

# Chapter 10

## Research-Policy Dialogues in Italy

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### 10.1 Introduction

Italy is usually characterised by political scientists as a country with a high degree of penetration of party politics over public administration and civil society, where experts are considered either marginal or controversial figures. Especially when involved in policymaking, experts are regarded as being linked to a political party, and claims of impartiality are met with suspicion. This seems to be particularly the case for the social sciences: in a recent reconstruction of the history of the Italian Council for the Social Sciences, founded in 1973 by a group of prestigious scholars including the political philosopher Norberto Bobbio, the organisation is described as an ‘anomaly for the time . . . as it was independent, not linked to any political party or cultural clan’ (Silj 2006, p. 8).

With regard to the immigration field, existing studies on policymaking assign either marginal or variable relevance to expert knowledge. In a recent history of Italian immigration policies (Einaudi 2007), the role of academic experts emerges as marginal compared to the centrality of political actors, in particular the Ministers responsible for immigration issues and the parties’ political leaders. However, according to another reconstruction carried out by Zincone (2011), centre-left governments have shown a greater inclination to rely upon independent experts and top-level civil servants than centre-right politicians, who show a greater trust in internal party staff. A party’s political ideology, in particular the left-wing pro-immigrant and right-wing anti-immigrant positions, seems to have some influence on processes of institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation in research-policy dialogues.

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This chapter intends to develop further these insights through a systematic analysis of knowledge production, policy-research dialogue structures, and the uses of knowledge in the migrant integration policy field. The next section is devoted to an illustration of the main developments around the framing of migrant integration in Italy since the first inflows of foreign workers. In the third section I reconstruct the intertwining of knowledge production (Favell 2003; Penninx 2005), dialogue structures (Bommes and Morawska 2005; Geddes 2005), and uses of knowledge (Boswell 2009) in order to identify some characteristic features of science–society dialogues on migrant integration in Italy. The fourth section is devoted to an in-depth analysis of science-society dialogues on three specific issues, i.e., naturalisation, the reception of migrant children in schools, and accommodation of new religious pluralism. In the conclusion I draw some reflections on research-policy dialogues on migrant integration in Italy and advance some considerations of the relevance of this case study for the advancement of our knowledge on science–society dialogues more generally.

Similarly to the other country studies presented in this book, empirical evidence is drawn from literature review, document analysis, analysis of newspapers articles and 27 semi-structured interviews with academic experts (11), experts affiliated with independent research institutes (4) and boundary organisations (3), and policymakers, both politicians (5) and civil servants (5).

## 10.2 Immigrant Integration: Key Issues

Immigration was first acknowledged as a relevant phenomenon in Italy at the end of the 1980s, even though initial flows from former colonies in the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia) had already started in the mid-1960s (Einaudi 2007; Colombo and Sciortino 2004). Table 10.1 provides an overview of the main phases of development of migrant integration issues and related policies.

The first phase is characterised by a complete neglect of the migration issue in the public debate. The first arrivals of migrant workers were dealt with by administrative bureaucracies within the Interior and Labour Ministries, behind closed doors and in a highly discretionary way (Einaudi 2007). Immigration only entered the political

**Table 10.1** Periodisation of Italian migrant integration policies

Period	Description of period
1965–1986	Early phase: migration flows developing spontaneously, no public debate
1986–1996	Functionalist approach: migrants as ‘useful workers’; emerging migration–security link
1996–2002	Integration enters the policy agenda: the ‘reasonable integration’ model
2002–2006	Regionalised – and fragmented – integration policies
2006–2012	Culturalist approach

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

agenda in 1986 when the first immigration law was approved. In terms of framing the migrant integration issue, this first law conveyed the idea of immigrants as a temporary presence, strictly functional to labour market needs (Caponio and Zincone 2011). No financial resources were provided to the regions in order to promote the integration programmes that the law requested them to undertake. Integration also remained a neglected issue in the second immigration law approved in 1990: It was *de facto* delegated to the good will of local administrations, pro-immigrant NGOs and Catholic associations.

The early 1990s were also marked by the emergence on the political scene of a new, explicitly anti-immigrant party, the Lega Nord, which proved successful in focusing attention on the 'dark side' of migration, i.e., undocumented entries, immigrant criminal organisations, and so on. A focus on events such as the mass arrival of undocumented Albanians on the Apulian coast contributed to the perception of Italy as being invaded by chaotic and uncontrolled migration flows, and to the consolidation of an immigration-security discourse in Italian politics.

As indicated in Table 10.1, migrant integration only entered the political agenda in 1996, with the first centre-left Prodi government, and on the initiative of the then Minister of Social Affairs Livia Turco. In this period, public attention was monopolised by continuous new arrivals of Albanians due to the so-called 'financial pyramids' crisis, later followed by Kosovars escaping war in the Balkans (Colombo and Sciortino 2004), leading to a high politicisation of issues of borders control and immigration regulation. *Vis-à-vis* these emergencies integration remained a neglected issue in public debate. However, in 1998 law no. 40, also known as the Turco-Napolitano law after the then Ministers of Social Affairs and Interior, addressed the issue explicitly for the first time by introducing the so-called 'reasonable integration model.' This initiative intended to pursue two goals: nationals' and immigrants' physical and psychological well-being on the one hand, and positive interaction between different groups on the other (Zincone 2011). A number of policy measures aimed at fostering individual equality and at promoting intercultural relations were devised in all the crucial spheres of immigrant incorporation. Furthermore, in order to make the 'reasonable integration' model work, a National Fund for Immigrant Policy was introduced and allocated to the regions on the basis of programmes to be agreed upon with the municipalities.

