Hammar (1990): denizens are foreigners with a legal permit of stay but no access to citizenship rights.

In the meanwhile, new challenges, including the increasing naturalization rates (i.e. the growth of minorities with Italian citizenship) and the rise of new generations with immigrant backgrounds are now under debate – for they need a change in the public image of “Italianness” – and do not have yet a strong institutional recognition.<sup>10</sup>

To sum up, the overall outcome of the last 20 and more years of immigrant regulation is a system that considers migrants temporary in terms of immigration policy, while grants formal rights in many welfare areas, though with an inconsequential implementation and a very territorially fragmented policy-making (i.e. different regions implement different policies).

The continuity in policy-making throughout the years has been granted mainly by a “strange coalition” (Zincone 2006) that was able to put forward an agenda both at the national and local level, complementing security and control with social inclusion policies. This “strange coalition” included both civil society (especially Catholic institutions) and social parties (both trade unions and employers, see Zincone 2011)<sup>11</sup> and paved the way for areas of potential tensions emerging in particular from:

- a) the contradictions implicit in matching security and control concerns with humanitarian claims (expressed by NGOs and Catholic stakeholders) and functionalist perspectives (carried on mainly by pro-business social and political parties);
- b) an emergency-based management of migration fluxes, that characterizes also the frequent recourse to ex-post regularizations;
- c) the strong politicization of immigration issues, with a cleavage between left and right, that anyway resulted much less evident in the actual practices than in the public discourse;<sup>12</sup>
- d) the fundamental role played by civil society and local policy-networks in lobbying, but also programming and managing integration measures (Caponio 2006).

This complex situation resulted in a poorly defined “national model” and in a strong delegation to local actors that prevented a more structured and coherent State discourse on diversity and integration. Incrementally the policy puzzle created a more (e.g. in educational policy) or less explicit policy line, grounded in a refusal of foreign national models of integration, represented through a stereotyped version of the French-style *assimilationism* and the British-fashioned *multiculturalism*, in favour of an “intercultural” mid-way: an emerging integrationist model that we will analyse in the critical analysis below.

### *Institutional map in Milan*

Providing an encompassing map visualizing all policy networks in Milan – given the frame presented in the previous sections – would be a very complex endeavour. In this subsection we are providing a graphic representation of vertical and horizontal relations of policy networks, to show partnership (two-way arrows) and funding (one-way arrows) connections.

In the map we are reporting just actors and relations that a) have been mentioned by our interviewees and/or b) have been found in grey literature and background

<sup>10</sup> Access to citizenship is now an issue in the political debate, as we will see in section 3.1, after a two-year campaign called “L'Italia sono anch'io” [I'm Italy, too] aimed at easing naturalization of new generations with immigrant background. The appointment of the first black Italian minister, Cecile Kyenge, boosted the attention on this issue – as the racist tones used to oppose intercultural policies.

<sup>11</sup> See also Cetin, E. (2012) Exclusionary Rhetoric Expansionist Policies? Right-winged Parties and Immigration Policy-making in Italy. COMPAS Working Paper, 95.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the biggest regularization was decided by a right-winged government, while tough controls on undocumented migrants have been started by left-winged ones (including migrants' detention centres)

information/documents we collected. The map includes mainly actors working on urban cohesion, renewal and development, with an over-representation of those dealing with in-migrant-related cultural diversity. In general, we could say that actors located in the left side of the map are more concerned with in-migrant integration policy, while those placed on the right side are more about urban renewal and economic development.

Within this landscape, inter-institutional cooperation among public actors seems quite limited. Actors that relate to regional institutions or to provincial institutions do not necessarily relate also to the municipal ones, even though they all work at the city level. The lack of institutional coordination – a role that could be of the metropolitan city” layer that has still to be implemented – finds a working solution in the local networking that is visible in the map.

What emerges to be a relevant characteristic is the centrality of some non-governmental actors, mainly lying in what we can define a “Catholic pillar”, i.e. a group of close-knit actors characterized by a more or less explicit common background in religious institutions and affiliations. Even though this does not provide the full picture of the variety of non-governmental actors (Milan has a long-lasting tradition of secular organizations, the most notable in the map being Arci and Naga), the role of the Catholic pillar is quite evident. The Cariplo Foundation, that funded and/or partnered many initiatives of interest here, is a good case in point and we will provide further information in section 3.2. There is also a micro-level activism of neighbourhood associations – often considered important stakeholders by interviewees and policy documents – which play a very dynamic role also in translating discourses into practice.

It is interesting and important to see how different scales conflate at the local level. We have national non-governmental actors with very active local branches (e.g. Caritas and G2 Network). This shows one of the possible ways for national campaigns entering the local arena, as we will see in section 3.1. The map does not consider the European level for readability reasons, therefore the role of EU funds and priorities in supporting and shaping local policies may be less visible than it actually is. We will be back on this in chapter 3, when discussing the issue of resources. At that point it will become clear that some of the lines connecting for example national and local actors, or public and private ones, are related to the implementation of EU measures.



### 3. Critical analysis of policy strategies and assessment of resource allocations

Diversity as such is not thematised neither in relevant national and local policy documents nor by interviewed key informants in Milan.<sup>13</sup> Some interviewees consider the lack of a clear national discourse on diversity management a weakness that may affect also efficacy at the municipal level, since there is a weak frame in terms of rights and funding. As a municipal key official in Social Policy maintains:

*“a municipality can hardly affect issues concerning rights: from an administrative point of view, we can just act as a stopgap; from a political point of view we can just lobby on the competent institutional level [...]. At the national level, nothing happens. There's something going on in some cities”* (Respondent A1\_5).

Such a weakness is somehow reflected also at local level – as emerges from the institutional map above – where networks centred on the Regional, Provincial or Municipal administration rarely intersect, also due to the lacking metropolitan coordination.

We will provide a bird's eye view on the few relevant national and city-level documents that were issued in recent years, with the caveat that none of them provides a real ground for a general diversity policy. Conversely, they address only specific targets such as immigrants and Roma. No general memorandum addresses diversity as such and only a few national documents set a national model of integration for immigrants. This has ripple effects on actual initiatives, since such a weak strategy is matched with limited earmarked resources. At municipal level the only recent background institutional discourse can be traced back in the electoral programme of the coalition winning the municipal election in 2011. The local strategy emerges therefore more via approved initiatives rather than via a strategic plan, that is missing also according to key governmental informants.<sup>14</sup>

Given the fact that “diversity” is not an issue by itself in most of Italian policy-making arenas, we will ground our analysis mainly on our interviewees' **representation of diversity**. In general, we noticed some difficulties – especially in the views of key officials and policy-makers – to build up an explicit, articulated and reflexive discourse on diversity. Most interviewees are more keen at presenting projects and specific cases rather than to define a broad set of priorities in diversity relations and diversity management. Consequently, there are initiatives addressing diversity (or, at least, some types of diversity), but within a poorly explicit general frame.

In order to address this potential problem, we inquired our interviewees with common stimuli, eliciting their view on specific cases that have been at the centre of the local political and media debate as portraying diversity in an ambiguous way<sup>15</sup> and that are considered “best practices” at municipal level. Our questions aimed at understanding the principles underlying their opinion and arguments on positive and negative dimensions of such cases.

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<sup>13</sup> We interviewed 15 key informants: key officials, policymakers, policy strategists and experts, members of business organizations, local in-migrant associations and other NGOs active and relevant at city level. For details, see Appendix.

<sup>14</sup> See the quote from Respondent 1\_4 working exactly on strategic planning in Milan under “*The approach to diversity in different City Departments*” in section 3.1.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, we asked their opinion on the situation and policies in two much debated neighbourhoods: Via Paolo Sarpi, a middle-class area simplistically defined as the Chinatown of Milan that after tensions in 2007 was renewed; Via Padova, a working-class area with a high share of immigrant residents subject to a stigmatization process in the media and political arena.

We will account for the resulting analysis on governmental discourses in section 3.1, reporting the policy target our interviewees and policy documents focus on, providing also a differentiation among policy areas (needed to account for the silo departmentalism of policy-making). Then, in section 3.2. we will focus on non-governmental views, with a special attention on actors in the social economy and on the so-called “second generations”.

### 3.1. Dominant governmental discourses of urban policy and diversity

The mainstream view policy-makers have on diversity frames it more as a problem than as a resource. The nuances of the discourse change according to the type of diversity taken into account, being the most problematic when immigrant and ethnic diversity is considered. In general equity and equal opportunity policies aimed at reducing disadvantages associated with diversity are framed more positively than policies for recognition or favouring encounter. There are indeed some formal praises on diversity as enrichment, and of the need to create tolerance and to overcome conflicts in order to live in an urban environment. However, diversity is mainly seen as a negative issue “*to ride over*” (as said by Respondent A1\_6, a key official in the Municipal Labour Department).

