Clara Tripodi

Reconquering Life: Vulnerable Women Migrant Victims of Trafficking Living the Process of Integration in Italy

Summary

This thesis is concerned with the debate on the integration of victims of human trafficking into host societies. It focuses on the Italian scenario, which among the European countries, has some of the most developed instruments regulating the fight of trafficking and victims' integration. Indeed, Article 18 of Legislative decree 286/1998 is an advanced tool which enables women victims of THB to escape from exploitation and to integrate into the new society. The study aims to understand if women ex victims of trafficking can integrate into the new society thanks to the services provided by Article18. With this aim, I decided to focus the research on women's perspectives and their personal experiences. Consequently, the research question is*: how do women migrant victims of trafficking perceive the process of integration in Italy and what is their point of view about the local NGOs' support?* I collected relevant literature which explores the concept of human trafficking as an international crime recognized at the regional and national level and I connected it with the issue of integration. Besides, I opted for the theories from Ager and Strang (2008) and their understanding of integration in addition to Kabeer (1999, 2005, 2012) and Zimmerman (2000) and their ideas on empowerment. To collect relevant data, I conducted interviews in an Italian NGO located in Bergamo – Associazione Micaela – which deals with THB victims' integration since 1999. I led semi-structured interviews with five women who have gone through the process of integration thanks to the services provided by Associazione Micaela. Despite the limited time and the challenges generated by the outbreak of the pandemic emergency Covid-19, which forced me to stop my fieldwork, many significant results emerge from the interviews. The thesis concludes that the Italian integration system designed for victims of human trafficking is efficient. Women interviewed feel integrated into Italian society and are satisfied with the services provided. Also, they believe the support received from the NGO was fundamental for their integration and their empowerment's process. Nevertheless, there are still some aspects that could be enhanced. The system as structured greatly rely on NGOs work and on the choice of victims to ask for help. Also, the political scenario together with the populist anti-migrant discourses, supported by many, represent a threat for the system which is already weak since it is outdated and lacking funds. The final part of this research examines the potential future challenges within this framework and try to give an overview of possible future steps to tackle human trafficking and assure victims' integration.

Abbreviations

BSA   British Sociological Association

GAATW The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women

MDG   Millennium Development Goals

NESH The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics

TFEU The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

THB   Trafficking in Human Beings

UNODOC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNTOC United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

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Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, migration has become a reality that touches all continents. People are on the move and in recent years the number of migrants has rapidly increased, reaching 272 million in 2019 (United Nations, 2019, p. 3). The 2015 migration crisis changed the European scenario, making the EU Member States face a large flux of migrants mainly arriving from the Middle East and Africa.

Also, in recent years, the number of women migrants has increased. Indeed, the percentage of women among all international migrants and their respective roles have changed remarkably across the world. More and more women decide to migrate due to different reasons such as domestic violence, persecution, civil war, gender-based violence, to name but a few. Women migrants, because of their status, are more likely to be victims of violations of human rights such as inequality, discrimination, and gender-based violence. Indeed, as Jane Freedam claimed "the current refugee crisis in Europe has produced multiple forms of vulnerability and insecurity for refugee women including various forms of sexual and gender-based violence" (Freedman, 2016, p. 18). Therefore, women migrants usually live in social conditions and economic deprivation that limit their individual choices, making it easier for traffickers and exploiters to operate (Greve et al., 2016, p. 15).

In the 2018 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (UNODOC) data shows that

> most of the victims detected across the world are females; mainly adult women, but also increasingly girls. The vast majority of the detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are females, and 35 per cent of the victims trafficked for forced labour are also females, both women and girls (UNODOC, 2018, p. 10).

Thus, women migrants not only "face violence, assault and sexual harassment at every stage of their journey including on European soil" (Amnesty International, 2016, p. n.a.), but they are also susceptible to international crimes such as human trafficking.

> Despite this evidence, there is an alarming lack of data at the national level on the extent of violence against women and girls who newly arrive or are in need of international protection. This lack of data may fuel the perception that violence against women is not a major feature of this crisis (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016)

On the contrary, violence is one of the main elements of the woman migrant's journey and residence in Europe and it must be taken into consideration when analysing women's experiences in receiving countries and their integration process.

1.1 Statement of the problem: the research question

Italy can be considered as a good example of evidence of the phenomena described in the previous section and that is why I decided to focus my research in this country. In the past few years, migration issues have always been at the top positions of the governments' agenda. Since the Arab Spring and the collapse of regimes in Tunisia and Libya, the number of migrants has significantly risen. From then on, the Italian government has been trying to manage the migration crisis. However, despite the numerous efforts and policies implemented, there is still a public perception that migration management is out of control. What is more, right-wing parties' political discourse has made a significant proportion of the general public consider migrants as a scapegoat for the several economic, social or political difficulties that the country currently faces. Thus, the main focus of the State, as with other European countries, seems to be migration control rather than the eradication of irregular migration and the protection of migrants' human rights and their dignity.

Within this scenario, human trafficking is constantly increasing. Migration control and restrictive policies make migrants rely on traffickers and their services. Thus, the number of women trafficked is still high and most of them remain unprotected until their identification, which usually does not take place at once when they enter Italian territory.

This research aims to give voice to women migrants who have been victims of human trafficking and exploitation. In particular, I am interested in exploring women's path to integration in Italy, with the aim of understanding if, according to the victims, the Italian integration system as it is structured is efficient and well-designed. Thus, all women I interviewed have the common feature of having been a victim of an international crime like human trafficking and having been supported by authorities and dedicated NGOs throughout their integration process in Italy. In other words, women I interviewed can be identified as vulnerable subjects who have been victims of violations of human rights such as inhuman treatment, arbitrary detention, violation of personal freedom and similar acts.

As stated in the title of this study, the starting point is the following: 'Reconquering life: vulnerable women migrant victims of trafficking living the process of integration in Italy'. Consequently, the main research question of my study is:

How do women migrant victims of trafficking perceive the process of integration in Italy and what is their point of view about local NGOs' support?

The aim is to understand if women victims of human trafficking, who have already experienced a path to integration, are satisfied with the services provided. It is important to state that such experiences are extremely personal and contextualized. Nevertheless, interviewing women and giving them the possibility to speak out about their experiences is essential when examining the Italian system and comprehending its effectiveness and its limits. In addition, their witness accounts are crucial to understanding if they do feel integrated into the new society and if they managed to fully recover and start over in Italy after the exploitation period. Thus, a central role is given to women's voices which will be constant throughout the whole study.

1.2 Purpose and significance of this study

As will be explained later in the method chapter, I decided to focus my study on a small local area thanks to the support offered by Associazione Micaela, a small NGO located in Bergamo. Thus, the purpose of my project is not to generalize to find a general rule valid for women's integration into Italian society. On the other hand, I aim to analyse the topic using victims' perspectives. Consequently, it is essential to give women the possibility to speak out. When I started reading and finding relevant literature for my study, I noticed that relatively few studies addressed women's experiences and personal thoughts. Indeed, as affirmed by IOM, within this framework

> while there has been widespread research into the integration processes of migrants more generally, there has been little empirical research on the integration of trafficked persons, and, in particular, no conclusions based on discussions or interviews with trafficked persons themselves (IOM, 2013, p. 8).

Hence, this study aims to contribute to research on the topic of Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) victims' integration starting from the data collected through interviews. The idea is to give women the possibility to tell their stories, narrating their personal experiences, sharing their feelings and expressing their views. Most of the time, victims' voices remain unheard and policies are updated or developed without taking into account victims' real needs.

Moreover, I believe the best way to understand if the Italian integration system projected for the integration of victims of THB is efficient and well-structured, is to analyse and study the topic starting directly from the perspectives of those who receive support and benefit from the services provided. Consequently, interviewing women ex-victims of trafficking is the core stage of this study.

Instead of what had been originally planned, the sample of this research is small and composed of five women who have been victims of trafficking and received support from Associazione Micaela throughout their integration process. In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic emergency led the Italian government to introduce a total lockdown for preventive and containment reasons. I reside in one of the most hit regions in the country. As a result, I decided to stop the interviews that had already been planned and to avoid organising new interviews that should have taken place in March in the South of Italy. This was a difficult but necessary decision. I am aware that this aspect could result in criticism. Nevertheless, I believe this choice was unavoidable and ethically correct since it aims to protect not only myself and my family but also all those that I could have met throughout the interview process. Finally, I decided not to opt for online interviews, because I believe face-to-face interviews are essential when dealing with topics such as exploitation, human rights violations, trafficking and human dignity.

1.3 Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. *Chapter one* gives an introductive overview of the topic, the research question and the purpose of the study. *Chapter two* examines the existing relevant literature for this research focusing on topics like human trafficking and integration policies from an international, European and national perspective. *Chapter three* will present a theoretical framework to provide a deeper understanding of issues such as integration and empowerment. *Chapter four* includes the methods used in this research, presenting my methodological approach, research design, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, ethical principles and tensions, positionality, validity and reliability. My findings and analysis will be presented in two chapters – *chapter five* – highlighting the main theme of integration and *chapter six* focusing on empowerment. Finally, *chapter seven* concludes the thesis and provides final remarks and potential challenges for the future.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Trafficking in Human Being: Regulations and Concerns

As defined in GAATW 2010 Working Papers "Migration is, simply out, movement from one place to another. It can be assisted or independent movement. It can be international or within a country" (GAATW, 2010b, p. 4). Within this framework, trafficking in human beings (THB) has also to be considered as a migration phenomenon since it also starts as a movement. Nevertheless, in the case of trafficking, the evident and outstanding difference consists in the practice of exploitation which can take place in every moment of the journey.

THB has become a subject of political concern at world, regional and national level. "The inhuman practices of trafficking and its links to organised crime have been denounced as a violation of human rights and a threat to the security of states" (Anthias, Kontos, & Morokvašić, 2013, p. 173). Moreover, "migrant trafficking has been recognised by migration experts […] and policymakers as undermining international collaborative efforts to produce ordered migration flows" (Anthias et al., 2013, p. 173).