However, with the approval in 2000 of the federalist reform which assigned to the regions complete autonomy on matters of social policy, migrant integration policies entered a new phase. Since 2003 the regions have received from the central government a share of the National Social Fund (Fondo sociale nazionale) and are held responsible for its allocation. This institutional reform, combined with the considerable cuts to the NSF taking place since 2005, led most regions to considerably reduce immigrant integration programmes if not simply to cancel them altogether (Campomori and Caponio 2013). The burden was shifted to cities, with the emergence of an extremely fragmented scenario, leading to a *de facto* erosion of the reasonable integration model.

Parallel to this decentralisation of migrant integration policy, at the national level the early 2000s were marked for the first time by a sudden politicisation of the

integration issue, taking place in the context of a debate on Italian identity and against multiculturalism triggered by the reactions to 9/11 and terrorist events in Europe. In this politicised climate, the centre-left majority elected in May 2006 proposed a new culturalist approach to migrant integration, as highlighted by the drafting of the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration promoted by the then Minister of the Interior Giuliano Amato. The Charter was initially presented as a reaction to a controversial initiative of the Union of Islamic Communities in Italy (UCOII) to publish an advertisement in the main Italian newspapers comparing Israeli repression in the Palestinian territories to the Nazi Holocaust. However, the Minister enlarged its scope by affirming that it had to be endorsed by individuals applying for Italian nationality more generally.<sup>1</sup> Integration was presented as a process requiring migrants to ‘show a good command of the Italian language, know the essential elements of Italian history and culture and share the principles regulating the Italian society.’ (Carta dei valori della cittadinanza e dell’integrazione – principle no. 5).

This culturalist shift was at the very core of Law no. 94, known as the ‘Security Package’ (*Pacchetto sicurezza*) and approved by the fourth Berlusconi government in July 2009. Integration was defined as a ‘process aiming at promoting cohabitation between Italian and foreign citizens on the basis of respect for the Italian Constitution, with a mutual engagement to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the society’ (art. 4-bis). The so-called ‘Integration Agreement’ was also introduced, requiring signature by first-time applicants for the residence permit. The Integration Agreement requires immigrants to fulfil specific integration conditions within 2 years in order to have their residence permit renewed, with a particular emphasis on the mastery of the Italian language and on the knowledge of the country’s history, institutions, and civic culture.

This cultural definition of integration was further emphasised in the document ‘Integration and security programme. Identity and encounter’ (Piano integrazione nella sicurezza. Identità e incontro), approved by the government in June 2010, where a so-called ‘Open identity’ model of integration (*Modello dell’identità aperta*) was proposed. This model favoured the ‘pursuit of a real encounter implying an understanding and respect for who we are, reciprocated by a natural curiosity towards others’ cultures and traditions’ (p. 5). The respect of ‘who we are,’ that is of ‘our cultural identity,’ defined as ‘an original combination of Jewish-Christian and Roman-Greek cultures’ (p. 4), is regarded as an essential pre-condition in order to start a path towards integration based on ‘rights and obligations, responsibilities and opportunities’ (p. 4).

However, the Integration Agreement was implemented only in March 2012, i.e., more than 2 years after it was introduced, and it has not challenged regional autonomy on matters of migrant integration. In fact, integration policy in Italy

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<sup>1</sup>See: «La Carta dei valori non è solo per l’Islam» [‘The Charter is not just for Islam’], *Corriere della Sera*, 10 April 2006, V. Piccolillo.

today takes place in a complex multi-level governance setting (Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero 2014), characterised by a high level of inconsistency between national, regional, and local definitions of integration.

### 10.3 Research–Policy Dialogues: A State of the Art

To understand science-society dialogues on migration in Italy a premise has to be made. Compared to other countries (for instance the Netherlands: See Scholten 2011), research on migration in Italy has not developed so much in response to policymaking but rather stems from pro-immigrant activism. In fact, the first research studies on the topic were undertaken at the end of the 1980s not by academics or by governmental research institutions but by NGOs traditionally involved in offering support to Italian emigrants and/or linked to trade unions or the labour movement more generally. This overlap between activism and research explains the difficult relations between experts and policymakers, with the latter often reluctant to cede decision-making power on such a ‘hot’ electoral issue.

However, research-policy dialogues on migration in Italy have developed and changed over time, and some technocratic experiments have also been promoted, especially by centre-left governments in the 1990s. In what follows, we will firstly analyse the development of the research infrastructure on migrant integration, i.e., knowledge production, before turning to focus on dialogue structures and use of knowledge in this policy field.