*“What do you mean by diversity? Disadvantaged target groups and populations?”*  
(Respondent A1\_4)

*“Diversity is a problem beyond certain thresholds. There's an effort to look at immigration as an opportunity, but it causes problems that cannot be kept hidden.”* (Respondent A1\_3)

This state of affairs can be tied to the lack of an explicit discourse on diversity as a value in many policy areas. If we focus on urban policy, the link between urban and diversity policy is rarely explicit and systematic. We can analyse, for example, the National Plan for the Cities and the preparatory documents for the definition of an Urban Agenda (Comitato Interministeriale per le Politiche Urbane, 2013). This document hardly mentions diversity, and the same applies for the speeches held by competent ministers in presenting it. The most used keywords are innovation, growth, renewal, housing, environment, knowledge economy, but these concepts are never associated with positive or negative effects of diversity. Only when disadvantaged neighbourhoods are considered<sup>16</sup> diversity is mentioned in passing.

Given the fragmentation of territorial policy,<sup>17</sup> and the silo-culture in departmentalism practices we mentioned above, there are different administrations with responsibility on coping diversity at the local level. We cannot focus just on Urban Policy Departments at national and municipal level. If we think about in-migrant diversity, for example, the Ministry of Interiors (responsible for the allocation of the European Fund for the Integration of migrants)<sup>18</sup> issued some calls for local projects on diversity management at neighbourhood level.<sup>19</sup> These calls usually repeat European guidelines, without adding any national strategy or any support structure for the guidance and coordination of local projects. Moreover, since these projects usually last less than

<sup>16</sup> A partial exception can be found in specific programmes, e.g. the attention on inequality and social class in urban renewal programmes, or the attention on gender and generations in some mobility programmes.

<sup>17</sup> 'Actually, in our country we have a lot of policies in cities, but we haven't clear policies for the city'. Carlo Trigilia, Minister for Territorial Cohesion, 23rd September 2013. Speech held at the Inter-ministry committee for urban policies.

<sup>18</sup> From now on: EFI.

<sup>19</sup> See for example the report issued by Ernst & Young, Italian government's Financial and Business Advisor for the use of the Fund for the Integration of Migrants, on *Libertà civili* (4/11), the journal of the Ministry of Interior about immigration issues.

12 months, the outcome of this lacking regulation is a mere list of short-lived good practices, that never come up as building bricks for a comprehensive, national strategy. As a policy strategist working in a research agency critically underlines:

*“there's no strategic dimension – if not sporadically, with projects that (not by chance) are funded by European funds, not Italian ones. Integration policy in Italy is made up with money that don't come from Italy. There can be a political discourse that praises diversity, but without actual effects”* (Respondent A3\_1)

Nevertheless, formally an Italian model to diversity management has been outlined in relevant policy documents, an integrationist model that, with different nuances, is commonly defined as “intercultural”. The most detailed description of this model has been released in a document by the Ministry of Education and drafted by the National Observatory for the Integration of Foreign Pupils and for the Intercultural Education in 2007, *'The Italian Way for Intercultural Schools and the Integration of Foreign pupils'*.

*'Choosing an intercultural perspective means we don't limit ourselves neither to assimilation strategies, nor to offsetting measures for immigrant pupils. [...] The Italian way to interculture keeps together the ability to recognize and appreciate the differences, and the search for social cohesion, with a new idea of citizenship fitting the present-day pluralism, where a special attention is given to build up a convergence towards common values'*

A more conservative view (rather oriented to a “law and order” approach) of interculture can be found in recent documents, for example in the *'Plan for integration within security. Identity and encounter'*. Released in 2010 under the last Berlusconi government, it is the last general plan on diversity issues published by an Italian government. It is consistent with neo-assimilationist trends in present-day European policy-making on immigration issues, where the responsibility for integration is mainly individual, while the focus on systemic causes is considered 'ideological'.

*'We are suspicious of a cultural approach where the encounter takes place among social, ethnic and religious categories, ideologically freezing out individual responsibility in being responsible for the encounter with the other. [...] To build up a long-term civic engagement, in a context of growing social pressures, we can just rediscover in our past its basic conditions, revaluing our roots. [...] This vision, that we call Open Identity, [...] overcomes, on the one hand, the multicultural approach (according to it, different cultures can live together by staying juxtaposed and perfectly separated) and, on the other hand, the assimilationist approach, that aims at neutralizing traditions in the society, in favour of the hosting one'* (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Ministero dell'Interno, Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2010)

The main difference between the two documents and approaches, is that the second makes explicit what the common ground is (the national tradition), while the first one is ambiguous, leaving possibly more room to pluralism. This swaying among assimilation and pluralism in Italian interculturalism is exactly what is considered its weak point in the national literature, being implicitly both multicultural (though without recognition policies) and assimilationist (though without granting equality), thus leaving integration to everyday molecular relations (Bertolani and Perocco, 2013).

*Which diversity is taken into account?*

Given the above-mentioned negative framing of diversity, the targets mentioned by interviewees in governmental organizations usually lists quite a number of disadvantaged groups. This does not apply just to groups undergoing negative politicization and stigmatization (e.g. in-migrants,

Roma and in the Italian case also the LGBT community), but also to targets like the youth. Here, the main reference is to the disadvantage of NEETs, i.e. those Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and having difficulties on the housing market.

In this subsection, we will try to identify also voices that do not comply with this negative approach and see “policy targets” as potentially carrying positive consequences to local social cohesion and economy.

In this respect, the group most frequently mentioned by interviewees is made up by high-end **mobile people** that contribute to business-like fashion, design, import-export and foreign enterprises' headquarters.<sup>20</sup> The appreciation for mobile professionals is also the key to challenge the above-mentioned negative image of **young people**. The present local government, from the electoral campaign onwards, paid a specific attention on **tertiary students, researchers and young professionals** (i.e. the “creative class”) as a population that can enrich the city with talents and international connections. The discourse implies that, a more open city is needed to attract young people but, at the same time, that young people can help creating a more open city:

*“Intercultural policies increase the appeal of the city for the best wits coming from abroad, in a country that has problems with brain drain. We need to create opportunities for wits from outside”* (Respondent A2\_1)

More generally, **age** (and **generational**) diversity was not so explicitly labelled as a 'diversity policy' by our interviewees, but it entered into discourses and policy documents on the changes and challenges the city has to face:

*“It's telling that Milan – while growing old – is losing the ability to settle some conflicts [...] we are taking into consideration the fact that new generations and groups can work, use and live the city in a different way than the previous ones”* (Respondent A1\_4)

**Foreign immigrants** not belonging to the creative class, on the other hand, are hardly seen by interviewed policy makers as bringing a potentially positive contribution to the city. Again, the focus is mainly on inequality, discrimination and risks for social cohesion. We will anyway see below also signs of a cultural change taking place in some city-level initiatives, like the *City-World Forum*.

The biggest challenge to a vision of immigration-related cultural diversity as disadvantage is provided by the so-called “**second generations**”<sup>21</sup>. Indeed, more and more, young people from an immigrant background who grew-up and studied in Italy are challenging the public image of in-migrant minorities as low-skilled temporary labourers. They are an interesting case also because it shows how national and local issues conflate at the municipal level: the restrictive national citizenship law produces denizens, with social integration problems at local level. In turn, local associations and administration are lobbying for a change in the naturalization law, in the meanwhile appraising this emerging social group.

<sup>20</sup> We have to consider that Milan is the main international gateway of Italy, since it accounts for 30% of Italy's international trade in services and 40% of foreign enterprises' headquarters (Mingione *et al.* 2009).

<sup>21</sup> In this Report, we will use “second generations”, in plural and in inverted commas, since this is the more common use in Italian scientific and public debate. Hence, we are using it as an emic concept. Differently from the main strand of international literature, in Italy the concept is used in plural, to acknowledge its internal diversity. Without specification (none of our interviewees or policy document uses “second-generation immigrants” or “second generation of immigration”) and in inverted commas it is used to acknowledge that the concept is contested and that “second generations” are not immigrants, but at the same time not fully included in other categories, like “New Italians” or “first-generation Italians”, since many of them are excluded from citizenship. In this respect, the concept is used also by advocates of citizenship reform as a working concept, with *caveat* about its inaccuracy.