According to UNODOC "51% per cent of total number of victims of trafficking in the world are women" – and – "if the victims are women, exploitation is primarily sexual (in 72% of cases), followed by labour exploitation (in 20% of cases) and other forms of exploitation (in 8% of cases)" (IOM, 2017, p. 7). The root causes of trafficking women are several: there could be micro factors like domestic violence, poverty, and unemployment or macro factors such as "gender-based discrimination and economic policies that result in lack of livelihood options in countries of origin" (GAATW, 2010a, p. 11). Moreover, "the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has identified restrictive immigration policies as one of the risk factors for trafficking" – indeed, - "without access to legal or safe channels of travel, women and men from economically disadvantaged countries have to resort to traffickers to access routes barred by governments" (GAATW, 2010a, p. 12).

Today the number of legal instruments against trafficking is growing and "it is becoming increasingly clear that trafficking in human beings is not only a crime but also is a serious violation of human rights, labour rights and fundamental freedoms" (Elabor-Idemudia, 2003, p. 111). In the following pages, international, regional and national instruments regulating THB will be presented.

2.1.1 THB an international crime

At world level, THB (at that time 'traffic') was first mentioned in the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. The Preamble states:

> Prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community (United Nations, 1949).

However, a new legal definition was elaborated in 2000 with the promulgation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto. As stated by UNCHR:

> The primary function of the Convention […] and its Protocols […] is crime control. […]. They seek to define criminal activities and guide States as to how best to combat them. In doing so, they nevertheless provide helpful guidance on some aspects of victim protection and therefore constitute a useful starting point for any analysis of international protection needs arising as a result of trafficking (UNCHR, 2006, p. 4).

2.1.1.1 The 2000 United Nations Convention against Organised Crime

The UN Palermo Convention "represents a milestone in the establishment both of legal frame and a frame for political action" (Campani & Chiappelli, 2013, p. 176). Together with it, two protocols were presented: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UN, 2000), and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (UN, 2000). Article 3 of the first Protocol defines THB:

> Trafficking in person shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (UNODOC, 2000, p. 42).

The definition broadens the previous UN's previous perspective and defines trafficking as a process of several interrelated actions rather than a single act at a given point. Indeed, trafficking is defined by three "essential and interlinked sets of elements" (UNCHR, 2006, p. 4): the act, which is the recruitment, the transportation, the transfer, the harbouring or the receipt of persons;

the means, which could be by threat or use of force or other forms of coercion; and the purpose, that is to say the exploitation of the victim.

Another aspect which is pointed out is the difference between *voluntary prostitution* and *forced prostitution*. Indeed, the article states "that involuntary forced participation in prostitution would constitute trafficking, but it rejects the idea that voluntary, non-coercive participation by adults in prostitution constitutes trafficking" (Campani & Chiappelli, 2013, p. 175).

Also, the concept of exploitation, which is well-explained in the paragraph, allows for the important distinction between trafficking in human beings and smuggling. In fact, "Trafficking in human beings differs from human smuggling (facilitated migration) because it involves the use of force and involves exploitation, and because there is no need to cross a border or be physically transported" (European Commission, 2012, p. 2). These features, make "trafficking a human rights issue and justifies its definition as a modern form of slavery" (Campani & Chiappelli, 2013, p. 176).

Finally, as its name suggests, the UN Trafficking Protocol wants to focus on vulnerable groups such as women and children. This is because "women who have been trafficked may encounter abuse and violence from their employers […] and/or from their agents or brokers" (GAATW, 2010a, p. 21). Furthermore, women "can be particularly susceptible to serious reprisals by traffickers after their escape and/or upon return, as well as to a real possibility of being re-trafficked or of being subjected to severe family or community ostracism and/or severe discrimination" (UNCHR, 2006, p. 8).

As a result, the Trafficking Protocol embodies a step forward in the definition of THB and the fight for the protection of human rights. As reported by Campani and Chiappelli, when defining THB, IOM clearly states that it violates the fundamental individual rights of migrants (Campani & Chiappelli, 2013, p. 176). Consequently, international instruments such as the UN Palermo Protocol, as well as regional and national frameworks (as will be shown later) are together trying to create a connected network the aim of which is to prevent and to suppress these violations.

2.1.2 The European Scenario

Nowadays, THB is widely discussed at a European level, as well. In 2015 "more than 90% of the migrants travelling to the EU used facilitation services" – and – "in most cases, these services were offered and provided by criminal groups" (Europol, 2016, p. 2). As declared by the European Commission, THB "is the slavery of our times. Victims are often recruited, transported

or harboured by force, coercion or fraud in exploitative conditions, including sexual exploitation, forced labour services, begging, criminal activities, or the removal of organs" (European Commission, 2012, p. 1) Consequently, fighting and preventing THB is one of the priorities of the European Union and its Member States. EU States, they bounded both to international regulations and the European Union's legal order which includes the EU regulations, decisions, directives, and judgements.

From the beginning of the 21st century, the EU "has put in place concrete action and stepped up cooperation as well as joint work at EU level and in partnership with third countries and organisations" (European Union, 2019, p. 1). The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights specifically prohibits THB: article 5.3 states that "Trafficking in human being is prohibited" (European Union, 2000, p. 9). The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) defines THB as a particularly serious form of organised crime:

> The European Parliament and the Council may […] establish minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions in the areas of particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension […]. These areas of crime are the following: terrorism, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitations of women and children […] (European Union, 2009).

Also, to address THB the EU has implemented a comprehensive, gender-specific and victim-centred legal and policy framework. The 2011/36/EU Directive and the EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings for the period 2012-2016 have been the main instruments applied.

The Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of 5th April 2011 replaces the previous Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA where THB was defined as a crime and Member States were required to criminalise it. The 2011 Directive condemns THB as a serious crime and as "a gross violation of fundamental rights" (European Parliament & Council of European Union, 2011, p. 1). Moreover, it recognizes "the gender specific phenomenon of trafficking and that women and men are often trafficked for different purposes. For this reason, assistance and support measures should also be gender-specific where appropriate" (European Parliament & Council of European Union, 2011, p. 1). Finally, the importance of Member States' participation is cited. First of all:

> Member States should encourage and work closely with civil society organisations, including recognised and active non-governmental organisations in this field working with trafficked persons, in particular in policy-making initiative, information and awareness-raising campaigns, research and education programmes and in training, as well

as in monitoring and evaluating the impact of anti-trafficking measures (European Parliament & Council of European Union, 2011, p. 2).

Second, Member States should provide assistance, support, and protection to victims:

> The assistance and support provided should include at least a minimum set of measures that are necessary to enable the victim to recover and escape from their traffickers. The practical implementation of such measures should […] take into account circumstances, cultural context and needs of the person concerned (European Parliament & Council of European Union, 2011, p. 3).

The 2012-2016 EU Strategy has produced a coherent basis and direction for the EU policy regarding THB. The main priorities of the strategy were: identifying, protecting and assisting victims; stepping up the prevention of trafficking in human beings; intensifying efforts to prosecute traffickers; enhancing coordination and cooperation among key actors and policy coherence and increasing knowledge and effective response. Moreover, it recognizes the need to include many more actors and not only governments in the fight of THB.

> A multi-disciplinary, coherent policy against trafficking in human beings requires the involvement of a more diverse group of actors than before in policy-making. These should include police officers, border guards, immigration and asylum officials […] Volunteers and people who work in conflict situations could also be involved (European Commission, 2012, p. 5).

In 2017, the European Commission adopted a Communication reporting the follow-up to the EU 2012-2016 Strategy.

Considering the European framework, the Council of Europe plays another relevant role. Indeed, it has set out a series of minimum measures to ensure the protection of the human rights of trafficked persons, the prevention of trafficking and the prosecution of those responsible through the adoption of a binding treaty: The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe, which was adopted in 2005 and came into force in 2008. In addition to this, a group of experts on trafficking has been set up under the acronym GRETA (Group of Experts on Actions against Trafficking in Human Beings), which is responsible for the implementation of the Convention.

Furthermore, another significant instrument drafted by the Council of Europe and related to women migrant's experiences is the Istanbul Convention (2011), the aim of which is to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. In particular, article 60 and 61 of the Convention "address the protection for refugee women against violence, as well as the

application of the principle of non-refoulement to victim of gender-based violence" (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016).

2.1.3 Italian Policies and Legal Instruments on THB

All forms of trafficking in human beings are prohibited in Italy. Italy has ratified the United Nation Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Smuggling and Trafficking Protocols. Moreover, it has implemented the European Council Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of the Council of Europe (2005) with Law n. 108 in 2010 (effective as of 2011) and the European Union Directive 2011/36/EU with the Legislative Decree n. 24 of the year 2014.

Nevertheless, "the major modification to Italian legislation on trafficking in persons was made by the introduction of Act 228/2003, which modified the previous provisions of the Italian Penal Code" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 157). In particular, articles 600, 601 and 602 of the Penal Code were revised. Article 600 establishes punishment with imprisonment of 8-20 years for persons committing crimes of slavery and commercialisation of slaves. Article 601 "defines the crime of trafficking in human beings as consisting of transportation of persons from one State to another with the intent of exploiting this person" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 157), and it specifies that "the crime of human trafficking is committed by deception, force, threat, abuse of authority or abuse of the inferiority of the person subject to human trafficking" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 157). Act 228/2003 punishes THB and organisations committing it. Moreover, it establishes the so-called 'Article 13 Programme': "this is a three-month programme that can be extended for another three months. The programme provides first immediate assistance and support to Italian, European Community and foreign victims of slavery, servitude and trafficking. It ensures adequate accommodation, social assistance and health-care services" (Palumbo, 2015, p. 56). This Act "meets the requirements of Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 157) and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

A second instrument is Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998 (also called the Immigration Law), which was not modified by further development of the Decree itself in 2002. Article 18 plays a revolutionary role because it permits the integration of victims of THB into Italian society. Indeed, it "establishes that six-month temporary humanitarian residence permits may be issued to foreigners needing protection and assistance. The residence permit is renewable for one year and may be converted into a residence permit for education or work" (European Commission, n.a.). Comma 1 of the Article clearly states that:

When, during police's operations or inquiries or proceedings, […] or during aid interventions of social services of local bodies, situations of violence or serious exploitations of a foreigner are found, and concrete dangers emerge for his or her life, […] the chief of the local Police headquarter, also on Public Prosecutor's proposal, or with the favourable opinion of the same authority, releases a special permit of staying to give the opportunities to the foreigners to escape from violence and from the influence of the criminal organisation and to participate in an assistance and social integration program. (Ventrella, 2010, p. 170)

Moreover, Article 18 permits the integration of victims of THB whether or not they decide to cooperate with the authorities. Indeed, it plays a crucial role in victims' integration, which will be better analysed later on.