The early research on migrant integration in Italy was inspired by two main schools of thought: the Catholic one, adopting a ‘social problems’ approach (i.e., focused on the description of immigrants’ living conditions and everyday problems of integration); and the macro-structuralist and critical one, looking at immigration as a product of the structural contradictions of capitalism (Rella and Vadalà 1984). The first perspective proved to be prolific and influential in subsequent decades. The NGO Caritas is a case in point: having been particularly active in the past in providing assistance to overseas emigrants and in compiling reports on Italian communities in the world (Pugliese 2002), in 1991 it started to produce a yearbook on immigration in Italy (*Dossier Immigrazione*), which is still published today. A similar background in Catholicism and approach to social problems also characterises the Institute for the Study of Multi-ethnicity (Ismu), founded in Milan in 1991, which can be considered the first Italian research centre specialising in immigration.

At the beginning of the 1990s academics also started to get more interested in the phenomenon, firstly demographers, followed by sociologists, political scientists, and legal experts. In this context, a third, more policy-oriented school of thought emerged, composed of scholars with a strong orientation towards political reformism who took theoretical inspiration from the experiences of other European countries. As we shall see below, this group of experts has been particularly

engaged in pursuing a dialogue with policymakers and, together with the Catholic school of thought, has taken part in the various commissions on migrant integration established at the national level.

In the last decade, the research infrastructure on immigration in Italy has further diversified, with the scientific production becoming more academic and, thanks to a new generation of scholars, internationally oriented (Caponio 2010). This diversification and fragmentation of knowledge production does not seem to be directly related to the politicisation of the migrant integration issue, but is rather a product of the internal dynamics of the research infrastructure on this topic. This is still marked today by a strong separation between academic research, supposedly 'neutral' or at least with a primary scientific orientation, and socially involved research, more oriented towards pro-immigrant activism. Furthermore, academic research is also fragmented internally along disciplinary lines and methodological approaches. Most independent research centres explicitly seeking to influence policymaking – such as Ismu and FIERI, *Forum internazionale ed europeo di ricerche sull'immigrazione* – characterise themselves as interdisciplinary.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of dialogue structures (Bommes and Morawska 2005; Geddes 2005), different periods can be identified: firstly enlightenment-like forms of dialogue operated in the early 1990s (1990–1992), followed by technocratic (1993–2001) and engineering phases more recently (2002–2009). As for the early 1990s, a first window of opportunity for research-policy dialogues on migration came with the explosion of the first crisis over immigration (but not integration, see above), leading to a mobilisation in favour of immigrants' rights on the part of trade unions and Catholic NGOs. In June 1990 and March 1991 two conferences were promoted by the then Minister of Justice, the Socialist Claudio Martelli, gathering together experts in different migrant integration policy subfields (children's education, labour market, health care, housing, etc.), from both academia and pro-immigrant organisations (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri and OCDE 1991; CENSIS and CNEL 1991). In the second conference European scholars were also invited and the concept of a national integration model entered the debate, putting on the agenda the necessity of devising consistent Italian integration policies.

The two conferences can be regarded as attempts to establish an enlightenment boundary configuration between policymaking and expert knowledge, with policymakers inviting prestigious experts (either for their academic position or for their experience in the field) to deliver the technical knowledge and the analytical tools needed to develop rational and evidence-based policies. To this end, a preparatory study was also commissioned by the government from Poleis (*Centro di politica comparata* – Centre for Comparative Politics), a research institute in comparative

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<sup>2</sup>FIERI was founded in 2002 in Turin and until recently it was the only Italian member of the IMISCOE (Immigration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe) network of excellence, funded by the EU in the context of the VIth Framework Programme and now self-financed by its members. It can be considered an indicator of the increasing international profile of migration research in Italy.

policy analysis at Bocconi University (Milan). However, no reform of the 1990 law was undertaken during Minister Martelli's mandate, in part because of a crisis in the then centre-left government. The conferences of the early 1990s seem to have played essentially a legitimising function for the then Minister of Justice who had promoted the 1990 law. This law was especially criticised by NGOs for its predominant focus on border controls and entry restrictions. In the politicised climate of the time, with the Lega Nord becoming more and more aggressive, the launching of the two conferences can be regarded as an attempt to counter radicalisation by sending the message that the government had invited prestigious and well-known experts to find solutions. If and to what extent there was really an intent to implement the mobilised knowledge is hard to say, given the short life of that particular centre-left government.

As far as integration was concerned, however, both the conferences and the Poleis study succeeded in putting the issue on the policy agenda, suggesting the necessity for a balanced approach between recognition of cultural differences and equal access to citizenship rights (Conferenza nazionale dell'immigrazione et al. 1991, p. 12). This conception of migrant integration was reiterated throughout the decade in the various technocratic commissions established since 1993 to reform the immigration law. Experts in this period were assigned the task of translating their knowledge into viable policy (namely a new law) and were directly involved in policymaking.

The first commission, established in 1993 by the then Minister of Social Affairs Fernanda Contri, was composed of academic experts from different disciplines, although legal experts prevailed.<sup>3</sup> The result was a bill composed of 174 articles, the so-called Contri bill, which attempted to strike a balance between issues of border control and favourable integration policies. The commission concluded its work a few days before the 1994 political elections, which were won by the centre-right coalition headed by Silvio Berlusconi and included the Lega Nord. The new majority took a clear anti-immigrant stance, and did not show any interest in the bill prepared by the commission (Einaudi 2007, p. 183). Again, no use was made of the mobilised knowledge.