Actually, the city of Milan is one of the 246 Italian municipalities to give honorary or symbolic citizenship to children of immigrants born or grown up in Italy,<sup>22</sup> as a lobbying action to support the approval of a new citizenship bill at the National Parliament – an action supported by Unicef Italy and the National Association of Municipalities (ANCI). Though contested as potentially raising expectations of naturalization that cannot be easily met, the symbolic citizenship is an example of bottom-up policy for diversity and recognition that is targeting a larger audience and setting a national agenda.<sup>23</sup> The mayor Pisapia is also the national spokesperson for the campaign “I’m Italy too” for the reform of the citizenship law, “*and Milan is the city that collected the highest number of signatures in Italy to support this reform*” (Respondent A1\_5)

*“The symbolic value is what it is – our participation [as a second generations' association] was just aimed at refocussing public attention to achieve a more concrete result [the reform of the citizenship law]”* (Respondent B2\_2)

*“We made a campaign called 'A time window for your rights': all the entitled 17 years old persons receive a letter to inform them about the naturalization requirements. Milan was trailblazing in this, because now a decree compels municipalities to do this”* (Respondent A1\_5)

For our general argument, it is interesting that also such a pluralist action is reconnected with an integrationist nuance, with the refusal of dedicated (“ghettoising”, as most of our interviewees would perceive it) initiatives. In this respect, a key official in Milan’s Social Policy Department stated that:

*“we considered the issue: is symbolic citizenship an 'exclusionary inclusion'? You separate those with immigrant background from the others. Therefore, we decided to call them all [including Italian classmates], to do a public event. There's a risk in dividing groups, and our goal is always cultural – supporting open-mindedness and shared participation”* (Respondent A1\_5)

In this respect, “second generations” are symbolically promoted through these events as equal citizens: *'You're from Milan in any respect. Today I'm not giving you a welcome, because you're already Milanese. The wealth of our city is exactly in our individual background.'*<sup>24</sup>

Another case in which “diversity” is not just seen as negative is “**neighbourhood diversity**”. Here, diversity is considered a challenge, with both risks and opportunities. The risky side is inequality, and the concentration of disadvantaged groups in mono-functional districts. Opportunities are related to the appraisal of the contribution that diverse people can give to social cohesion and the local economy in mixed neighbourhoods. Policy makers see retired elderly, young students and disabled people in the area of housing and development policy as groups whose role can be appreciated if they are supported in dedicating time and skills to the community. We will come back on this issue when talking about social housing in section 3.2.

<sup>22</sup> Source: [www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/452226/Minori-stranieri-246-comuni-hanno-gia-assegnato-la-cittadinanza-onoraria](http://www.redattoresociale.it/Notiziario/Articolo/452226/Minori-stranieri-246-comuni-hanno-gia-assegnato-la-cittadinanza-onoraria)

<sup>23</sup> The event in Milan – as many others – was attended also by the Minister for Integration Cecile Kyenge, gaining visibility on national media.

<sup>24</sup> Discourse of the Alderman Pierfrancesco Majorino at the ceremony for the symbolic citizenship, as reported by the press release issued by the Municipality of Milan. The certificate given to the children has the same discourse, since it includes the statement *'I'm Milanese. I'm Italian'*.

Though, most interviews also show that when neighbourhood diversity is matched with the *ethnification* of public space, diversity is seen more as a real danger than as a challenge. So, our key informants support predominantly an integrationist approach, where diversity is accepted but not encouraged. Pluralism should be tempered by an attention to social cohesion – and social cohesion usually and implicitly refers to the worries of natives, and to the need to blend minority specificity by mixing with the majority (even though not to the point to support assimilation). Ethnification is associated to “ghettoisation” (where the concept does not refer primarily to poverty and stigmatization, but to separateness), while *mixité* and the promotion of dialogue are to be supported. An example can be seen in the references some interviewees made about Milan's “Chinatown”

*“A tribal drift is always dangerous [...] Urban spaces must be social spaces?”* (Respondent A2\_1)

*“We may see two options: one is the ethnification, creating a Chinatown. But this option was not appreciated by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, neither Italian nor Chinese. Perhaps the latter just wanted to avoid conflicts, and self-censored themselves? Don't know [...] The other one is about diversification, working on the Italian and Chinese commercial offer. The pedestrianization has this goal, to create a shopping attraction. And this was the goal, also because the neighbourhood is much more complex than Chinatown. There's a growing Arab community, there are young households and students, since the rents are still affordable. It's a chance to create a plural and interesting – but not poor – area, which is quite rare in Milan.”* (Respondent A1\_2)

**Gender, sexual orientation and new families** received also a recent attention: short after the last election in 2011, the City Council created a Register for civil partnerships, thus recognizing “*different concepts of family, different lifestyles and wills*” (Respondent A1\_5). The register is open also to same-sex couples.<sup>25</sup> A specific antidiscrimination policy is dedicated to this group, with the opening of the “House of Rights” (an antidiscrimination centre) and with a city plan aimed also at training local civil servants to sensitivity towards gender and sexual orientation issues. At the same time, there are also hints of the diffusion of Florida's creative class argument, as we can find in the words of a key official and a policy maker committed with municipal cultural policy:

*“we should appreciate the economic value [of diversity]. For example, take the case of Festival Mix Milano,<sup>26</sup> the Lesbian Fuorisalone<sup>27</sup> or the Milano Pride Week – all events that the Municipal administration supported. To face the criticisms, cynically and ironically I point out that travel guides always mention gay-friendly places. Around this issue there's an economic sector, and it's absurd to give it up”* (Respondent A2\_1)

*“There's a connection between local development and the LGBT community, since it's a case that boosts gentrification and urban development through diversity”* (Respondent A1\_2)

Finally, it is worth closing this list of policy targets mentioning the **Roma** population. Discourses about this group highlight diversity as subject to negative politisation and to discourses of oppression, focusing on the challenges to social cohesion, at most to material deprivation. Poor attention is dedicated to recognition and spaces of encounter. This issue is considered very sensitive in the public discourse, due to the conditions of authorized and spontaneous

<sup>25</sup> Same-sex couples are some 13% of the registered partnerships, according to data released in mid-2013.

<sup>26</sup> It's a LGBT Movie Festival, whose first edition dates back to 1986.

<sup>27</sup> “Fuorisalone” is the name given to the Milan Design Week, a yearly programme of events that usually takes place in the same days of the Furniture Exhibition, but also initiatives taking place in other periods do use that “brand”.

encampments and the voice of neighbourhood committees, political entrepreneurs of fear, and general opinion on the “dangerousness” of this minority.

The coalition now in office campaigned about going beyond encampments, involving also Roma communities in the decision-making process. Actual evidences of this rhetoric change are still to be seen. The new rhetoric itself seems not so consolidated, since the “law and order” option is always a possible answer. Indeed, also in the new action plan for the period 2012-2015 (Comune di Milano, 2012) the following wordings are used: *'tackle and overcome urban blight and criminality spread in the city, both in legal and illegal encampments'; 'fully enact existing sanctions'; 'contrast the gathering of vans and trailers on the streets of Milan, by applying sanctions in areas where camping is forbidden and limiting the access to parking lot for those means of transport'.*

So, if there is at least a (limited) attention on redistribution, the effort to create space of encounter and recognition seems limited mostly to projects and proposals coming from NGOs like NAGA or *Casa della Carità* [House of Charity], but this has not entered that much the discourse in the documents and interviews analysed.

#### *The approach to diversity in different City Departments*

Not rarely a “silo culture” (departmentalism) in public administration makes it hard to link a transversal policy target – as “diversity” can be – to the specific policy areas where our interviewees are committed. In general, diversity is rarely an explicit target for many branches of the local administration and it enters just as a secondary argument in the normal procedures of their office. Not by chance, a key official from a minority background pointed out that the local government is trying to change the mandates of some office, to include diversity management as a daily activity (Respondent 1\_5). This is considered the only way to have long-term effects that symbolic policies may not have.

Though, as an effect of the above-mentioned departmentalism, we can see different approaches to diversity. For example, a non-policy approach can be found in the case of **tourism**, mainly concerned with heritage, a concept that does not include so much the vibrant plurality of lifestyles and people's background that made up the contemporary metropolis. On the contrary, the Department of **cultural** policy is the one closer to a pluralist approach to diversity, with an attempt to build policies for recognition and for democratic deliberation. The cultural programme associated with Expo 2015 (the collaboration of migrant and minority associations to welcome visitors; the exhibition of artworks made by foreign artists working in Milan) and the re-use of historical places as symbols of urban diversities could help the construction of a pluralist tradition of the city. We are referring in particular to the former Ansaldo factory as the seat for the new Museum of Cultures and the City-World Forum. Actually, these initiatives are probably the most explicit in recognizing and appraising diversity in Milan.