Finally, since 2000, Italy has put in place a complex structure for the assistance of trafficked persons. "It works through three main tools: programmes for temporary assistance and long-term social protection; free helpline; programme for assisted voluntary return" (European Commission, n.a.). This structure is supervised at the national level and coordinated by the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers. More specifically, the Department aims to work towards the development of a National Action Plan against THB through effective coordination with NGOs and associations involved. The first National Action Plan was adopted in 2016 for the period 2016-2018. Unfortunately, political instabilities and new government formations have slowed down the process for the new Action Plan. In a latest declaration, on the European day against THB (18th of October 2019), the Minister of Equal Opportunities Elena Bonetti declared that Italy has to do more and that the new government plans to work towards the realization of a new National Action Plan which will include all national actors in the fight against THB (Italian Department for Equal Opportunities, 2019, p. n.a.).

2.2 THB and Integration

Integration "is one of the most important and complex aspects of assistance of trafficked persons" (Surtees & Nexus Institute, 2008, p. 4). Indeed, victims of THB who try to "integrate into destinations settings are likely to encounter barriers to care and stressors similar to those experienced by refugees and asylum-seekers" (C. Zimmerman, Hossain, & Watts, 2011, p. 330). In a study on the effectiveness of measures for the integration of trafficked persons (2013), IOM declares that lately "there has been relatively little attention paid to the medium to longterm prospects of victims who remain in the destination country" (IOM, 2013, p. 13).

Differently from other migrants the very first impact that victims have with the host society is distorted due to their experience of exploitation which slows down and unbalances the process of integration. They, usually, "experience their first encounters with the destination society during the period prior to their identification, whether with individuals involved in the trafficking or exploitation, or with outsiders who cannot or do not assist victims in changing their situations. These encounters are likely to be negative experiences" (IOM, 2013, p. 21). Interviews by IOM brought up that victim's integration use to start from the moment of identification, and not during the period of exploitation (IOM, 2013, p. 21). That is to say that the integration process (if it ever starts) could start a very long time after the victims arrive in the host country. Moreover, even when identified, victims are sometimes unable to proceed with their process of integration either because of deportation or due to their refusal to cooperate with authorities against their traffickers. Indeed, "once victims are identified and start the process of leaving their experiences behind, many or most are dependent on their willingness to participate in criminal proceedings against those who perpetrated their movement and exploitation in order to remain legally in the country of destination" (IOM, 2013, p. 21). Consequently, "those who have been trafficked into and exploited within EU societies set out on the path to integration (if there is to be one) with very limited rights" (IOM, 2013, p. 21).

As it is easy to understand THB victims need a specific approach. As Polatside and Mujaj explain "different groups (asylum seekers/refugees/undocumented migrants/victims of human trafficking etc.) face unique problems, have specific needs and confront specific barriers, thus integration of these groups requires different approaches" – and again – "assistance should be centered on the victim's needs, age and should be gender-specific, as well as specific to the form of trafficking the victim has experienced" (Polatside & Mujaj, 2018, p. 7).

Trafficking experiences are often deeply traumatic and managing life post-trafficking can be very difficult. Trafficked persons reported a range of negative emotions" (Surtees & Nexus Institute, 2008, p. 15): stigma, shame, enduring psychological repercussions, risk of re-trafficking, difficulties accessing services, fear and the actual possibility of retribution by the traffickers etc. Furthermore, victims require "healthcare that is trauma-informed and culturally sensitive to their particular needs. This is especially significant where the harms are lasting, which they often are in case of, for example, several sexual violence (Polatside & Mujaj, 2018, p. 54).

Surtees notes five factors which could be helpful in victim integration: "settlement in a safe and secure environment, access to a reasonable standard of living, mental and physical well-being,

opportunities for personal, social and economic development and access to social and emotional support" (Surtees & Nexus Institute, 2008, p. 11). "While these factors might be common to all immigrant integration, the emphasis might vary and they are central to the (re)integration of victims of trafficking, and form together the basis for the empowerment of these people" (IOM, 2013, p. 24). Indeed, empowerment plays a central role in the integration process: "empowering past victims of trafficking with well-considered support in line with individual needs, from the moment of identification until the time of full integration, seem […] to provide a solid basis for integration" (IOM, 2013, p. 57).

Providing tools and facilitators is up to host governments. Indeed, taking into consideration the international and the European frameworks with their already implemented conventions and instruments, it is undisputable that governments are responsible for victims' status and rights. Moreover, access to services depends both on government's policies and funding, and on the availability of services (IOM, 2013, p. 22). Even so, European governments have recently mostly focused on the prevention and prosecution of THB, neglecting other aspects such as the protection of victims. In truth, it looks like designing assistance and integration policies is somewhat challenging:

> Policy-makers have tendency to respond in a short-term manner and expect quick effects. Assistance programmes and integration policies, especially to vulnerable migrants like victims of exploitation and trafficking, however, requires long-term commitment by central and local authorities and adequate sustainable funding (Polatside & Mujaj, 2018, p. 54).

In conclusion, it can be stated that a more focused and effective implementation of international as well as European instruments should be enacted. Governments' actions should be centred on victims' needs. As Polatside and Mujaj explain for successful integration:

> The aspect of empowerment is central, and that the victim is provided with meaningful alternatives. It is important to nurture such essential life skills like making connections, complex problem solving, self-motivation to regain control over one's life, critical thinking etc. that facilitate integration, social and labour inclusion. After experienced trauma, that can cause mistrust in people and insecurity in life, it might be challenging for trafficked persons to master these skills if adequate support and assistance is not provided for the necessary period. These aspects of integration and long-term protection are usually poorly addressed and need to be strengthened (Polatside & Mujaj, 2018, p. 55).

2.2.1 Italy and Integration of THB's victims

From an international perspective, "the Italian anti-trafficking legal framework appears to be extremely innovative and progressive to both assistance and protection of victims, and the possibility of issuing a residence permit" (Palumbo, 2015, p. 54). Indeed, Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998 (above mentioned) is advanced since, differently from other EU countries' systems "not only it permits the integration of victims of human trafficking by issuing residence permits when the victims decide to co-operate with law enforcement authorities to arrest their traffickers, it also permits the integration of these people whether or not they decide to cooperate" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 170).

The scheme applies a two-way protection approach: victims "can be identified as such by selected NGOs specialised in this field and by public social services, which is known as the 'social path', or by law enforcement authorities if they agree to cooperate in prosecution, which is known as the 'judicial path'" (IOM, 2013, pp. 33-34). Differently from the 'judicial path', "under the 'social path', the issuing of the residence permit by the *Questura* is requested by NGOs or public social services that have discovered a situation of violence or serious exploitation against a foreign national. In this case, the trafficked person is not obliged to co-operate in the framework of criminal proceedings" (GRETA, 2018, p. 49). The 'social path' is usually preferred, since victims are frequently reluctant to cooperate because they fear the traffickers and the retaliation against their families in their countries of origin (Ventrella, 2010, p. 170).

The residence permit issued under Article 18 "has a duration of six months and may be renewed for one year or longer period" (GRETA, 2018, p. 49). As stated in the Legislative Decree 286/1998:

> The residence permit, issued under this Article, has a duration of six months and can be renewed for one year, or for a longer period if required for legal reasons. It shall be revoked in cases of interruption of the programme or conduct incompatible with its purpose[1] (Italian Chamber of Deputees, 1998).

Moreover, "the residence permit can be converted into a residence permit for education, or work, allowing the victim to remain in Italy" (GRETA, 2018, p. 49). Indeed, as specified in the Decree:

> The residence permit provided for in this Article shall allow access to welfare services and study, as well as entry on lists of employment and the performance of paid

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[1] "Il permesso di soggiorno rilasciato a norma del presente articolo ha la durata di sei mesi e può essere rinnovato per un anno, o per il maggior periodo occorrente per motivi di giustizia. Esso è revocato in caso di interruzione del programma o di condotta incompatibile con le finalità dello stesso".

employment, subject to minimum age requirements. If, on the expiry of the residence permit, the person concerned appears to have an employment relationship, the permit may be further extended or renewed for the duration of the relationship or, if this is indefinite, in accordance with the conditions laid down for that purpose. The residence permit provided for in this Article may also be converted into a residence permit for study purposes if the holder is enrolled in a regular course of study[2] (Italian Chamber of Deputees, 1998).

Thanks to the residence permit victims of THB can access several services such as housing, language courses, legal and psychosocial/medical support, vocational training, job placement support and many others. Services are operated by NGOs and associations, which receive funding directly from the national Department for Equal Opportunities. "Italy makes national funding available, to the tune of an average of 6 to 6.5 million euros each year, for initial assistance and long-term integration services to former victim of trafficking" (IOM, 2013, p. 44). Even more relevant is the fact that all these services are provided and available for victims until the process of assistance and empowerment achieves the ultimate goal of a job place or an autonomous life (IOM, 2013, p. 44).