Nevertheless the Contri bill was taken as a starting point by the first centre-left Prodi government elected in April 1996. A second commission was appointed, chaired by the then Minister of Social Affairs Livia Turco, and formed by more or less the same academic experts and top-level civil servants as in 1993 (Zincone 2011, p. 266). Experts were again directly involved in the elaboration of a new comprehensive law, even though, in contrast to 1993, a greater collaboration with ministerial bureaucracies was sought (interview with a civil servant from the Prime Minister's office). The original text of the Contri bill was simplified, adapting it to the everyday needs of public administrators, yet this simplification did not happen without conflicts among some of the experts (interviews with (i) a civil servant from the Prime Minister's office; (ii) an expert in immigration law). In any case, there is

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<sup>3</sup>Of a total of thirteen members, five were legal experts. As for the others, there were four sociologists, two of them representing respectively CENSIS and ISMU, a political scientist, a demographer, an economist, and a philosopher.

no doubt that the 1996 Turco Commission had an instrumental function insofar as the revised bill was discussed in the Parliament and constituted the backbone of the 1998 Immigration Law.

The technocratic model of research-policy dialogues was institutionalised to some extent by art. 46 of the new law, which established the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants. This commission had the task of monitoring policy implementation, suggesting possible adjustments and providing answers to requests on the part of the government. Chaired by Giovanna Zincon, who had already taken part in the two previous commissions and in the Poleis comparative study, the Commission was composed of eight top-level officials, nine experts (eight from academia and one from an NGO), and two business representatives, one of whom was an entrepreneur of Somali origin. Hence, in contrast to the previous two commissions, experts in the field and pro-immigrant activists were represented, pointing towards a more open science–society dialogue structure.

The Commission for the Integration of Immigrants was inspired by a strong belief in the ability of knowledge to orient policymaking towards reasonable and appropriate solutions shared by the Minister of Social Affairs, Livia Turco, and by the head of her staff, Guido Bolaffi. In particular, the Minister relied upon commission advice in her attempt to reform the 1992 Naturalisation law and a bill was prepared and discussed in the government (interviews with (i) a minister in the first Prodi Government; (ii) a senior civil servant in the Prime Minister's office). However, this attempt was ultimately fruitless.

On the other hand, in order to inform the government about the implementation of the new law, the commission compiled two reports on migrant integration. And, contrary to what we would expect in the case of instrumental use of knowledge (i.e. minimal interest on the part of researchers and policymakers in publicising research reports, see Boswell 2009: 86), the President of the Commission and the Director of the Department for Social Affairs sought broad dissemination and high visibility for the Commission's work. In fact, the two reports were published by a leading academic house, Il Mulino. Furthermore, the commission organised three international conferences, respectively on naturalisation policies in Europe, immigrants' political participation, and Roma minorities' rights, and actively participated in the organisation of a conference on migration held in the context of the 2000 Vatican Jubilee events.

Through the organisation of conferences and the publication of reports, it appears the commission was attempting to legitimise itself as an impartial and technocratic institution in the contested field of migration policy. And actually, according to one of the key actors at the time, the Commission was perceived as 'an institution characterised by autonomy, plurality and scientific rigour' (interview with a minister in the first Prodi Government). However, this strategy of legitimising knowledge use did not prove completely successful, since the next Berlusconi government in 2001 abolished the commission. As a matter of fact, the new centre-right political majority did not conceive it as an independent body, but rather as a political instrument set up by the previous centre-left government in order to signal its positive stance towards immigrants integration.

The end of the commission marked the end of the attempt to establish a technocratic model of relations between experts and policymakers on the migration issue. At the beginning of the 2000s, as already mentioned above, migrant integration became an increasingly politicised issue, leading to a profound re-orientation not only of policy (see the culturalist approach above) but also of research-policy dialogues. Politicians on both sides started to show a clear preference for seeking ad hoc consultancy and setting up commissions on specific issues. As we shall see in greater detail below, this is the case of the two initiatives on naturalisation and new religious diversity promoted by the Minister of Interior Giuliano Amato in 2006, as well as the few and informal initiatives to seek advice on the implementation of the Integration Agreement introduced by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy in the fourth Berlusconi government. These cases can be regarded as typical examples of an engineering-like boundary configuration between research and policy (Scholten 2011), since experts were called upon to accomplish specific tasks established by the political leadership, in a principal-agent type of relationship.

In terms of knowledge utilisation, engineering relations in this period seem to have had a primarily substantiating function, since the role of experts was essentially that of providing scientific support for certain policy decisions against possible alternative courses of action (Boswell 2009). Yet, some instrumental use of this ‘mandated knowledge’ can be also noted, in the sense that ad hoc expertise indeed contributed to the refinement and specification of the policies to be undertaken. Nevertheless, the setting of policy priorities rested firmly in the hands of politicians.

## 10.4 Key Topics in Research–Policy Dialogues

In the sections below I analyse how science-society dialogues on key topics in migrant integration policy have unfolded in the 2000s. As with the other chapters in part 2 of this book, I will cover naturalisation of newcomers, reception of immigrant children in primary and secondary school, and the accommodation of new religious diversity. I will consider first the production of knowledge on each topic, to turn then to dialogue structures and uses of knowledge.