The to-be Museum of Cultures will host a permanent ethno-anthropological collection, the headquarters of the City-World Forum itself and temporary exhibitions on intercultural issues.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> To these, we can add the House of World Cultures, opened in 2009 and managed by the Province of Milan in partnership with some NGOs, and MU.BA., the Municipal Museum of Children. Though, this “museumification” of diversity may be quite ambiguous. If it will turn into a public recognition of diversity, or in a reification and oversimplification of diversity; if these places will be able to impact on the city discourse on diversity; it is still unclear, since these projects are at an early stage. Much will depend on the continuity in investing and promoting their role.

“[The Museum of Cultures] *will be an intercultural lab and a bet for the city, an effort to unravel the concept of multiple identity, the belonging to an urban community that has different origins, cultures, languages...*” (Respondent A2\_1).

*'we are committed to bring forth a great Intercultural centre that goes beyond a mere folkloric curiosity, and becomes instead a place of knowledge, encounter, a creative lab dedicated to cultures and people from all around the world'.* (Comitato Pisapiaxmilano, 2011)

The City-World Forum is an association of associations putting together hundreds of ethnic, minority, immigrant and intercultural organizations, initially with the goal of linking foreigners living in Milan with foreign visitors and countries in view of Expo 2015. International cooperation, co-development and appraisal of intercultural skills and networks of minority groups were thought as a resource in view of the biggest international event the city will host in the next future.

We can wonder if these initiatives are hints of a shift towards a more pluralist policy, appraising diversity as a permanent issue, and promoting it. Even though the focus on recognition may suggest a more multicultural leaning, the aims and goals of these initiatives, as reported by key officials and policy-makers, suggest that an integrationist/intercultural view is still in point, and that diversity makes sense just in an integration process. For example, a policy-maker in the Culture Department affirms: *“I think it's wrong to support individual communities, because it's ghettoizing”* (Respondent A2\_1).

Putting into practice the “Italian way” to interculturalism seems to have some ambivalent effects. Swaying between a focus on individuals (as in assimilationist policies) and on groups (as in multicultural policies) limits the consistency of initiatives undertaken. In this respect, the unclear prospect of the City-World Forum itself is quite telling:

*“The City-World Forum was born to recognize the variety of traditions seeping through the urban experience; to give voice in a way different from the usual advisory bodies, where communities are divided according to the country of origin. Here, the diversity is meant as not easy to label and hybrid [...]. The forum is made up by individuals [...] where everyone is just representative of himself/herself. Then – true – the chairperson is appointed on a rotation basis, representing the weight of national communities”* (Respondent A3\_2)

The ambivalence between a representative body for organized communities and a space of encounter for individual diverse trajectories is unresolved. The “aphasia” on what the Forum will be and do in future – reported by some policy-makers – may come also from this ambiguity, as mentioned by a municipal key official working on internationalisation and strategic planning: *“Today the problem of the Forum is its aim [...] The principle is good, but we don't know how to put it into practice”* (Respondent A1\_2).

Such a problem can be generalized to Expo 2015 – within which the City-World Forum was imagined. It has been thought also as a chance to transform the cultural discourse on diversity in Milan. The leftist coalition – with an inflamed rhetoric typical of campaigning, that focus more on cleavages than on continuity – pointed it out under the 2011 election:

*'Parochialism and closure are not a destiny, but the outcome of an inept and short-sighted ruling class. Projects for international cooperation and Expo can be an extraordinary chance to start a new season'* (Comitato Pisapiaxmilano, 2011).

Besides rhetorical excesses, the organization of Expo boosted a reflexive thinking on the relationship between the city and the world, with the effort to connect the diverse people that

will come to Milan for the event with the internal diversity of the city – and this was the background for the initial idea of the City-World Forum:

*“The relationship between Expo 2015 and the City-World Forum has a meaning as a way to balance bridging and bonding relations. The stands at the Expo are rigidly national; the Forum mixes up, with different communities working together on the same issue”*  
(Respondent A3\_2)

Nevertheless, the connection between Expo and cultural diversity policy is weaker than expected by now, with an unclear role of the City-World Forum and a cultural programme more focused on national and local heritage that includes diversity only partially.<sup>29</sup>

Passing to another sector, **labour and economic** policy makers and officials have an ambiguous stance toward diversity. On the one hand, they express a certain refusal – or an unwilling acceptance – of targeted policies. A universalistic approach is considered enough to grant access to minorities as exemplified by a key official.

*“We wondered whether to do specific initiatives targeting this issue [cultural diversity] or not; whether to give money just to immigrant firms or not. And our answer is: immigrants in Milan have equal opportunities. They can access all the calls we do”* (Respondent A1\_4)

Thus, in some policy fields diversity is not seen as something needing specific initiatives, even though some types of diversity are considered as over-represented in disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, diversity is not seen as a resource that needs special attention to deploy. Granting access (equal right) is considered enough, while issues of accessibility – all social and individual conditions needed to enjoy equal rights – are underestimated. The hypothesis of “equal opportunities” portrayed by some (few) interviewees as already existing denies the evidence of inequality in outcomes, showing a poor awareness of the implication of diversity management.

Contradictorily enough, local and national institutions endorse some very targeted and multicultural measures. For example, two events aimed at matching labour demand and offer for specific groups. The first one is organized by the National Antidiscrimination Office in three cities and provides job interviews for disabled, immigrant and transgender job-seekers. The second one, organized by Associna, aims at matching opportunities for Italian firms working in China and Chinese firms working in Italy targeting those having mixed cultural backgrounds, especially Sino-Italian “second generations”. Both are national events that take place (also) in Milan, and are among the few actions to target explicitly specific groups with a sort of affirmative action, without worries for the negative politicization that often is associated to targeted measures in the Italian political debate (see below).

A “positive” assessment of diversity in this policy area is mainly centred on another target, i.e. innovative labour policies supporting entrepreneurship, start-ups and co-working projects thought mainly for the creative class. They are aimed at supporting groups (e.g. youth) that may produce a positive return for the city: attracting young professionals (researchers and fashion professionals among the most mentioned) can boost competitiveness; revitalizing public properties (where new initiatives are encouraged to locate) can improve dilapidated neighbourhoods.

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<sup>29</sup> In synthesis, it is worth noting that the theme of the Expo 2015 (*Feeding the planet, energy for life*) – a much debated event in the city – steered the reference to diversity in direction of biodiversity, to be considered also as a local policy priority. *“the protection and safeguard of biodiversity are a priority: Milan still has green farming peri-urban areas that is worth keeping, to avoid overbuilding, having different functions in the city”* (Respondent B3\_1)

*“Diversity is an advantage for local development [...] in this respect, it is very important how we work with multinational firms, small business, retailers, craftspeople, professionals and creative business. They are all part of the economic diversity that makes up the urban development”* (Respondent A1\_4)

**Housing** policy does share a more diversity-aware vision, that we already mentioned above in relation to “neighbourhood diversity”. The main focus here is on “functional differentiation and diversity”, taken into account for the risk of accumulation of disadvantages and of having poverty “stuck” in mono-functional areas, potential ghettos. Though, diversity often is not a primary focus in social housing or neighbourhood renewal. Rather, it is seen as a disturbing element to be taken under control. In this sense, the attention paid to diversity is somehow “reactive”, and targets its potentially negative meanings in policy management. As in the case of labour policy, positive aspects of diversity just refer to specific groups that the city should attract – not so much to existing cultural and social diversity. A quote from a key official in housing policy can be a good example in this respect.

*“In the management of public housing, the main focus is on diversity as a problem: paying attention to ghettoization risks; answering the demand of different targets. When we think about the public building stock at large, and the maximization of its value, we think about another kind of diversity: creative, cultural, social (even antagonist) groups, and the non-profit sector”* (Respondent A1\_3)

Nevertheless, some urban regeneration projects – that we will analyse more extensively in section 3.2 – are meant to consider diversity as a local asset to promote, with a more nuanced view on disadvantages and advantages of different urban populations.<sup>30</sup>

Lastly, the Department for **Social Policy** has a strong focus on diversity in terms of anti-discrimination policy, as shown by the commitment in the setting of the “House of Rights” and in the drafting of a municipal antidiscrimination plan.

We can have quite a complete picture of diversities taken into account – and likely also of their prioritization – by reading the list of target groups included in the City Welfare Programme: *'gender, age, ethnicity, health, wealth, religion, sexual orientation'* (Dipartimento Politiche Sociali e Cultura della Salute – Comune di Milano, 2012).<sup>31</sup>

This long list is followed by area-specific actions. Here the attention is on specific targets, everyone enjoying its own “protection” through newly set initiatives – the House of Rights mainly focusses on LGBT recognition, G.Lab on “second generations”, the Immigration Centre on migrants...