NGOs and local associations play an important role in this system since they are the ones realising the project of assistance and social integration designed by Article 18. NGOs and associations are directly selected by the Italian Department for Equal Opportunities as winners of the call (which is usually published every year). They do help victims from the recognition of the final independence. Indeed, as mentioned in the 2016-2018 anti-trafficking National Action Plan one of the final aims of Article 18 is to:

> Activate actions to motivate, empower and make migrants more employable; guidance, training and employment integration, through the testing of networks composed of highly qualified persons working with a view to programming and strengthening measures to combat trafficking by ensuring access to social and labour market services for those at high risk of exclusion[3] (Italian Council of Ministers, 2016, p. 42).

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[2] "Il permesso di soggiorno previsto dal presente articolo consente l'accesso ai servizi assistenziali e allo studio, nonché l'iscrizione nelle liste di collocamento e lo svolgimento di lavoro subordinato, fatti salvi i requisiti minimi di età. Qualora, alla scadenza del permesso di soggiorno, l'interessato risulti avere in corso un rapporto di lavoro, il permesso può essere ulteriormente prorogato o rinnovato per la durata del rapporto medesimo o, se questo è a tempo indeterminato, con le modalità stabilite per tale motivo di soggiorno. Il permesso di soggiorno previsto dal presente articolo può essere altresì convertito in permesso di soggiorno per motivi di studio qualora il titolare sia iscritto ad un corso regolare di studi"

[3] "Attivare azioni di motivazione, di empowerment e di maggiore occupabilità dei migranti, orientamento, formazione e inserimento lavorativo anche attraverso la sperimentazione di reti composte da soggetti altamente qualificati che lavorino nell'ottica di programmare e potenziare gli interventi di lotta alla tratta assicurando l'accesso ai servizi sociali e al mercato del lavoro per i soggetti a forte rischio esclusione"

In practical terms, services provided by associations usually are housing; health, psychological, and legal assistance; activities aimed at helping the victim to reach a potential job placement such as training courses, language classes, and traineeships; information, training and awareness-raising on trafficking and so on. In other words, the aim of the assistance and social integration project is "the autonomy of the victims, and, accordingly, the need to support their ability to make decision for themselves, enabling them to escape from situations of abuse, to obtain a legal status and to access social and labour opportunities in Italy" (Palumbo, 2015, p. 57).

Ultimately, it can be claimed that Article 18 is a revolutionary tool for two different objectives: offering the victims of THB an actual chance to escape exploitation and start a new life and improving the quality of the results of the criminal repression of THB. However:

> The originality in the approach of Art. 18 is that both objectives are placed on the same level, by not considering social protection of trafficked persons as a mere tool of criminal action and by considering the protection of the victims' rights as a priority, at the same level of importance for the State, as the punishment of those who have committed such horrible crimes as trafficking in human beings (Association On The Road, 2002, p. 18).

That is to say that Article 18 implements a victim-centred system where victims' protection plays a central role.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter sought to present the international, regional and national framework in the fight of THB and how these are interplaying with the process of migrants' integration in a new country. As clearly shown, integration is a problematic process as such. However, being a victim of trafficking adds extra tasks and difficulties to the course. This literature review is fundamental to the following research since it aims to understand how women ex victims of trafficking perceive the process of integration in Italy. In other words, all victims that will be interviewed have been victims of an international crime such as THB and have been personally living the process of integration. As a result, not only have victims been experiencing a violation of human rights but they have individually encountered the limits and challenges of multiculturalism throughout the process of integration in Italy.

Among European countries, Italy has an innovative and revolutionary legislative system regulating the integration of THB victims. Indeed, Article 18, which encloses not only the possibility to leave a situation of exploitation but also the chance to integrate into the new society, is unique and different from other European countries' regulations, where victims usually receive

a permit to stay only if they decide to cooperate with the authorities. Thus, this peculiarity makes it unique and interesting enough to decide to undertake this research in Italy.

In the next chapter, theories useful to the research will be introduced. Consequently, concepts such as integration and empowerment will be discussed and a general presentation of both will be provided.

3. Theoretical Framework

Integration and empowerment are two concepts which have been largely mentioned in the previous chapter. Both have a significant meaning to this research and that is why this chapter gives an overview of these notions to provide a theoretical background to the question of this study.

> The ambiguity of the concept of integration lies in its differential acceptance and understanding by different users. Uncontested and taken for granted within political discourse, it was only one of the key concepts in migration research in the twentieth century which was primarily concerned with the ways migrants adapts to their new contexts (Anthias et al., 2013, p. 2).

Today, its heuristic meaning is constantly questioned in academic research and the European agenda.

At the same time, the idea of empowerment is largely debated. Its introduction within migration theories is more recent. Nevertheless, the discussion is constantly open, and, as will be explained later, several authors have contributed to the definition of its meaning over the years.

3.1 The Concept of Integration

"Integration is perhaps one of the most discussed challenges in immigrant receiving countries, yet it lacks a meaningful common definition" (IOM, 2013, p. 18). Indeed, as Robinson suggests, "'integration' is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most" (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167). As he explains, integration is an individualized, contested and contextual circumstance that has been interpreted and explained in several ways by academia and politics.

"Migration and integration research as a sociological discipline begins in the 1920's and 1930's in the so called Chicago School" (Heckmann, 2006, p. 11), where authors such as Duncan and Park proposed different theories and models of immigrant inclusion starting from the example of the American society. Despite the theorization and the large debate on this topic, and even today, there is still no consensus on a single definition. "Definitions share commonalities, but remain highly context or country specific" (Migration Data Portal, 2019).

A broad definition of migrant integration that could be used as a starting point for a discussion is the one reported on the Migration Data Portal. Migrant integration is

> The process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups … [integration] refers to a two-way process of adaption by migrants and host

societies … [and implies] consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose (Migration Data Portal, 2019).

As the definition claims, migrant integration is nowadays usually seen as a two-way process. "Historically, the forerunners of integration studies […] defined settlement and incorporation as a more or less linear process in which immigrants were supposed to change almost completely to merge with the main-stream culture and society" (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016b, p. 3). However, as time passed, it became clear that integration was not only a one-way process where migrants were the individual subject. Naturally, as Garcés-Mascareñas and Pennix explain:

> From the moment immigrants arrive in a host society, they must 'secure a place for themselves' […] They must find a home, a job and income, schools for their children, and access to health facilities. They must find a place in a social and cultural sense as well, as they have to establish cooperation and interaction with other individuals and groups, get to know and use institutions of the host society, and become recognized and accepted in their cultural specificity (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016a, p. 11).

However, host societies do not remain unaffected by these events. "The size and the composition of the population change, and new institutional arrangements come into existence to accommodate immigrants' political, social, and cultural needs" (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016a, p. 11). As a result, migrants' integration can be considered a two-way process where two parties are involved: "the immigrants with own characteristics, and differing levels of effort and adaption and the receiving society with its characteristics and varied reactions to these newcomers" (Penninx, 2005, p. 142).

In 2004, European Commission itself defined migrants' integration as a two-way process in its Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU: "Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States" (European Commission, 2004, p. 17). Moreover, it specified that the integration process "demands the participation not only of immigrants and their descendants but of every resident. […] It also involves the receiving society, which should create the opportunities for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation" (European Commission, 2004, p. 20). Consequently, to create a multi-cultural and well-integrated society Member States should consider and involve both immigrants and citizens in integration policy communicating their mutual rights and responsibilities.

When talking about integration theories, another highly debated aspect is what migrants practically need to feel integrated. Ager and Strang's theory can be useful. In their article *Understanding Integration: A conceptual framework* (2008) they conceptualise integration in a framework consisting of ten core domains.

A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

Markers and Means	Employment	Housing	Education	Health

Social Connection — Social Bridges, Social Bonds, Social Links

Facilitators — Language and Cultural Knowledge, Safety and Stability

Foundation — Rights and Citizenship

Figure 1 – Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: a Conceptual framework.
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These domains can be grouped into the following categories: foundation, facilitator, social connections, markers and means. "The 'foundation' is rights and citizenship; there are two 'facilitators', namely language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability. Three sets of 'social connections' from the next layer in approach: social bridges, social bonds and social links. Four markers and means of achieving these outcomes are employment, housing, education and health" (IOM, 2013, p. 19). Access to 'facilitators' and 'markers' depends both on funding and policies, and on the availability of services. In other words, States or connected providers such as NGOs (which most often receive funding from the governments) play a fundamental role in the integration process and are fundamental to the success of the process itself.

However, as Anthias, Kontos and Morokvašić explain within the last few years "in those European states that adopted a multiculturalist model […] there has been a shift in emphasis on migration and integration policies and towards social cohesion. Consequently, there has been a

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growth of securitisation and migration management as well as neoliberal policies and related agendas around this" (Anthias et al., 2013, p. 4).

As a result, by focusing on the State's interests and changing direction towards integration programmes leave migrants' voices unheard. As well as ignoring migrants' needs, the fact that migrants mostly need enough time to integrate into the new society is also an aspect that is usually not taken into account. IOM's Report on the effectiveness of measures in the integration of trafficked persons clearly states that "different people integrate at different speeds" (IOM, 2013, p. 50). As Heckmann explains, "integration as an individual and collective phenomenon is not a short sequence of events, or a big leap forward, but a long lasting process that may often extend the lifetime of a person and last for three generations" (Heckmann, 2006, p. 16). While some migrants feel integrated by the time they leave the support network provided by the State, some others would still not feel part of the receiving country. The feeling of not being integrated could be due to either a lack of confidence or a lack of skills (language skills or the ability to find paid employment). Time is, sometimes, the key element for a successful integration process: migrants need enough time to understand their responsibilities as part of a community and to get to know the peculiar aspect of the receiving societies such as practices and costumes, feelings and perceptions of good and evil. Also, from the perspective of a victim of trafficking time is fundamental since, as has already been explained previously, it might take a long period of time between recognition as a victim of trafficking, the start of the support programme and the final stage of integration into the new society.