### 10.4.1 *Naturalisation of Newcomers*

The issues of naturalisation and citizenship more generally were primarily discussed by legal experts in migration after the 1992 reform to nationality law. This reform toughened the naturalisation requirements for non-EU immigrants, from 5 years of legal residence under the previous law to 10 years (see: Zincone 2011). Experts in comparative and constitutional law were particularly prominent in criticizing this law, both through academic publications and editorials in the newspapers.

In the mid-1990s, political scientists and sociologists also became more and more interested in matters of naturalisation. Citizenship was conceptualised by these scholars primarily as a set of civil, political, and social rights accorded to immigrants. Comparative studies on immigrants' citizenship rights in the main EU immigration countries were carried out in order to draw meaningful insights for analysis of the Italian case. From a comparative perspective, the 1992 nationality law has been interpreted by Zincone (2006) as evidence of the family-based approach to the issue in Italy, given its openness towards the descendents of Italian emigrants (just 3 years of legal residence required in order to apply for naturalisation) and the foreign spouses of Italian citizens (until 2009 only six months of legal residence were required), set against its stringency towards other non-EU immigrants. Zincone's study, carried out in the context of FIERI's research activities (see above) and published by one of the main Italian publishing houses (Laterza), did not receive much attention from the media, yet some of the interviewees considered it a relevant piece of research in the policymakers debate on the issue (interviews with (i) a centre-right political leader; (ii) a centre-left political leader).

As already mentioned above, the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants was particularly active on matters of naturalisation. The bill prepared by the Commission envisaged naturalisation after 5 years of legal residence and the introduction of 'moderate *jus soli*' for children: the parents of minors who were born in Italy or had arrived very young could apply for Italian nationality provided that their children had completed primary and secondary school obligations in Italy.<sup>4</sup> These two innovations remained at the very core of subsequent reform proposals aimed at liberalising access to nationality in Italy (Zincone 2011).

In the 2000s, the main attempt to reform the nationality law was pursued during the second Prodi Government by the Minister of the Interior Giuliano Amato, in 2006. The 2006 bill was an updated version of the one prepared by the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants in 1999, on the basis of a new comparative study prepared by an expert who had already participated in that commission (Zincone 2011, p. 25). On the one hand the new bill reduced the residence time requirement from ten to five years, yet on the other hand it added new conditions by introducing a language test and oath of allegiance, thus copying the initiatives pioneered in other European countries. This bill was discussed in the Constitutional Affairs Parliamentary Commission, where various experts, primarily legal experts, were invited to provide their opinion and advice. The hearings promoted by the Constitutional Affairs Commission can be considered an 'enlightenment-type' dialogue structure since experts, both academics and practitioners, were not directly involved in the policymaking process but were consulted on a bill which was already prepared by policymakers (i.e. the Minister, his undersecretary, and the Democratic Party rapporteur in the Chamber of Deputies [lower chamber of the Italian Parliament]).

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<sup>4</sup>According to the present law, in order to be eligible for citizenship, foreign children have to be born in Italy and to have regularly lived in the country without interruption until the age of 18.

Usually, expert hearings in parliamentary commissions have a functional purpose, in the sense that debate with experts is sought in order to improve a certain bill and to facilitate its approval in Parliament. Yet this was not the case with the nationality law: the final adoption was delayed due to problems in finding the financial resources needed for implementation (interview with a minister in the second Prodi government), then in 2009 the second Prodi government lost its majority. The new centre-right majority in parliament, including the new Interior Minister Roberto Maroni (Lega Nord), were not interested in pursuing nationality reform. However, according to one of our interviewees (an expert on immigration law), the advice delivered by the Constitutional Affairs Commission was sometimes critical towards the bill, and legal experts especially found it less than satisfactory from a constitutional point of view. If and to what extent the final text that Minister Amato intended to present to the Chambers took these criticisms into account is not clear.

There is unanimity among the interviewees about the hostile role played by the media during this period. In fact, the media did not give much attention to debates in the Constitutional Affairs Commission, which – similarly to other Commissions of this kind – worked in the shadows. The main target of the news was the Amato bill, which was depicted by newspapers and journalists close to centre-right parties and the Lega Nord as indiscriminately open towards *jus soli*. In general, the interviewees share the opinion that the issues of naturalisation and citizenship have attracted more media attention because of the clamour created by politicians than the arguments and proposals put forward by experts.

#### ***10.4.2 Reception Policies for Immigrant Children in Primary and Secondary Education***

The first research on immigrant children and school reception policies dates to the 1990s, when NGOs working in the field began to notice increasing numbers of foreign children enrolling every year in Italian schools. Catholic organisations have been particularly prominent, which accounts for the prevailing ‘social problems’ approach. As regards independent research centres, Ismu (see above) and Fondazione Agnelli were the first to carry out studies on the topic, primarily at local levels, i.e. in the Lombardy and Piedmont regions respectively.

Academic research on second-generation and migrant children is more recent, and dates to the late 1990s. New centres were founded, some, such as the CD-Lei in Bologna, directly linked to the University, while others, such as the Centro Come in Milan, were sponsored by the local administration (in particular the Province of Milan). According to one of the interviewees (an academic expert on the second generation), two approaches to the study of migrant children’s integration can be identified: on the one hand, a normative approach, characterising primarily educationalists and sociologists of education, who have specialised in the

definition of the intercultural model of education and intercultural policy; on the other hand, an empirical approach, followed by demographers and sociologists of migration, which is concerned first and foremost with data collection and analysis. The relevance of these different perspectives is also confirmed by literature reviews on migrant children's integration in Italy (see for instance: Ponzio and Ricucci 2007).