Is this targeting a proxy of a pluralist approach, appreciating specific diversities? Again, some interviewees seem to consider such a pluralist leaning as a risk, trying to recover an integrationist dimension.

<sup>30</sup> These projects represent a tiny minority in the actual regeneration process, since it targets mainly the top-tier of the housing market (Mingione et al. 2007), with no attention on social mix and diversity.

<sup>31</sup> In particular, the need for the involvement of groups outside traditional targets is mentioned: *'young people, younger elderly (300,000 in the city), university students (180,000 in the city), young professionals, young couples that leave the city as soon as they have children, separated persons, 'puzzele families'...'* Aging, the changing role of families, multiculturalism, the youth problem, and gender equality are among the issues more stressed in the Welfare Plan. In this respect, the plan has an explicit recognition of the changing face of the city, and the need to adapt social policy to new challenges.

*“The Immigration Centre is based on the idea to have a cultural turn. We have the idea to make it attractive also for non-migrant people [...] G.Lab, too, has been located within the Youth Information Centre (not to ghettoise)” (Respondent A1\_2)*

*“The House of Rights won't just deal with LGBT rights, but also with gender-based violence, human trafficking, minors' rights, and it will temporarily host also the City-world Forum. There it will also be possible to express living wills” (Respondent A1\_5)*

These offices/structures show an investment in terms of symbolic policies, increasing public visibility of diversity. However, we are uncertain about their actual effect on social cohesion dynamics within the neighbourhoods where they are placed, since. Interviewees reported that they are often detached from lower-scale places of encounter and their localization is meant to generate effects at municipal level rather than at neighbourhood level.

*The role of the political arena. A shifting paradigm?*

Milan has had a relevant change in local government in 2011, when – for the first time since the introduction of the direct election of mayor in 1993 – a leftist coalition won the elections. The new mayor, Giuliano Pisapia, is a libertarian lawyer, also committed to minority rights.<sup>32</sup> Since many of the policy-makers and key officials we interviewed have been involved in this political change, an emerging issue was their opinion on the transformation of diversity policy in local institutions.

Diversity has been a heated issue in the last electoral campaign and was given relevant attention in the electoral programme of the now ruling coalition (Comitato Pisapiaxmilano, 2011): it has a chapter titled *'The City of Rights'* that focusses exactly on children, non-standard families, immigrants (...and animals). The heated political and media debate during the campaign was often connected to urban policy – as for immigration (e.g. the management of high concentration areas), religion (e.g. the building and location of a mosque), ethnic diversity (e.g. the Roma encampments).

*“This local government came in office after a campaign where issues like a great mosque, Via Padova as an interesting place were mentioned. Hot issues, that were potentially creating discontent, are in the political programme” (Respondent A1\_5).*

No strategic document on diversity followed the elections, but in some fields, the change in policy orientation appears quite relevant. This applies especially to more contentious ones, along a left-right cleavage: LGBT and immigrant rights are a good case in point. If we consider the treatment of these minorities in Italy, we can see that “non-policy” may not represent the narrowest option, since explicitly exclusionary policy have been implemented (Ambrosini, 2013). For Milan, we can mention two cases occurred few years ago: a) at regional level, in 2006 a law for tougher controls on phone centres *de facto* limited economic freedom of a number of immigrant businesspeople;<sup>33</sup> b) at municipal level, children of undocumented parents have not been allowed to attend municipal kindergartens from 2006 to 2012, when a court fined the

<sup>32</sup> As a lawyer, he represented Scientology, the Kurdish activist Abdullah Öcalan, and the parents of Carlo Giuliani, the activist shot by a policeman during the G8 summit held in Genoa in 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly enough, this regional law was cancelled by the Constitutional Court not for being discriminatory (there was no explicit reference to any minority group), but for producing an unlawful inequality in the economic freedom of some sectors compared to others (sentence 350/2008).

Municipality for discrimination.<sup>34</sup>

In this respect, more politically committed interviewees underline a radical shift in the approach to diversity:

*“In the new local government diversity is not contrasted to normalcy. The multiplicity is a richness that has a part in the belonging to the urban community”* (Respondent A2\_1).

*“For years there was a narrow-minded administration: for years the 'Chinese challenge' in Milan was just the Chinese wholesaling in Via Sarpi! [...] The change in the discourse and approach to diversity has been radical and fast”* (Respondent A1\_2)

*“With the new administration there's a new attention. The round tables with the previous one was frustrating: they didn't even faced up to you, or addressed you directly”* (Respondent B2\_2)

*“We found a local administration that was not used to work on citizenship problems. In the previous legislature, immigration issues were classified under 'disadvantaged adults'! Disconnecting immigration and disadvantage changed the perspective inside the administration”* (Respondent A1\_5)<sup>35</sup>

However, a change can be acknowledged also in less politicised arenas. For example through a focus on children as citizens with own rights and on young people (students, early-career professionals, new couples). These new foci, in the words of some policy-makers, mark a difference with previous administrations: *“Producing measures for children is important, since Milan has long been a hostile city to them”* (Respondent A2\_1).

The same is true for the *social cohesion turn* in many initiatives. For example, the above-mentioned framing of Expo 2015 as a chance to change the discourse on diversity, and the Smart City programme in Milan, that is more keen on social issues than in other cities or in the European guidelines are good examples.

*“Milan thought about Smart City not as focussed on mobility and energy, but as a transversal dialogue among relevant actors, including also issues like social cohesion and local development”* (Respondent A1\_2).

*“Smart City is not just a project for the economic development, it's a process that aims to include all the actors that may be part of local development and liveliness [...] For example, Smart City pays attention to urban accessibility for those with different disadvantages – e.g. those with visual or motor impairments”* (Respondent A1\_4).

Quite a number of interviewees do underline also continuities. As far as the contents of the diversity policy are concerned, initiatives like the participation into the network of Intercultural cities – that held its second meeting in Milan in 2007 – or the programme “Milan for co-development”, aimed at linking immigrant communities, local organizations and international cooperation, were both signed by the previous mayor. On the negative side, the rhetorical turn

<sup>34</sup> In Italy, minors' access to education – whatever their legal status – is considered a human right protected by the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child.

<sup>35</sup> This turn is not uncontested, since this pluralist nuance of the Italian integrationist approach may be paternalistic: *“We have to avoid push migrants into the category of 'beggars of rights'; this is homologating, and transforms people into a problem. This is what the left in Milan is doing all the time”* (Respondent A3\_2).

was not always matched with a change in policies – e.g. in the case of Roma, who remain still stigmatized and marginalized.

As for the governance of diversity, some interviewees focus on continuity in problems of departmentalism, and delegation to non-governmental actors. Nuances, however, might change: it was more about delegation and 'big society' ideas with the right-wing local government, it is more about social participation driven by public institutions with the current left government. A slow change in practices can be connected to institutional inertia and to an unfavourable institutional frame (e.g. a limited legitimization at national level). We can identify also the influence from the political debate, where the anti-diversity discourse – especially anti-immigration one – is considered relevant in the electoral strategies. So, it is considered “wise” not to raise issues that can be used by populist and xenophobic movements, keeping a “low-profile”. A key official working on innovation and strategic planning reports this issue quite explicitly in this way:

*“I worked in the strategic planning of [name of European capital], that was exactly based on the idea of diversity [...] This is an issue in Milan, too, but there's no strategic plan based on these keywords [...] Making diversity an explicit issue is a political problem. If you draw a plan on diversity, on the other side there will instantly be someone telling you: 'Mind normalcy! Why should you mind about marginal fringes?' There's a part that considers diversity as a negative value” (Respondent A1\_4)*

To sum up, the political turn may have included pluralist elements in a prevalent integrationist policy view and a new activism in areas where non-policy or exclusionary policies were in practice.

*'the foundations of big social problems (like loneliness, addiction, poverty, a full social life for the disabled, the support and promotion of aging, the integration of migrants) can be found in the cultural maps, income and power structures, social cultures, the quality and intensity of relations. [...] A society made up by isolated individuals, mutually distrustful, fearful about diverse people, feeds a situation that increases social problems, weakens the chance to cope with them, follows repressive shortcuts. [...] A secular political approach allows the society to be not only more just, but also to progress faster and to be richer, as the experience of the largest European metropolises show' (Comitato Pisapiaxmilano, 2011).*

Though, we can maintain that the main approach is still integrationist/intercultural, given that recognition is often a subordinated priority to social cohesion and interaction. This includes - more or less implicitly – the idea that diversity should be controlled.