Summing up, given the fact that there are no precise definitions of integration and keeping in mind what above explained, this definition by Heckmann can be used in connection with the reality analysed in my research:

> Integration as social integration can be defined as generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society. For the migrants integration refers to a process of learning a new culture, an acquisition of rights, access to positions and statuses, a building of personal relations to members of the receiving society and a formation of feelings of belonging and identification towards the immigration society. Integration is an interactive process between migrants and the receiving society. The receiving society has to learn new ways of interacting with the newcomers and adapt its institutions to their needs (Heckmann, 2006, p. 18).

The final aim of this thesis is to give a voice to victims and to give priority to their point of view. As a result, interviews will be conducted from this perspective and will endeavour to understand

women's comprehension of the term 'integration'. Considering the theoretical background and the difficulties in defining the term, it will be difficult and most probably unattainable to reach a conclusion, but asking the subjects directly who have been personally living this process will certainly help come closer to a final definition of the term and to establish the needs of women migrants.

3.2 Migration and Gender Empowerment

As Naila Kabeer states: "Gender equality and women's empowerment is the third of eight MDGs" – (MDG – Millennium Development Goals) – "It is an intrinsic rather than an instrumental goal, explicitly valued as an end in itself rather than as an instrument for achieving other goals" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 13). Nowadays, gender empowerment is omnipresent in the international and the European agenda. However, its strict connection within the migration debate is quite recent and few are the institutions that have developed the concept in this framework. Nevertheless, the importance of this process for the case studied in this research is fundamental. As IOM explains in its report on the effectiveness of measures for the integration of trafficked persons "during the process of transition and thus of integration, individuals seek to be empowered" – and again – "Part of the role of society in the integration process is to offer that empowerment along with emancipation from a role as victim in order to reach independence" (IOM, 2013, p. 60).

Despite the general agreement on the importance of empowerment, there is still no clear consensus on the definition of the term. Hence, keeping in mind the case study and the connection with the migration framework, an overview of the theories on empowerment is required.

When answering the question of what empowerment is, most of the current definitions firstly describe it as a process. To Mechanic (1992) empowerment is "a process in which individuals learn to see a closer correspondence between their goals and a sense of how to achieve them, and a relationship between their efforts and life outcomes" (Mechanic, 1992, p. 641). The definition of Rappaport in 1984 was the following: "empowerment is viewed as a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 43). Marc Zimmerman supports this idea of empowerment as a process and develops his own theory based on it. Specifically, he believes that "empowerment processes are ones in which attempts to gain control, obtain needed resources, and critically understand one's social environment are fundamental" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46). Indeed, "the process is

empowering if it helps people develop skills so they can become independent problem-solvers and decision-makers" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46).

Marc Zimmerman also points out that empowerment can be considered on different levels of analysis, that is individual, organizational and the community. Individual empowerment, also known as psychological empowerment, is the most important when dealing with victims of THB. The processes and the outcomes of this specific type are perfectly suitable for the THB victim's needs during the process of integration. Marc Zimmerman explains that "psychological empowerment (PE) includes beliefs about once's competence, efforts to exert control, and an understanding of the socio-political environment" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46). To reach these outcomes and become an empowered person, everyone should first go through an empowering process during which it is possible to acquire decision-making skills, learn how to manage resources and how to work with others. Women victims of THB, who have been living one of the most stressful and difficult events in life, need to be empowered and gain all skills needed to become independent in the new country. That is why the second level of analysis is equally relevant to this study's case. Indeed, organizational empowerment refers to those organizations that provide opportunities for people to gain control over their lives and provide members with opportunities to develop skills and a sense of control (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 51). In other words, organizations such as NGOs and the associations which help victims of THB throughout the process of integration can be defined as empowering organizations, since they are those who give them the chance to reach the empowerment process outcomes described above.

Another aspect most authors agree on is that the definition of empowerment takes 'choice' as a central aspect. Naila Kabeer bases her theory on this idea. She declares: "I defined empowerment as the processes of change through which those who have been denied the capacity to exercise choice gain this capacity" (Kabeer, 2012, p. 217). According to Kabeer power is the ability of a person to make decisions if he or she is first denied access to decision-making processes. This idea of initially being unable to choose (or as she says 'disempowered') is fundamental to Kabeer. Indeed, empowerment and disempowerment are related to each other. In one of her articles, she explains: "my understanding of the notion is that it is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choice acquire such an ability" (Kabeer, 1999, pp. 436-437). Nevertheless, for there to be a real choice, precise conditions must be fulfilled: "there must be alternatives – the ability to have chosen differently" – and again – "alternatives must not only exist, they must also be seen to exist" (Kabeer, 2005, pp. 13-14). Women victims of THB frequently cannot choose what kind

of life to conduct in Italy. Coercion, abuse and threats do not allow them to gain awareness of their rights: they do not see alternatives and they cannot choose; that is to say that THB victims can be defined as disempowered and in need of an empowering process.

For this to happen, women must have access to resources. "Resources include not only material resources in the more conventional economic sense, but also the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). A next step in the process is then when women acquire what Kabeer defines as agency. "Agency represents the process by which choices are made and put into effect. It is hence central to the concept of empowerment" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). 'Achievement' is the third dimension in the process outlined. Resources and agency make up people's potential for living the lives they want (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). "The term 'achievements' refers to the extent to which this potential is realised or fails to be realised; that is, to the outcomes of people's efforts" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15).

The international, European and national legal framework together with the work put in place by NGOs and associations have as one of its final aims to empower victims of THB to help them become independent and ready for a new life in Italy. Both agree on the fact that social support and an integration-oriented attitude would be positive predictors of victims' empowerment. In the end, the importance of empowerment is unequivocal and firmly stated in legal instruments and other organisations' reports as previously mentioned. The idea of this study, then, is to understand women's point of view and realize what empowerment means to them. For this reason, interviews will be conducted with the intention of better understanding this concept trying to find out which dimensions are considered and valued by victims.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed some basic terms such as integration and empowerment which are commonly mentioned when dealing with THB and victims' integration. Despite the large debates on these topics, there are numerous standpoints and it remains difficult to give a common definition. As a result, the idea of this research is to ask directly to the victims what integration and empowerment mean to them. Consequently, a broader discussion on this will be dealt with in the following chapters, analysing data and reporting results.

4. Research Methodology

Methods of social research are closely tied to a different vision of how social reality should be studied. Methods are not simply neutral tools: theories are linked with the ways in which social scientists perceive the connection between different viewpoint about the nature of social reality and how it should be examined (Bryman, 2016, p. 17).

That is why choosing the right research method is fundamental to the study's accomplishment.

My research questions - How do women migrant victims of trafficking perceive the process of integration in Italy and what is their point of view about local associations/organizations' support – drive the selection of my methodology. In this chapter I will provide an overview of my methodological approach – including my epistemological background; research design; recruitment of participants; data collection and analysis; ethical principles; validity and reliability and my positionality.

To answer my research question, I decided to employ the qualitative research method in data collection using semi-structured interviews that lasted between half an hour and one hour. Taking into consideration the aim of this research, qualitative interviews ended up being the best choice to collect data since they permit a bigger emphasis on interviewees' perspectives (Bryman, 2016, p. 466).

4.1 Epistemological Background

Brinkmann defines epistemology as the philosophy of knowledge which involves long-standing debates about what is knowledge and how it is obtained (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 55). Since the idea is to access a wider approach to what knowledge is than the position adopted by the positivist tradition, the epistemological foundation I have decided to adopt for this study is interpretivism. Interpretivism is "founded upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural science and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). I am interested in understanding women's perspective on the process of integration in Italy and the impact that the international, regional and national system has on them. The positivist tradition, which aim is to explain and generalize through the application of the method of the natural sciences, would not be as effective in answering my research question as I am not trying to generalize behaviours or generate hypotheses that can be tested. On the contrary, what I am interested in is the understanding of the interviewees' point of views and behaviours. That is why interpretivism is the most suitable approach to adopt.

4.2 Qualitative Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate experiences of the process of integration in Italy among women migrants who have been victims of trafficking. Unlike what usually takes place, great importance will be given to women's perspectives. Most of the studies on the issue of trafficking, indeed, usually do not include victims' standpoints but explain what the international, regional and national communities are doing towards the eradication of trafficking and the implementation of effective laws on integration. As a result, migrants' ideas remain ignored. That is why I decided to base my research considering the unheard viewpoints, giving the priority to victims' stories.

To achieve this goal, I decided to adopt the qualitative research method and the use of semi-structured interviews to collect data. Qualitative research methods, in fact, "are valuable in providing rich descriptions of complex phenomena; […] illuminating the experience and interpretation of events by actors with widely differing stakes and roles; giving voice to those whose views are rarely heard […]; and moving towards explanations" (Sofaer, 1999, p. 1101). The following definition is in line with the research's objectives, which is to answer the questions directly by interviewing people who have been living the trauma in person.

According to Bryman, one of the aims of qualitative research is to interpret the social world from the perspective of the people being studied (Bryman, 2016, p. 393). In other words, "the stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation for that world by its participants" (Bryman, 2016, p. 375). This is exactly what this research wants to do. The final purpose is to investigate women's perceptions, feelings, emotions, and personal experiences and individual understandings and their definitions of terms like integration and empowerment. The qualitative research method is, then, the most fitting choice to implement to develop this research.

4.2.1 Research Design

As Bryman explains, a "research design is […] a framework for the generation of evidence that is chosen to answer the research question(s) in which the investigator is interested" (Bryman, 2016, p. 39). In other words, "a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2016, p. 40). Considering the research question and my interest in highlighting women's voices, I decided to opt for a case study design.

The reason I chose this model is that a case study design implies the intensive and detailed analysis of a single case. The aim of this study, indeed, is not to generalize. The numbers of victims of human trafficking and those of women ex-victims of trafficking living the process of integration in Italy are large. As a result, taking into consideration the time available and the type of research I am working on, it would have been difficult to develop a broader study and to create a bigger sample which could include many more actors. Consequently, I decided to focus on smaller samples and single cases. Moreover, analysing local realities seems to be more accessible and the most exemplifying way to give a real and concrete example of the topic of research. Thanks to cooperation with a local organization, I had access to women who have experienced the process of integration in the previous years. I then decided to collect data through semi-structured interviews and analyse them through thematic coding.