In the 2000s some important studies on migrant children's integration were carried out, among them one coordinated by Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna, demographer at the University of Padua, comparing the educational achievements of migrant children and their Italian schoolmates in nine Italian regions (Veneto, Lombardy, Tuscany, Marche, Lazio, Campania, Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily). This study demonstrated the critical relevance of regional school systems and reception policies, and publication of its results (Dalla Zuanna et al. 2009) raised a lively debate in the expert community, albeit with far less interest at the level of the media and the public more generally. In this respect, the interviewed experts remarked how the media have been more attentive to reporting politicians' statements than scientific studies on immigrant pupils' integration. A case in point is represented by the controversy that was raised in 2008 by Lega Nord MP Roberto Cota, who argued for the necessity of arranging separate classes for immigrant children.

Notwithstanding this neglect on the part of the media, in the 2000s two important dialogue structures were set up on the issue: firstly, a mixed group composed of teachers, public officials, and academic experts started by Minister Moratti in 2004 during the third Berlusconi government; secondly, a National Observatory for intercultural education and foreign pupils' integration, established in 2006 during the second Prodi government. In terms of dialogue structures, these boundary organisations can be characterised as technocratic institutions, since academic experts, together with public officials and other experts in the field, were directly involved in the definition of the lines of action to be pursued by the Ministry to strengthen immigrant children's access to school.

The mixed group was an initiative of the then Director General for Student Services in the Ministry of Education, Mariolina Moioli, appointed by Minister Moratti. Before becoming a political activist in the Berlusconi Forza Italia movement, Moioli was a secondary school teacher with a longstanding interest in reform of the school system.<sup>5</sup> According to some interviewees (academic experts on the second generation and education issues, and members of the mixed group), she played a crucial role in ensuring the adoption in 2006 of the 'Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign pupils,' a document drafted by the mixed group which established a series of benchmarks to which schools were expected to conform. Academic experts appointed in the mixed group were key in drafting the guidelines, starting with the experiences and suggestions of experts in the field

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<sup>5</sup>[http://www.comune.milano.it/portale/wps/portal/CDM?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/contentlibrary/In+Comune/In+Comune/I+Gruppi+Consiliari/Milano+al+centro+Letizia+Moratti+Sindaco/Moioli+Maria+Mariolina/](http://www.comune.milano.it/portale/wps/portal/CDM?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/wps/wcm/connect/contentlibrary/In+Comune/In+Comune/I+Gruppi+Consiliari/Milano+al+centro+Letizia+Moratti+Sindaco/Moioli+Maria+Mariolina/)

such as schoolteachers and headmasters. The document was judged by NGOs and trade unions as unexpectedly open-minded and progressive for a political majority where the Lega Nord played a pivotal role.

As mentioned, in 2006 the second Prodi government institutionalised the experience of the mixed group with the establishment of the National Observatory. This was articulated at two levels: the Scientific Committee, composed of almost the same academic experts already involved in the previous mixed group and of experts from the field (school teachers and community link-workers), placed side by side with a technical committee formed by senior officials in the Ministry; and the general assembly, where NGOs and other pro-immigrant organisations as well as school headmasters and teachers were represented. In this case, the main promoter of the initiative was also a politician, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Maria Letizia De Torre, of the Democratic Party, who had a professional background as a schoolteacher.

Despite the change in the political majority, there is a clear continuity between the two experiences, as indicated by the fact that key experts appointed in 2004 were confirmed in 2006. Furthermore, in both dialogue structures a crucial role was played by a senior public official of the Ministry, Vinicio Ongini, former teacher, described by most interviewees as an atypical civil servant, insofar as he was particularly interested in keeping contacts with experts and facilitating the translation of their ideas into viable policy documents. As is clear, in the education sector personal commitment and interest in the issue seem to represent crucial assets in order to initiate and continue research-policy dialogues, regardless of the ideological make-up of the ruling majority.

Contrary to the previous mixed group, the Observatory did not succeed in elaborating any new normative provision. A general declaration of principles was adopted, entitled 'The Italian way towards intercultural education and foreign pupils' integration.'<sup>6</sup> According to the interviewees, the short (2 year) lifespan of the Prodi government impeded more effective action, and the National Observatory was discontinued in 2009, when the fourth Berlusconi government came to power. Nevertheless, the reflections developed by this institution were not completely abandoned. According to two interviewees, they continued to represent a point of reference for the Ministry's administrative staff as indicated by circular no. 2/2010 on the so-called 'bridge classes.' Issued under pressure from the Lega Nord, which intended to establish special ethnic classes for migrant children, the ministerial circular introduced a maximum threshold of 30 % non-Italian-speaking children per class 'to be adjusted to specific local conditions.' This reflected the positions of the experts participating in the National Observatory, who were particularly concerned with creating favourable conditions for immigrant children to learn the

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<sup>6</sup>[http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/cecf0709-e9dc-4387-a922-eb5e63c5bab5/documento\\_di\\_indirizzo.pdf](http://hubmiur.pubblica.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/cecf0709-e9dc-4387-a922-eb5e63c5bab5/documento_di_indirizzo.pdf)

Italian language. To this end, they considered a high number of non-Italian-speaking pupils to be detrimental (interviews with (i) a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Education; (ii) academic experts and members of the Observatory).