#### *What public resources for local diversity policies?*

A clear view on resource allocation for diversity policy is far from easy in a context of high institutional fragmentation, where measures are often parcelled according to territorial levels, policy areas and targets. This may also be seen as a proxy that diversity is not a policy target in itself or a priority, thus not enjoying a clear budget.<sup>36</sup> From the words of the interviewees and from the document analysis, we can anyway identify some trends that, mostly applying to public policy funding in general, are an issue also for diversity-related policy in Milan.

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<sup>36</sup> Not by chance, at the national level, main ministers having to do with diversity and/or with urban policies are often without portfolio; for example, in the current cabinet, this applies among the others to the Ministries of Integration, Youth Policy, Regional Affairs and Territorial Cohesion, whose Departments are just branches within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

In general terms, policy makers at the regional and local level often express a dissatisfaction for the resources available for diversity policy. They consider national investment on this issue as inadequate, since many calls and measures are funded via European<sup>37</sup> or local funds, with a poor role of national resources to steer priorities.

*'we have seen a paradoxical situation: a constant growth of regular foreign stayers in Italy is matched with a simultaneous shrinkage of resources for integration policies. The Regions are not able to fully counterbalance these cuts'*<sup>38</sup>

Where does this lack of resources come from? According to some of our interviewees it is the evidence of hard times in the aftermath of the **economic crisis**. For example, a key official in housing policy states that: *"the crisis made everything more difficult. Poverty and conflict have increased, and the problem in facing them is not about ideas, but about money"* (Respondent A1\_3). Retrenchment hit hard also policies targeting specific disadvantaged groups, even though in the Italian case the trend has started well before the crisis (Einaudi, 2007; Arlotti, 2013), so the crisis had a "more of the same" effect.

At most, we can wonder whether the crisis might have increased the perception that some targets of diversity policy are competing for scarce resources. Since diversity is mainly seen as a disadvantage, a discourse on the positive effects of an active investment on diversity could not be able to balance negative views: in welfare policy, in particular, cultural diversity (Roma, people from an immigrant background) may be seen more and more as an undeserving target, strengthening the opposition to policies targeting specific stigmatized groups. Such a negative politicization seems limited in some cases – e.g. for immigrant domestic workers – because of the evidence of the need for them (van Hooren, 2010). Therefore, up to now a utilitarian perspective in sectors where competition with Italians is not so visible limits anti-immigrant sentiments. As a policy strategist critically complains:

*"there's a risk of tough social conflict in the very short term. We didn't reach yet the Greek level of xenophobia [...] but this can change. The scapegoat could not be identified in immigrant workers, since they are clearly 'losers', but those – like immigrant entrepreneurs – more successful and blamed (e.g. for tax avoidance)"* (Respondent A3\_1)

For others, it is just a **low prioritization** due to political reasons (e.g. risk of negative politicization; priority given to other targets).

*"the commitment was to revamp integration policy through participation about what to do for integration and how to do it. One year of work, many ideas... [...] The problem is that it didn't become actual policy, since at a given point we understood that there were no money. This means that the administration doesn't consider it as a priority"* (Respondent A3\_1).

In this respect, the allocation of resources is in question. An interviewee (B3\_1), for example, maintains that resources allocated are rarely evaluated in terms of effectiveness, since policy goals and priorities are too implicit. Nevertheless, a recent shadow report shows that the amount of money dedicated to policies targeting the Roma was not negligible (in Milan, some € 500,000 per year in the period 2005-2011, increased recently due to the resources coming from a national emergency plan). Though, this funding was mainly – and increasingly so in recent years – used for security programmes and not for social integration, feeding a 'ghetto economy' (Berenice *et al.*, 2013).

<sup>37</sup> The above-mentioned EFI, that endowed Milan (through the municipality or NGOs) of some € 500,000 per year in the last five years, is an example.

<sup>38</sup> Errani, 2010. Vasco Errani is President of Region-Emilia Romagna, and spokesperson of the Italian Regions.

Whatever the amount, there is an evidence that diversity-related initiatives – as many other actions in recent policy-making – are mainly based on short-term projects, with variable and unpredictable resources in the long-term. This applies also to a number of good and innovative initiatives mentioned by our interviewees which are mainly funded through one-year calls and measures (e.g. through EFI or national earmarked funds). For example, “*G.Lab is closing down on December 2013, but we are planning to going on. We are trying to piece together different resources, with a municipal share.*” (Respondent A1\_5).

For most of the policy-makers we interviewed, this means the need for a new role of public actors – from distributing resources to facilitating and networking; from a hierarchical to a bargaining role – with pros and cons.

*“This is good, because that model was not sustainable, and we have to play other roles, as partners and project managers; but it's also bad, because we have less bargaining power. We have to understand how to define a new role for us, to increase the urban well-being”* (Respondent A1\_2).

*“The problem is the economic sustainability, in the frame of current budget cuts (especially to social expenditure): the local administration is relying much on social participation, activism, and volunteering – even too much”* (Respondent B2\_2)

Networking (including intra-institutional, inter-institutional and public-private coordination) is seen as the main resource to exploit, and one of the main tasks of local administrations. It is seen as a solution to the lack of resources and to the departmentalism of local administration. Furthermore, since diversity and social cohesion in an integrationist perspective are considered jointly, networking can receive even more attention here than in other policy fields, with a specific attention on the creation of plural partnerships. Actually, diversity is an issue in recent agreements with non-governmental organizations, like the memorandum of understanding between the Municipality and the Third Sector Forum (August 2012), and the project “Sistema Milano” to develop collaboration among public and private actors in policies targeting Roma. Even, the case for this latter target – that we already mentioned as particularly contentious – shows that networking can also have the role of creating a supportive network and reducing isolation against negative politicization.

### 3.2. Non-governmental discourses of urban policy and diversity

*An interplay of different non-governmental actors: between social economy and advocacy*

Among non-governmental actors, many acknowledge the positive social and economic contribution provided by diversity. When it comes to immigration-related diversity there are some national think-tanks (e.g. Caritas, Ismu<sup>39</sup>, Fieri<sup>40</sup> and Leone Moressa Foundation) that do not only advocate for social inclusion, but also focus on their positive contribution to social and economic reproduction of the country (e.g. repopulating abandoned areas, filling gaps in the labour market, contrasting ageing, paying taxes and social contributions...).

Some non-governmental actors mentioned above are based in Milan, like for instance Ismu and the local branch of Caritas. They are quite able to influence the local public debate on diversity,

<sup>39</sup> Institute for the Study of Multi-ethnicity.

<sup>40</sup> Italian and European Forum of Research on Immigration.

through public events and through a rich and complex network of solidarity that faces diversity. This occurs both, by contrasting the disadvantage groups like immigrants, Roma, convicts and ex-convicts face, and by advocating for them and promoting a culture of dialogue.<sup>41</sup>

This role is mainly covered by actors in the Catholic pillar. Though the effectiveness in public arena seem stronger when the policy coalition keeps together both religious and secular groups and trade unions. For example, in the late 1980s, such a transversal group was the first to promote an immigration bill not just focussed on security issues. Nowadays, a large coalition of NGOs and public institutions is campaigning for the reform of citizenship and electoral laws, with petitions that – as already mentioned above – enjoyed a good support in Milan, too.

Focusing on the municipal level, most interviewees and local policy documents mentioned the Cariplo Foundation<sup>42</sup> – another player that can be ascribed to the Catholic pillar – as a key actor in local diversity policy. Even though per se – according to a key manager of this NGO – “*diversity is not a central key in the strategic planning of the Foundation*” (Respondent B3\_1), initiatives and action plans in the fields of social cohesion and human capital formations targeted it. This funding activity has the potential to steer the public agenda toward a more pluralist recognition of diversity, thanks to resources and policy ideas this Foundation supports.

Most relevant initiatives are on the one hand projects on intercultural education and equal opportunity, focussing on the impact of diversity on educational outcomes. Here, diversity is mainly seen as inequality: “*The Foundation aims at reducing diversity, to make school choices of Italians and foreigners more similar, to avoid a waste of human capital*” (Respondent B3\_1). On the other hand housing projects (from shelter centres to social housing) to support groups that can hardly access the market: ex-convicts, disabled, low-income families, young families, migrants.

Avoiding ghettoisation is a prime concern: diversity is taken into account mixing different functions and groups, to be kept together with neighbourhood animation. Projects supported by Cariplo Foundation usually mix housing for different social groups (with flats at market and subsidized prices), social functions (crèches, residential care homes, support to social cooperatives employing disabled persons in neighbourhood maintenance works) and animation. Here, diversity is seen as positive under certain conditions consistent with the integrationist approach and the worry for ghettoisation we saw also among governmental interviewees: “*diversity is a value when it cross-fertilize: when it is just side by side it puts a strain on society*” (Respondent B3\_1); “*diversity is a value for social cohesion if you invest on it*” (Respondent A3\_1).