Despite not being fully generalizable, the case study design gave me the chance to deepen the topic. As Stake explains, the case study design lets the researchers "enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how" – the cases – "function in their ordinary pursuit and milieus" (Stake, 1995, p. 1). The interest of researchers, when choosing the case study design, is to fully understand the interviewees. As Stake says, "We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories" (Stake, 1995, p. 1). As a researcher, I do identify myself in these statements, since my objective is to comprehend women, listening to their stories and giving them the chance to speak out. The emphasis is on women and the case study design is the only research design model which could allow me to work maintaining this perspective.

4.2.2 Participant Recruitment

Purposive sampling was employed in my research. As Bryman states "purposive sampling approach is that the sampling is conducted with reference to the research questions, so that units of analysis are selected in terms of criteria that will allow the research questions to be answered" (Bryman, 2016, p. 410). To be even more specific I used what Hood defines as '*a priori* purposive sampling': "when researchers decide what categories of people or situations to sample and how many of each they want to include, they are using what I call an '*a priori*' purposeful sample" (Hood, 2007, p. 157).

I was interested in interviewing women who fulfilled the following criteria. First, they had to be a migrant and moved from their country of origin to Italy. Then, they must have been victims of THB, which means that they also have been exploited by their traffickers. I did not add any limits

in terms of type and duration of exploitation. Finally, they have gone through a process of integration and they have been helped by a local association who provide this type of service.

To create this sample, I had to get in contact with local organizations that host and provide services to victims of trafficking. As will be better explained later, getting access to these associations has probably been one of the biggest challenges in the realization of the project. Associazione Micaela Onlus[4] accepted to help me in the realization of the sample.

Associazione Micaela Onlus (founded in 1999) is an association engaged in the field of social assistance, helping immigrant women victims of trafficking and serious exploitation, women in prostitution, women who use psychotropic substances and women who are subject to alternative measures to detention. The association – which has five different sections in Italy – fights to promote solidarity, peace and human rights, supporting intercultural and interreligious dialogue and sustaining women's rights and their empowerment on a daily basis. Their mission together with their ethics are wholly in line with my research and that is why it was easy for us to get well along and have moments to discuss and compare ideas and findings on the topics examined in the study.

In practical terms, I got in contact with one of their local sections, the one located in Bergamo (Region of Lombardia, Northern Italy). Associazione Micaela in Bergamo is a residential community for women victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, working and begging and in conditions of considerable social vulnerability (recognised by Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998). They have been working with victims of trafficking for several years and that is why I was able to work with them in finding interviewees for the research. My purpose was to interview people who had already been through the community and who had completed the process of integration. The Association, keeping in mind my idea of sample and requirements, decided to ask several women who fulfilled the criteria and that were helped by the organization in their integration process. As a result, I interviewed five women at the headquarters of the association. All interviewees were introduced to the project since they had received the information letter and the interview guide in advance. Moreover, I explained once again the aim of my project right before starting the interview. Finally, they were asked to sign the consent form to officially recognize their voluntary participation in the project.

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[4] ONLUS initials of non-profit organization of social utility, private institution that, according to the statute or the instrument of incorporation, carries out its activity for exclusive purposes of social and non-profit solidarity in an area deemed to be of social interest by the legal system.

Participant n.	Nationality	Country of origin	Over 18?	Year of arrival in Italy	Started being under protection in
1	Albanian	Albania	YES	2010	Oct. 2010
2	Moldavian	Moldavia	YES	2000	2000
3	Nigerian	Nigeria	YES	2007	2016
4	Albanian	Albania	YES	1997	Feb. 1997
5	Nigerian	Nigeria	YES	2005	2005

Table 1 – Description of participants in the interviews in Bergamo

One critique of my research could be that it had a small sample. However, as already mentioned earlier, my intention is not to generalize. Moreover, the pandemic emergency that is currently affecting Italy, led me to the decision to use the data collected until the pandemic outbreak without proceeding with more interviews.

4.2.3   Data Collection

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were utilized for data collection. As someone who researched in Italy, I decided to conduct interviews in Italian. Indeed, most of the interviewees felt more comfortable in discussing topics using a language they knew, and they felt more at ease with it.

Semi-structured interviews were employed as there were numerous subjects covered in the interviews where I wanted the interviewees to have space within the topic. This provided an opportunity to let the emphasis be on how the interviewees framed and understood issues and events – that is, what the interviewees viewed as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). I originally considered interviewing both immigrant women and social operators working for NGOs. However, I opted for interviewing only women migrants to give them the importance and the centrality that I wanted to provide with this study.

As Wilson explains, "semi-structured interviews are useful when you are working with a complex issue because you can use probes and spontaneous questions to explore, deepen understanding, and clarify answers to questions" (Wilson, 2013, p. n.a.). Therefore, the interview

guide was designed in such a way as to answer questions but also to have the possibility of a follow-up. Flexibility and freedom in answering questions were given to interviewees so that their standpoints could be expressed. Depending on the interview's development, questions that were not included in the interview guide, prompts and comments were added to develop the conversation and help the interviewees in keeping the focus on the topic.

Opting for semi-structured interviews was the most suitable tool I could use to collect data. Indeed, it gave me the chance to address such complex and delicate topics like trafficking and integration and ensured that particular points were covered with each participant and also allowed users to raise additional concerns and issues (Wilson, 2013).

4.2.4 Data Analysis

As for data analysis, I opted for thematic analysis, one of the most common approaches to qualitative analysis. "The idea is to construct an index of central themes and subthemes […] – which – are essentially recurring motifs in the text that are then linked to the data" (Bryman, 2016, p. 585). I read and reread the text to code and organize the data in terms of themes to highlight patterns of main concepts. Indeed, "the themes and subthemes derive from a thorough reading and rereading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the corpus of data" (Bryman, 2016, p. 585).

Once the data were coded and divided into themes and subthemes, I started finding connections between them and to create relations with the existing literature and the research questions. Thus, I developed a discussion on integration and empowerment – the two main topics of the research – using and including the data collected to make observations and finding results.

Finally, I used the data collected and coded to drive the conclusions and to create a final debate on potential future threatens and developments.

4.3 Ethical Principles and Tensions

"Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in social research" (Bryman, 2016, p. 120). Therefore, it is fundamental to be aware of the ethical principles that are involved between the researcher and the participants in all stages of the study process. Indeed, "infractions of ethical principles are wrong in a moral sense and are damaging to social research" (Bryman, 2016, p. 123). The British Sociological Association (BSA) guidelines on research ethics states that researchers

> Have a responsibility both to safeguard the proper interests of those involved in or affected by their work, and to share their analyses/report their findings accurately and

truthfully. They need to consider the effects of their involvements and the consequences of their work or its misuse for those they study and other interested parties (British Sociological Association, 2017, p. 4).

For these reasons, I will provide a critical reflection on some ethical principles I believe are central to my topic, especially relating to conducting interviews and research with women who were previously victims of THB. Indeed, working directly with these vulnerable actors might embody serious ethical challenges. As UNCHR explains, women victims of THB are extremely vulnerable: they "may feel ashamed of what has happened to them or may suffer from trauma caused by sexual abuse and violence, as well as by the circumstances surrounding their escape from their traffickers" (UNCHR, 2006, p. 17).

In searching sensitive and personal issues, including personal experiences, I could incur in what is defined as harm to participants. According to Bryman, "harm to participants can entail a number of facets: physical harm; harm to participants' development; loss of self-esteem; stress; and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts" (Bryman, 2016, p. 126). Stress and loss of self-esteem, especially, could have arisen during interviews. I was aware of the sensitivity and the particularity of the subject covered and I was ready to find interviewees which could potentially feel uncomfortable in talking about their lives.

I, therefore, decided to act accordingly. My original plan was to discuss and ask questions on exploitation and the trafficking process. But, considering the focus of the research – which is integration – and the extreme vulnerability of women in talking about these experiences, I decided to emphasis on the integration process which occurs when the exploitation period is over. The questionnaire (attached in the Annex chapter) demonstrates how I opted for questions which would focus on the integration process, avoiding any queries on the exploitation experience. This choice not only gave me the possibility to avoid the risk of harming participants but also increased the chance of interviewing women. Indeed, as confirmed by NGOs, women would have been more willing to participate in the research if the questions did not cover subjects that could make certain feelings arise once again. Moreover, I decided to interview women who had already been through the process of integration and who were already independent. That is to say, all participants were already integrated.

"The issue of harm to participants is further addressed in ethical codes by advocating care over maintaining the confidentiality of records" (Bryman, 2016, p. 127). This means that the identities and data of participants should be maintained as confidential. The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics (NESH) "stipulate that researchers must treat all information

about private matters confidentially. The material must usually be anonymised to protect the privacy and to prevent harm and a severe burden on the persons being researched" (The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics, 2015). In practice, all personal data – as can be seen from the interview guide – were not collected, since they could reconduct to interviewees, but also because they were not necessary for answering the research question. Moreover, the information letter, which was given to and signed by all participants, clearly states how data would be treated and who would have access to it. Finally, to guarantee participants' anonymity, I will refer to them using terms such as 'Interviewee n. x". In this way, confidentiality is guaranteed. However, I did not guarantee anonymity for the NGOs. This choice was made in agreement with the organisation.

Lack of informed consent must also be considered. "The principle means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study" (Bryman, 2016, p. 129). This task put me in a position of great responsibility. Therefore, I used two different tools to give participants information on what taking part in the project would have meant. First of all, the information letter, which as it is structured, it fully explains the aim of the project and clarifies what participating in interviews would imply. Moreover, I decided to share with interviewees the interview guide in advance. This made them feel more comfortable once consulted together, and it helped them understand what kind of questions they were to answer. On the other hand, some women who have been asked by the NGOs if they were willing to participate, decided not to take part to interviews since they did not want to live and remember their previous experiences once again. I can then affirm that sharing the information letter with potential interviewees together with the interview guide was a successful technique. It helped women in the decision process and helped me in respecting their sensibility once conducting interviews. Also, before starting the interview I gave this information once again to give the interviewees the chance to ask further questions if needed. Finally, I also asked permission to record their voices.