### ***10.4.3 Accommodation of New Religious Diversity***

Knowledge production on religious pluralism in Italy is characterised by a plethora of academic groups, individual scholars, and research centres, among which three strands emerge as particularly relevant (interviews with two academic experts). The first strand is represented by a group of sociologists of religion from the University of Padua who have specialised in the study of multiculturalism and Islam. The second is formed by specialists in religious and canon law in Rome, Milan (Catholic University), and other universities in Italy, who have been active on matters of religious liberty and have always taken part in the various committees established at a local and national level. The third strand is that of the centres of oriental studies established in various Italian universities (Rome, Venice, Naples, etc.), which, while primarily concerned with linguistic and cultural aspects, have also devoted considerable attention to religious matters.

Contrary to the other two topics discussed above, research on immigrant religions and Islam has always attracted a certain level of attention from the media, as emphasised by the fact that, according to two interviewed experts, their books have usually received reviews in the main newspapers, although this has not always resulted in accurate and unbiased accounts (interviews to two academic experts on matters of religious pluralism and Islam). The media's interest in this aspect of migrant integration is particularly well illustrated by what can be called the 'Sartori case': in 2002 Giovanni Sartori, a well-known political scientist at Columbia University (albeit with negligible experience in cultural, religious and migration studies), published a pamphlet against multiculturalism which raised heated debate in the academic community and in the public at large. Various factors contributed to the escalation of this case: first of all, the personal charisma of the scholar, always alluring to the Italian media because of his critical voice on political parties and the political class more generally; secondly his indisputable prestige in the academic sphere as an expert on democracy; third, his provocative argument. According to Sartori, multiculturalism is inherently dangerous for Western civilisation since its cultural relativism leads to the acceptance of value systems in contradiction with democratic principles, such as those characterising Islam. Yet Sartori's book cannot be considered a proper scientific study, since it was not based on any kind of systematic research or data analysis.

Sartori's position contributed to the politicisation of the religious issue at the beginning of the 2000s. As anticipated above, in order to oppose radicalisation especially on the part of the Lega Nord, in 2006 the then Minister of Interior Amato established the Scientific Committee for the drafting of the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration. Experts were selected because of their authority

on religious issues and Islam in particular, as indicated by their biographies: the president, Carlo Cardia, and Roberta Aluffi Beck-Peccoz are both legal experts on religious law; Adnane Mokrani is a professor of Islamic Theology and Islamic Law; Khaled Fouad Allam was professor of Sociology of Islam and a deputy in the Italian Parliament (at the time belonging to the centre-left party La Margherita); Francesco Zannini is an expert on the history of contemporary Islam. Moreover, two representatives of the Home Office Ministry were also involved, acting as a liaison with the Minister. None of these experts had been involved in the previous commissions, even though the committee's president was close to the Interior Minister and had collaborated with the Socialist government in 1984 on a revision of the agreement with the Catholic Church (*Concordato con la Chiesa Cattolica*) (interview with academic expert and member of the Scientific Committee).

In order to draft the Charter, the committee undertook extensive consultations with the main immigrant and religious communities present in Italy, as well as with voluntary organisations supportive of immigrants' integration. Furthermore, the Committee identified a number of relevant matters about which specific studies were undertaken, including civic integration programmes in Europe. The media followed the initial steps of the committee's work and dedicated some attention also to the final text of the Charter, officially presented by Minister Amato in April 2007. However, the focus of media news continued to be UCOII's controversial attitudes towards the Scientific Committee (see Sect. 10.3), rather than the day-to-day work of this group.

The Scientific Committee can be regarded as a typical example of an engineering structure in research-policy relations: experts were called upon to accomplish a specific task, i.e., drafting the Charter, a task which was established by the political leadership in a principal-agent type of relation. Indeed, the role of the experts was essentially that of giving scientific substance to an already established normative goal. Such a goal was clearly shared by the president of the Committee (interviews with (i) a minister in the second Prodi government; (ii) an academic expert and member of the Scientific Committee).

As for knowledge utilisation, by establishing a committee of experts on such sensitive issues as Muslim religion and integration, the Minister of the Interior was affirming his credibility in the domain of migrant integration as well as enhancing his culturalist approach, in contrast with the more solidaristic and universalist stance of the then Minister of Social Policy, the ex-Communist Gianni Ferrero. Some of the characterising features of the Scientific Committee are indicative of a substantiating use of knowledge (Boswell 2009, p. 86): from an organisational point of view, the committee was composed of external experts plus two senior civil servants, thus ensuring direct exchange with the decision makers; the research agenda was centred around the linkages between culture (specifically in terms of religion), Italian identity, and integration, which were critical issues in the public debate at the time; the outcome, i.e. the Charter, was selectively publicised among those audiences considered the most directly concerned, i.e. religious and immigrant communities, schools, and public administration offices dealing with immigration.