The ability of the Foundation to steer discourses on diversity depends also on its wide set of partnerships with governmental and non-governmental actors in the field of housing policy,<sup>43</sup> thus being one of the biggest actors in the renewal of social housing blocks and mixed residential solutions (together with a number of other actors like Dar-Casa cooperative society,<sup>44</sup> San Carlo

<sup>41</sup> Just to quote a couple of examples, Ismu produces a well-known yearly report on immigration in Lombardy and many province- and city-level reports every year. The House of Charity initiates debates on inequality and diversity, to promote social and economic participation of stigmatized groups.

<sup>42</sup> It is the biggest Bank Foundation in Italy, that manages a number of projects, calls and grants, allocating every year some 200 million euro in charitable activities on Environment, Art and Culture, Research and Welfare. Owning 5% of Intesa Sanpaolo Bank, it is an important shareholder in the 16th largest banking group in Europe, the second in Italy.

<sup>43</sup> Cariplo Foundation partnered Region Lombardia and the National Association of Italian Municipalities in the Social Housing Foundation, but also organizations active in the social economy, like Polaris Real Estate, opened by Catholic groups to operate in the social housing market.

<sup>44</sup> Founded in 1991, today it manages more than 200 flats with an integrated approach that is providing both housing and social participation tools.

Foundation, ABCittà – see Censis 2005; Alietti and Agustoni 2013). Those are examples of private actors structuring a complex housing policy that includes brokerage in the rental and mortgage markets, and management of small estates with a strong focus on social cohesion, social participation, community work and empowerment at neighbourhood level. In this respect, non-governmental actors find a collaboration with those public actors in housing and development policies more keen towards the approach to “neighbourhood diversity” we mentioned in section 3.1.

Here the approach to diversity is broad, and does not concern just cultural diversity and ethnic mix. Interviewees, literature and policy documents often mention two cases: 1) the *Barona Village* that is a ten-year-long experience of urban renewal aimed at providing mixed housing and services for disadvantaged groups (elderly, people affected by psychiatric disorders, families with children facing hardship...). 2) “*Cenni di Cambiamento*” that is a new green, mixed social housing block with flats granted at different subsidized or fixed rents, targeting new young families, single-parent households and elderly.

In this respect, these projects are not only meant as redistribution policies, addressing material deprivation and housing problems of disadvantaged groups, but also as spaces of encounter between different populations – Italians and immigrants, young and elderly, working and middle-class. Facing a governmental non-policy approach or integrationist view mainly focussed on redistribution actions, these actors do actually steer public discourses and practices toward a more pluralist vision, by promoting their own view or by supporting and complementing with expertise and resources public views consistent with their aims.

Besides the Cariplo Foundation, there are other NGOs with an important social and economic role in supporting diversity, that often partner governmental actors. We can mention in particular those involved in diversity policies based on action-research – Universities or private research centres, like the above-mentioned Ismu (in the past a branch of Cariplo Foundation), Centro Come (tied to Caritas, it aims at the educational inclusion of immigrant youth and “second generations”), and Codici Ricerche.

As private players in the market, they are commissioned researches and projects according to interests of their client public administrations. Though – given the high number of competitive tenders issued at different levels (EU, national, regional, local) – they have also the expertise to apply, and to promote public-private partnerships, hence “steering” policy networks. The effectiveness of these actions may be limited by the very nature of competitive calls, since short-term projects do not easily produce structural changes.

Instead, we found quite limited evidence of an attention on diversity by business organizations, besides the effort to attract a creative class in a city world-famous for its fashion and design industry. Employers' associations and the Chamber of Commerce – especially through its spin-off company for training, Formaper – organize on a regular basis activities to support and boost entrepreneurship of specific target groups, mainly young people, women and immigrants. The delivery of services through projects, also in this case, undergoes a great variability, in time, extent and goals of the activities. The projects mentioned by our interviewee and that we could retrieve through grey documents could be mainly considered as policies for equity, i.e. aimed at easing the access of 'minorities' or 'disadvantaged' groups to entrepreneurial opportunities, since some formal and informal barriers (from the credit crunch to the accessibility of information) may limit their chances. Just as a secondary aim, in some cases the focus is on recognition, on possible socio-economic advantages that diverse businesspeople may bring about.

Obviously, actors active in market and social economy do not complete the large array of non-governmental actors dealing with diversity. Milan has a long tradition of advocacy groups and associations. We think it is worth focussing here on emerging associations of generations from an immigrant background, since they challenge media and political view on Italian citizenship as a ethnically homogeneous country.

Two of the most well-known associations of “second generations”, G2 Network and Associna, did develop their branch in Milan in the last decade. After starting as informal groups to discuss about their conditions, these groups developed into associations advocating for citizenship reform and recognition and are, in more recent times, actively engaged in diversity related projects aiming also at creating spaces of encounter.<sup>45</sup> “Second generations” representatives we interviewed see themselves as a key actor in building a new representation of diversity in Italy. For example, they challenge the idea that diversity is related to immigration, since – even though they are from an immigrant background – they are not immigrants themselves, being grown up in Italy. Therefore, they are unsatisfied by the label “second generations” and try to spread a new self-representation as “new Italians” or “first-generation Italians”.

Their pluralist concept of diversity takes anyway on integrationist elements, trying to balance minority and majority identity and to focus on social cohesion through social contact: “*Second generations are a kind of bridge, having social circles larger than kinship groups: the city, the society as a whole, the media [...] Avoiding isolation is a primary goal*” (Respondent B2\_1). In this respect, the battle for citizenship reform is not just about rights, but about belonging: “*Ius soli is necessary not because now you are limiting my rights, but you are limiting my sense of belonging. The State doesn't allow you to feel Italian, it denies you*” (Respondent B2\_1).

Considering again the case of Milan's Chinatown, minority key informants show that the integrationist discourse is quite pervading, even though it may contain an implicit subordination of minorities to the national culture.

*“Emphasizing the ethnic features of a neighbourhood is risky: our bet for the future is to avoid spaces of belonging of individual communities, but mobile and intertwined communities”*  
(Respondent A2\_1)

*“The Italian solution is not a multiculturalism in the Anglo-Saxon way, that would allow a Chinatown. The Italian intercultural way doesn't love ghettoization; it's more about interaction in diversity than about a multi- that doesn't crossbreed”* (Respondent A1\_2).

So, even though recognition is important for these actors, it should be somehow subordinated to social cohesion: an “accommodation” can take place if diversity is limited, and interbreeding. So, their critical view on diversity management in Italy is more related to the fact that not enough has been done to create social cohesion than to recognize diversity.

#### *Non-governmental actors as a resource, and the resources from non-governmental actors*

We have seen that non-governmental actors in Milan play a major role in putting diversity in context in urban policy, in advocating for recognition and spaces of encounter, but also in planning and delivering diversity-sensitive measures. Therefore, in this situation, their role in steering city discourse and practice is fundamental, at least in three respects:

<sup>45</sup> For example, Associna recently participated in a project funded by EFI aimed at promoting social participation of Chinese adolescent newcomers, while G2 Network was involved in G.Lab, the municipal office targeting “second generations” and providing information and guidance on naturalization, rights and opportunities.

- 1) First by funding projects with own resources. This applies mostly to some top players; for example the Cariplo Foundation, that can be regarded as one of the main private players in the field of cohesion policies in Milan, invested some 1 million a year on intercultural education policy (in a programme that has now come to an end) and 3 millions to support social housing projects;
- 2) second by fund-raising through different sources and projects;
- 3) third by networking in public-private partnerships.

This means that non-governmental actors – advocacy groups, associations, volunteers, social economy actors (e.g. social cooperatives) and investors – are not just mere implementers of governmental strategies. On the contrary, they do contribute meaningfully to the planning and programming, both lobbying at national level and entering relevant policy networks at local level. In this respect, the main risk is an enduring subordination of public actors in comparison to the activism of non-governmental ones: public actors do delegate responsibility (and poor resources) to civil society, while civil society actors complain that local administration is not proactive enough. In synthesis, it is the risk of *passive subsidiarity* (Kazepov, 2008)<sup>46</sup>, i.e. of a delegation without coordination/collaboration of public actors.