Besides, informing participants was not only a way to help them in deciding if they wanted to take part in the project or not. Indeed, it helped me in building trust, as well. Trust was one of the biggest challenges in conducting this research.

First, it must be said that getting access to interviewees was quite difficult. Being a young researcher and being new to the topic made me initially unaware of who to contact and how. It was difficult to find participants without going through NGOs first. That is why I contacted

several organizations. Most of them did not answer my email, some replied explaining that they do not let researchers have access to their contacts and some others clarified that researchers have access to their contacts if they do a volunteer internship first. I consider myself extremely lucky in having finally found the organization I have cooperated with since they decided to help me because they believed in the cause and in the project itself. To building a relationship of trust with them, I had a preliminary meeting where we had the chance to become acquainted with each other, talk about the subject I had decided to research, and give information about interviews. That is to say that NGOs received the information letter and the interview guide as well. Their feedback on the interview guide was extremely important because they helped me in understanding if questions were appropriate or not.

After this first meeting, they decided to contact women who could take part in interviews. This was a great help, especially in terms of building trust. Indeed, it would have been quite impossible to get access to participants without the help of a mediator. Women who decided to take part in interviews trust the organisation they have received help from. Consequently, they were more willing to participate since they were feeling safer. Moreover, I decided to conduct interviews at the associations' buildings, which is a place that participants are used to, and this made them feel comfortable and calm. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention that despite the mediation role played by the NGO, some women (who had previously received support from the NGO) decided not to participate in interviews, since they did not feel comfortable with that the idea. That is to say, that regardless of the help I received from the NGO, some ex-victims – even after a long period – prefer not to recall their experience.

An additional ethical issue is the invasion of privacy. As Bryman states the research participation "does not abrogate the right to privacy entirely by providing informed consent" (Bryman, 2016, p. 131). In practice, I left participants free to participate in the project. Moreover, they were not obliged to answer all questions I asked. Indeed, "when people agree to be interviewed, they will frequently refuse to answer to certain questions on whatever ground they feel are justified" (Bryman, 2016, p. 131). As a result, I explained every single question while interviewing, trying to explain words that participants were unsure of, and I left them free to decide whether to answer or not. Moreover, as stated in the information letter, participants are free to withdraw their consent at any moment of the research.

The question of privacy is also connected to anonymity and confidentiality. These two issues have already been discussed above.

Finally, as a researcher, I am aware that this study put me in a position of responsibility. Indeed, the subject and the aim of the research could interfere with the participants' lives and future. I implemented all the tools I could to protect participants. The study, indeed, did not aim to discredit any participants or organisations.

Despite the protection measures I adopted, and the adjustments made to respect any ethical issue that could arise, it is still difficult to portray how the data are collected, and the results reported will be interpreted or used by other once the research is published.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are important measures in establishing the quality of research. "However, there has been some discussion among qualitative researchers concerning the relevance of these criteria for qualitative research" (Bryman, 2016, p. 383). This paragraph shows how my study is related to these issues.

LeCompte and Goetz refer to reliability talking about *external reliability* which "addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomena or generate the same constructs in the same or similar settings" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 32). That is to say that "reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable" (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). The design of this research, however, aims to study singular cases locally based. This also means that each participant has his own story, experience, background and feelings to share. This gives results a uniqueness and makes them impossible to be replicated. Moreover, as discussed with NGOs, participants who are nowadays taking part in the integration process have different expectations and needs. Thus, future research with the same inquiry may not get identical results to my findings. This aspect notwithstanding, the requirement of replicability can be met if another researcher can draw the same conclusion if doing the exact same study. Under this perspective, the criteria of replicability are fulfilled.

Moreover, reliability is sufficiently met when the researcher can take into account the methods used. In this case, reliability is met. For instance, using a standardised interview questionnaire which entails asking all the informants similar questions, improves reliability. And again, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity improves the reliability of interviewees' answers. As a result, I can affirm that I am aware of the methods used and I am sure that they help in fulfilling reliability.

According to Bryman "the most important quality criterion is validity" – which – "is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated" (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). LeCompte and Goetz discuss what they define *external validity* which refers "to the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings" (Bryman, 2016, p. 384). As they explain, external validity embodies a problematic issue to qualitative researchers since they focus "on recording in detail aspects of a single phenomenon, whether that phenomenon is a small group of humans or the operation of some social process" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 44). As a qualitative researcher, I faced the same challenges. Indeed, using semi-structured interviews and collecting a large amount of data was necessary to the accomplishment of the study. Thus, results are difficult to be generalized as such in other social scenarios.

Nevertheless, the importance of these criteria of reliability and validity for the quality of qualitative research has become a contested area and new principles – more accurate and in line with the qualitative research's purposes – have been proposed.

In line with Yardley "traditional criteria for research quality are often inappropriate" (Yardley, 2000, p. 219) to qualitative research. That is why he proposed other characteristics that should be respected to have good qualitative research: *sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence* and *impact and importance*. These measures are met in my research.

Sensitivity refers to the sensitivity to the scenario the researcher is working in, but also to relevant theoretical positions and ethical issues. In practical terms, "awareness of the relevant literature and previous related empirical work is essential for all investigations" (Yardley, 2000, p. 220). Moreover, an analysis of the potential ethical issues must be carried out. As far as literature and previous empirical work are concerned, the literature review I have been working on covers a large scale of data that examines the topic I have decided to work with. While, as regards ethics, the issue has already been discussed above.

Commitment and rigour embody the "substantial engagement with the subject matter, having the necessary skills and through data collection and analysis" (Bryman, 2016, p. 387). I have been highly motivated while working on this research and I have dedicated a great time of the last year writing, reading, conducting interviews and developing results.

Transparency and coherence are other relevant criteria which are hotly debated. It refers to the need to have a specified research method, clearly articulated, and a reflexive instance. A common critique of the qualitative method is the lack of transparency. Indeed, as Bryman explains, "qualitative research reports are sometimes unclear about such matters as how people were

chosen for observation or interviews" (Bryman, 2016, p. 399). That is why great emphasis was put on drafting the method chapter, to be as transparent and clear as possible in explaining how the research was conducted and why certain choices were made.

Finally, impact and importance which embodies the importance of "having an impact on and significance for theory, practitioners and the community on which the research is conducted" (Bryman, 2016, p. 387). As already mentioned, the relevant literature on THB and integration usually do not cover victims' perspectives. This is the main reason that pushed me to adopt this perspective in doing this research. The aim is to see the issue through the participants' eyes, giving centrality to their voices and trying to understand how they perceive the implementation of Article 18. I believe that this research has an unusual perspective which could be useful to the association to understand and receive feedback on their work. In these terms, I hope this research will be useful, not only for theoretical purposes but also in a practical way, especially for local NGOs and realities.

4.5 Positionality

"Positionality refers to the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study – the community, the organization or the participant group" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014).

In this research, I must be considered as an outsider. Indeed, I do not have experience as an immigrant in Italy and my background is different from the interviewees' ones. Under some aspects, I could be considered as an insider, since I have been a migrant as well, but in another country. Indeed, I moved from Italy to Norway for academic reasons. Consequently, I could share some of the feelings women have discussed with me such as the struggle of not knowing the local language or the difficulties in finding a job. However, this is not enough to qualify me as an insider. The reasons for moving and the experiences lived in the new country were different and led to dissimilar paths and encounters. As a result, I am an outsider.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the methods I decided to adopt in developing my research. I have introduced the ethical questions and difficulties I faced, and I have explained the method I used to collect and to analyse data. The next section will report the data collected and the analyses thereof.

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the analysis and the findings of this research. According to the method chosen to analyse data (thematic analysis), all themes and subthemes were related to the main topics of the research question: integration and empowerment. Thus, a discussion on these issues and related aspects connected to the relevant literature review and the theories used has been developed. In particular, I decided to start the debate with an analysis of integration, followed by the examination on empowerment.

Also, women's perspectives play a central role and that is why, as will be seen, I always place them at the forefront of the discussion. This to comply with one of the priorities of this study which is to prioritize women's views and needs and to give them the possibility to speak out.

5. Integration

Starting from the research question of this thesis, integration plays a crucial role in the whole study. Indeed, the main idea is to understand how migrant women victims of THB integrate into Italian society. As a result, integration is one of the main themes that will be developed and analysed throughout this chapter.

5.1 Road to integration

The very first point that is worth mentioning and summarising, even before going through the analysis and the findings on the meaning of integration, is the path that women must go through before starting the integration process. Continuing on from what was explained earlier, as IOM declares, THB victims' integration does not formally start until the moment of identification as a victim of trafficking (IOM, 2013, p. 21). After their arrival, due to the conditions they live, they usually have a distorted image of the host country: they are scared and lack the tools to emerge from the situation. Moreover, they are disoriented: all women who took part into interviews came to Italy thanks to a mediator, some had to go through a long journey, some were looking for a job, some others for a better life or just for a new start. Despite their hopes and what was promised to them, all of them ended up being exploited.

> In 2002, I lost my mom. I was looking forward to being an independent adult. One day my sister called me, and she explained that the daughter of a friend of hers went to Italy thanks to the support of a woman in the village. That was my chance; I said yes. I came to Italy in 2005. This woman welcomed me and the very first day we went to the hairdresser and to buy clothes. The same night she told me to dress up, we took a bus and

then a man came to pick us up. He drove us to a street, and he left us there. The women told me that the street was our workplace (Interviewee no.5).

In 1997, I came to Italy with my boyfriend. We crossed the sea on a rubber dinghy. He was working in Italy and he told me we were going to stay with his sister. I have never been to his sister's place (Interviewee no.4).