Another dialogue structure on the topic is the Constitutional Affairs Parliamentary Committee, which convened in November 2009 to examine two bills on Islamic

women's dress codes, the so-called 'Burqa Commission.' The three interviewed academic experts who took part in the commission were dissatisfied with its outcomes: '[T]hings were very well planned before and probably already decided. . . . [W]e were invited to articulate our position, but there was no real interest in taking this into account' (interview with an academic expert on immigration law and member of the 'Burqa Commission'). The Commission seemed to play essentially a legitimising function for the two proponents of the bills under discussion, i.e., the Popolo della Libertà MP Suad Sbai, a woman of Moroccan origin known for her provocative positions on Islam, and the Lega Nord MP Roberto Cota, always highly vocal on matters of migration (see above for his initiative on the so-called 'ethnic classes'). Neither law was approved in the end, but they raised quite a lot of debate in the media.

## 10.5 Conclusions

Similarly to other European countries, research-policy dialogues on migrant integration in Italy have taken different forms throughout Italy's 40-year history of immigration. As in the UK and the Netherlands at earlier times (Scholten 2011, pp. 271–272), in Italy during the late 1990s an attempt to establish a consistent model of integration policies, implying both individual equality and some (soft) cultural recognition, was accompanied by the establishment of technocratic venues for research-policy dialogues, e.g. the Commission for the Integration of Immigrants. While short-lived, the commission provided a crucial contribution to the development of scientific research and, to some extent, also to policymaking. This is particularly the case for the naturalisation issue, where the reform of the nationality law elaborated by the commission has represented something of a benchmark for the bills that followed, even though to date no reform has been approved.

Analysis of dialogue contributions in the 2000s, on the three subsectors of naturalisation, school reception policies, and accommodation of new religious diversity, reveals how knowledge utilisation indeed represents a major issue. Dialogue contributions autonomously provided by experts seem to have had minimal influence on policymaking, even though, according to the interviewees, some research studies have indeed contributed to enhancing experts' status and consideration in the eyes of policymakers, offering experts an opportunity to participate in various boundary organisations. As for the experts' contributions to research-policy dialogues, a distinction can be made between expert hearings promoted by parliamentary commissions and expert committees appointed at the governmental level. Whereas in the former case the influence in policymaking appears negligible, notwithstanding the strictly instrumental purpose of these commissions (to improve bills and speed up their approval), for the latter we find contrasting evidence.

In particular, engineering structures such as the Scientific Committee for the drafting of the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration, and technocratic forms of dialogue as exemplified by the boundary organisations set up at the

Ministry of Education, seem to have exerted quite an influence on policymaking especially in the long run. This is the case for the National Observatory for intercultural education and foreign pupils' integration: even though its work did not translate into any new piece of legislation or policy action, it influenced how the Ministry's senior civil servants responded to political requests (see the 'bridge classes' issue above).

Hence, dialogue contributions directly promoted by the government appear to have more chances of being used instrumentally, i.e., in order to modify existing policies or legislation. Nevertheless, this does not rule out symbolic uses, as evidenced by the case of the Scientific Committee for the drafting of the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration, which played primarily a substantiating function in the – hidden – conflict between Ministers in the framing of migrant integration.

In order to understand knowledge utilisation (or lack thereof), an intervening factor has to be taken into account, i.e., the personal commitment and interest of policymakers in a specific issue. This seems to be particularly the case for education, where the key decision makers — politicians from both right-wing or left-wing parties and public officials — show considerable experience in school matters and a particular sensitivity towards the issue of migrant children's integration. In the other two policy sectors, this condition is met only in the case of Minister Amato, who as a professor of Constitutional Law already had an interest in matters of citizenship and religious liberty. However, in both these sub-sectors the role of public officials, i.e., the bureaucracy of the Ministry of the Interior, appears to be negligible, which may be the reason for the scarce implementation of the mobilised knowledge.

On the other hand, media attention does not seem to have been relevant for knowledge utilisation. The relationship between the media and migration in Italy has been the object of several studies (Sciortino and Colombo 2004; Gariglio et al. 2010; Binotto et al. 2012) which converge in highlighting the high degree of selectivity towards the 'dark side' of migration, i.e. arrivals of undocumented migrants, criminality, and the like. In this context, new religious diversity (above all Islam), has received some attention as underscored by the 'Sartori case' and confirmed by the majority of the interviewees. On the contrary, as far as the other two issues are concerned, media attention has been reported as intermittent and limited to political controversies. The media have indeed contributed to the politicisation of some issues and this may have led to the decision to start a dialogue with experts, as in the case of the Scientific Committee for the drafting of the Charter of the Values of Citizenship and Integration. However, the media do not seem to have played any relevant role in the utilisation (or non-utilisation) of experts' knowledge.

To sum up, demand for expert knowledge in Italy does not seem to be necessarily the prerogative of certain political actors, even if it is undeniable that centre-left majorities have been more keen to pursue science–society dialogues. On the other hand, knowledge has been used primarily for symbolic purposes (Boswell 2009), either of a legitimising or substantiating kind, or not used at all. According to our

analysis, for instrumental utilisation to occur, responsible and interested policymakers (and, even more importantly, responsible and interested public officials) must be in place, a condition that seems to have clearly been met only in the case of school reception policies for migrant children.

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