As a matter of fact, notwithstanding efforts reported by interviewed governmental actors, non-governmental interviewees maintain that the public coordination and capacity to build and enact a vision on diversity is very limited. The subsidiary role played by non-governmental players (often from the Catholic pillar of local society), endowed with resources, skills and voice to act effectively as “*catalyst for different function, groups and actors*” (Respondent B3\_1) is on the contrary very strong. However, this is not enough to create a strategic coordination: “*there are uncoordinated micro-strategies around, but there's no shared ploy*” (Respondent B3\_1).<sup>47</sup>

This grounds quite an ambivalent discourse on the role of civil society. **On the one hand**, we can find evidences of a “Big Society” discourse, portrayed especially in national documents in which accommodation of diversity is considered a quasi-spontaneous, micro-level process.

*'the proper actor, that makes the interaction good for integration, is the people – a lively human experience, with their tradition, culture and values. Italian people have constitutive traits with the needed potential for that'* (Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, Ministero dell'Interno, Ministero dell'Istruzione dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2010).

Consequently, also at municipal level integration is considered to take place spontaneously once local society meets minimum standards of cohesion, activism and predisposing factors (limited inequality, limited negative stereotyping, a number of associations...). “*The simple living together as neighbours doesn't become a real problem: the belonging to a common social class can ease the typical Milanese 'live and let live'*” (Respondent A3\_1). This is possible thanks also to a limited territorial segregation of diverse social and cultural groups (Motta 2005; Musterd 2005; Mingione *et al.* 2008b). In this respect, local NGOs and civil society actors are considered the most competent players to accommodate diversity, providing vision, innovative and effective measures: “*In general, the Third Sector is a step ahead of politics, since it's able to involve people and support their skills*” (Respondent A3\_2).

<sup>46</sup> This vision has been actively supported in some national documents issued by recent governments in the wake of a “big society” discourse: *'Our model is mainly subsidiary. In Western societies the State is often considered as the first interlocutor in these [integration] processes: nonetheless, welcoming and exchange can take place just where there is a lively actor, with an identity [...] The State must overall attend upon these actors.'* (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2011)

<sup>47</sup> As mentioned in section 3.1., the lack of continuity in project-base diversity-related initiatives might also play a role.

**On the other hand**, non-governmental informants often invoke the role of public actors, to provide legitimation, standardization and institutionalization of spontaneous measures. In this respect, non-policy is seen as a risky option, that can lead to the worsening of social problems, especially segregation, concentration of disadvantage, resulting into stigmatization and open social conflict. So, public actors' legitimation of effective actions and general responsibility over policy processes are considered focal but – at the same time – they are not considered able to cope with diversity. This is due, either for structural (e.g. separation from civil society; difficulty to define clear goals and priorities) or for incidental reasons (e.g. lack of resources due to the economic crisis; early stage of immigration policy). A generalized low trust in politics and institutions plays a role in this and supports discourses on the primacy of spontaneous sociability.

*“Italians have nothing to do with the State, they are welcoming people [...] unrelated with the demagogy that some institutions use”* (Respondent B2\_1)

*“Local policies do not bite reality, they are just announced [...] Politics seems to use a discourse open to diversity now, but has no intention to put the money where the mouth is”* (Respondent A3\_1).

#### 4. Conclusions

In Italy, the main discourse on diversity is much more focussed on reducing negative effects of diversity on **social cohesion** and secondarily on supporting its social participation and inclusion against **inequality**. A discourse on **recognition and appreciation of diversity** and its potential positive role is much less present. This clearly emerges also from the analysis national and local policy documents and from interviews to key informant in the city of Milan, especially as far as in-migrant diversity is concerned.

At least for in-migrant diversity there are signs of a changing discourse, that passes mainly through symbolic policies, not yet implemented into actual measures but able to affect practices. Some neighbourhood renewal projects or the City-World Forum, for example, brought elements of a new pluralist idea, focussing on the positive, transnational contribution they can give to Milan. In this respect, even in a common integrationist frame, attention on diversity seem more marked in Milan than in national policy, since in some areas diversity (or better: specific targets within a diversity policy) is explicitly addressed.

However, policy prioritization is not enough, in a context where fragmented governance at vertical and horizontal level can curb the effectiveness of local initiatives. Horizontally, since city departments seem to work within a silo-culture (thus with fewer chance of a cross-sectoral diversity discourse). Vertically, since different administrations governing the urban area do not coordinate with one another, lacking a government level or an effective structural governance arrangement for the metropolitan level at large (Mingione *et al.* 2008a),<sup>48</sup> but also for the specific area of diversity.

At the same time, we moved away from a consolidated evidence in literature about the lack of an explicit discourse on diversity. Many of our interviewees complained about this, even though we cannot downplay the consistent support for an integrationist model that emerges from both interviews and policy documents. This intercultural model, considered specifically “Italian” in its features, is reported as not grounded in traditional assimilationist or multicultural paradigms, and

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<sup>48</sup> This general governance problem has also a specific local dimension in Milan. Here political cleavages may limit inter-institutional collaboration (the municipality has a different majority than the province and the region).

(somehow contradictorily) aimed both at recognizing diversity and to limit it in favour of social cohesion.

The international literature raised some doubts on this model, but also showed that it seems to gain momentum as a pragmatic correction of multiculturalism (Taylor-Gooby and Waite 2013). It is not a point here to theorize about it rather to understand what our interviewees mean by “interculturalism”. The nuances can be quite different, from a conservative multiculturalism (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997), close to an implicitly assimilationist non-policy, to a quasi-multiculturalist pluralism. What is common is the idea that cultural difference should have a public visibility only in a context of *mixité*. Therefore, formal praises for diversity go hand in hand with its limited recognition (Grillo and Pratt 2002). In this respect, policies considered as diversity-related may well be compressing diversity.

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## Appendix

### *Interviews*

This report is based on the analysis of 15 interviews conducted in Milan between November 2013 and February 2014 (see Tab. A.1 for details). Interviews have been anonymised according to the Italian privacy law.

**Tab. A.1: Interviewees by type and area**

N.	Code	Type	Area/sector	Organization	Position
1	A1_1	Key officials	Cultural policy	Municipality of Milan	Officer
2	A1_2	Key officials	International affairs	Municipality of Milan	Officer
3	A1_3	Key officials	Housing policy	Municipality of Milan	Director
4	A1_4	Key officials	Innovation	Municipality of Milan	Director
5	A1_5	Key officials	Social policy	Municipality of Milan	Officer
6	A1_6	Key officials	Labour and economic policy	Municipality of Milan	Officer
7	A1_7	Key officials	Social policy	Municipality of Milan	Director
8	A2_1	Policy-makers	Cultural policy	Municipality of Milan	Aldersperson
9	A3_1	Policy strategists	Social policy	Research agency	Founding partner
10	A3_2	Policy strategists	Urban and cultural policy	Architecture firm	Founding partner
11	B1_1	Business organizations	Cultural industry	Cultural business	President
12	B1_2	Business organizations	Entrepreneurship policy	Chamber of Commerce	Officer
13	B2_1	Local in-migrant associations	Advocacy	Chinese second generation's association	Vice-President
14	B2_2	Local in-migrant associations	Advocacy	Interethnic second generation's association	Member
15	B3_1	Other NGOs	Urban and social policy	Bank Foundation	Head of Department

Interviews have been conducted mainly by junior staff from Urbino research team (Alba Angelucci), in collaboration with a research team from the University of Milan-Bicocca (Fabio Quassoli and Roberta Marzorati).

*Document analysis*

This report is also based on a critical discourse analysis of 102 documents of different kind (see Tab. 1.2 for details).

**Tab. 1.2: Documents analysed by type**

Type	N.
Policy strategy documents	9
Media documents (press releases, interviews...)	20
Documents about specific projects and initiatives	31
Documents of policy analysis	42
Total	102

For a more thorough analysis, we focussed on a limited number of policy strategy documents. In particular on the following:

- 1) *Plan for integration within security. Identity and Encounter*, issued by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Education (August 2010)
- 2) *Framework agreement for the implementation of measures concerning social integration of migrant people*, issued by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, and the Italian Network of Intercultural Cities (September 2013)
- 3) *Programme Roma, Sinti and Travellers 2012-2015. Guidelines for a proposal*, issued by the Municipality of Milan (July 2012)
- 4) *Plan for the Welfare Development of the Municipality of Milan 2012-2014*, issued by the Dept. of Social and Health Policy, Municipality of Milan (September 2012)
- 5) *Methods and contents about the priorities for an Urban Agenda*, issued by the Inter-Ministry Committee for Urban Policy (March 2013)
- 6) *Programme of the candidate for mayor Giuliano Pisapia*, issued by the Committee “Pisapiaxmilano” (May 2011)
- 7) *The Italian way for the intercultural school and the integration of foreign pupils*, issued by the Ministry of Education (October 2007)