The direct connection that exists between their origin country and the exploitation scenario in Italy is so tight and well organised that women's identification by authorities is almost impossible. Women interviewed, indeed, never have the chance to visit the police station or authorities for the identification or to apply for a residence permit. As a result, the feeling of being imprisoned, controlled, without documents, and with no tools such as knowledge of the language, force women to live as victims of exploitation.

The period of exploitation has a different length for each person, and the longer it is, the later the integration process starts. Most of the women interviewed in my study got in contact with NGOs and authorities within one year after they arrived in Italy. Only one out of five asked for help nine years after her arrival.

Based on this information some questions to be answered in my study are: how do women get in contact with NGOs or authorities, and how do they start the integration process? Some of the interviewees explained that they independently decided to contact police or local organisations. Only one out of five, called the police to ask for help. Meanwhile, the others got to the police through a mediating body. Some of them called a number (usually connected to an NGO or a local organisation) that they received from a friend on the street, some others got in contact with NGOs while working. Organisations who work with victims of THB usually provide services on the road, known as "*unità di strada*" bringing warm drinks and some food and sharing relevant information.

I followed my friend where she was working because she explained to me that people used to come to visit her. They came, and they brought coffee and croissants, and they asked me if I needed help. They said I could quit what I was doing. So, we exchanged numbers, I called the number, and we fixed a date. They came, and they took me (Interviewee no.3).

I did not ask for help. One day, while working a woman came by car. She started explaining that if I wished, I could get help. I was scared because I did not know her. From that day she came every night, she brought me tea and croissants. She kept informing me that if I wanted, I could quit what I was doing, and the woman I was living with would never have any news about me. One night a guy beat me. I almost died. I

made up my mind. I called the woman and she came to pick me up. We went to the police, and then she drove me to the community (Interviewee no.5).

Thus, asking or getting help is a crucial aspect without which the integration process cannot start. Asking for help encloses the possibility of being identified as a victim of trafficking, being under protection, emerging from a situation exploitation and starting a new life in Italy. Once in contact with authorities and the NGO, women are informed about their rights and the existence of Article 18.

5.2 Article 18: judicial and social path

Article 18 of Legislative Decree 286/1998 is probably the most important legislative tool that THB victims can benefit from. As has already been mentioned, Article 18 "not only permits the integration of victims of human trafficking by issuing residence permits when the victims decide to co-operate with law enforcement authorities in order to arrest traffickers, it also permits the integration of these people whether or not they decide to cooperate" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 170). Nevertheless, it will be shown that Article 18 is revolutionary compared to other instruments since it endorses not only integration but also protection and identification, two relevant points for THB victims.

Women victims of THB are usually influenced and intimidated by their exploiters. They are scared, and they fear retaliation against them or their families in their countries of origin. Ensuring protection is then essential. As for the law, once situations of violence or serious exploitations of a foreigner are found, victims should be conducted to authorities for identification and the release of a special permit to stay. All women interviewed reported that once asked for help, they were directly taken to a police station. Protection started right away. Interviewee no. 2 remembers: "I was under protection from the moment they picked me up from the street. They drove me to the police station" (Interviewee no.2).

Identification is the following step. Up to the meeting with authorities, women were unregistered in a foreign country. Some of them were even undocumented because their exploiters took their passports. Thus, they were extremely vulnerable. Thanks to the implementation of Article 18 women received a special residence permit and were assigned to a local organization to start the integration process and continue receiving support.

The meeting with the authorities marks a turning point. Women are not only identified and recognized as victims of human trafficking, but for the first time since their arrival in Italy, they received information on their rights. They became aware of the existence of Article 18, and they

could decide which path to take: either to report and collaborate with authorities, either to avoid the judicial path and start the social one right away. Until then, women who had been denied human rights and fundamental freedoms were enabled to choose for their own life once again. In a way, this could be read as the very first real step to victims' empowerment. One of the interviewees explains:

> Police explained what Article 18 was. They told me what my possibilities were, and what the steps were. They also told me what would have happened if I had collaborated and reported my exploiter. They never obliged me to do anything (Interviewee no.2).

Thus, while the NGO could work as a mediating force from the exploitation scenario to the road to protection, police are the core actors in women's identification as victims of THB, after which the integration process can start.

Whether women decide to cooperate and start the judicial path or not, they receive a special residence permit for social protection reasons. Moreover, they are assigned to a local organization where they can start the integration process. As mentioned in the 2019 National Directive for Administration and Management action, issued by the Minister of the Interior, "in the field of trafficking and serious labour exploitation, territorial projects will have to be implemented"[5] (Italian Minister of Interior, 2019 p. 12). Not all women interviewed by me got directly to Associazione Micaela. Depending on their age, location, and background, they were assigned to different communities, some in Milan, and some in Brescia. After an initial period there, they were assigned to Associazione Micaela in Bergamo. Once in the community, women started what is defined as the integration path. Indeed, women with a special residence permit and assigned to a community can access services such as "psychosocial assistance, legal assistance, language courses, vocational training and job insertion measures" (IOM, 2013, p. 44). Moreover, "these services are available until the process of assistance and empowerment of the trafficked persons achieves the ultimate goal of a job placement and an autonomous life" (IOM, 2013, p. 44). When asked, the women interviewed made a list of all the services they received.

> Practically speaking, the NGO provided me with a language course, psychosocial assistance, health services, vocational training, and they helped me in preparing and getting my documents (Interviewee no.1).

> First of all, health services. I got pregnant while working, and they helped me get an abortion. Even if today I might regret it, that was the right choice. They gave me

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[5] "In materia di tratta e grave sfruttamento lavorativo si dovrà procedere all'attivazione dei progetti territoriali"

everything I needed. I had a personal teacher to learn Italian, they helped me to get a job and later on to find and rent a house (Interviewee no.5).

Women are satisfied with the program and the services provided. When asked to answer the question if the law might include something more or if they were missing anything while staying at the community, they were all sure that nothing more could have been done. One woman explains:

> I'm glad that Article 18 exists, especially for women. It is of great support. It gives you great opportunities, and I am sure that if all women victim of THB were aware of its existence, they would convince themselves to ask for help (Interviewee no.1).

On the other hand, interviewee n. 2, whose goal was to find a job as soon as possible to support her family back at home says: "they could not do anything more. I aimed to find a job and thanks to Article 18, I was able to find one" (interviewee no.2).

Nevertheless, when talking about services that have been provided, all interviewees put hospitality first. "Hospitality, even if it is not a practical service. They sheltered me, they gave me a bed, and overall, they were helpful" (Interviewee no.1). Hospitality is at the core of the integration process, and all women mention it. Usually, once a victim is identified and assigned to a community, "issues relating to personal safety and security, as well as recovery from stress and other psychological trauma and physical health needs are among the first to be addressed" (IOM, 2013, p. 35). Feeling welcomed and accepted helps women throughout the process. "You are assisted from the very beginning" (Interviewee no.2). Women who have experienced exploitation start feeling safe again, and this is important for their recovery. NGOs' availability and capacity to reassure women, ensure the creation of a trustful and long-lasting relationship. All women interviewed still have stable relations with NGOs' social workers. The NGO is usually remembered as their first home in Italy.

> Hospitality. I received a lot of love. I am not saying my family back home was not lovely to me; my family was wonderful. However, I received another type of love and support, the love you can give to someone you do not know. At the end, who are you to the NGO? You are no one. They do not know you, but they give you everything (Interviewee no.4).

> This is like another family (Interviewee no.3).

> Hospitality is fundamental. I felt good. This is my first home in Italy, and it will be forever. I always pass by to say hi and to see how it is going (Interviewee no.1).

Hospitality and protection are then crucial. Without feeling welcomed and secure women would not have been able to create a trustful connection with the social workers and without trust

integration could not be implemented. Haynes (2004) in his article *Used, Abused, Arrested and Deported: Extending Immigration Benefits to Protect the Victims of Trafficking and to Secure the Prosecution of Traffickers* explains the importance of protection. In particular, he highlights that the best systems to protect victims are those which start from a human rights perspective. He notes "the stronger the protection, the more likely the victim is to seek help (self-identify) meaning that actually stronger protection (and more opportunities for successful integration) could help bring more victims forward" (IOM, 2013, p. 49). Moreover, as he adds, "the benefit to the victim-oriented approach is that it not only protects trafficked persons, but also allows them to become better potential witnesses simply by virtue of securing their safety and physical presence and promoting their psychological capacity to testify" (Haynes, 2005, p. 252). Thus, the Italian system as it is structured can be defined as having espoused victim-oriented legislation which supports women and welcomes them in the new society through the implementation of different tools.

5.3 The meaning of integration: the victims' perspective

Understanding the meaning of integration and trying to give a definition based on women's experiences is one of the aims of this study. As already widely debated, up to today, "there is no consensus on a single definition for integration" (Migration Data Portal, 2019) and "the concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated" (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002, p. 112). Consequently, looking for a definition and keeping in mind the centrality of women's voices, interviews were conducted so that women could express their meaning of integration.

Starting from Ager and Strang's model, and keeping in mind the ten core domains identified, women interviewed were asked to give a definition of integration explaining what their needs were at the time of the integration process and how they managed to become part of the Italian society.

A premise, because of the interviews conducted, is necessary. Despite some commonalities, women's definitions are extremely personal and contextualized. Indeed, depending on women's priorities, their backgrounds, and their experiences, needs might be different. Subsequently, a general definition is hard to give.

Interviewees included what Ager and Strang define as *Markers and Means*, at the base of their needs. As they explain *Markers and Means* are "a number of key areas of activity in the public arena […] which are widely suggested as indicative of successful integration" (Ager & Strang,

2008, p. 169). In particular, employment, housing, education, and health are recurrently key issues and consequently included in this section.

> Employment. Due to my situation at home, where I was suffering because I could not meet my basic needs, I was looking for stability. It was my first objective, and I worked hard towards it. Employment gave me stability and independence. With my income, I was able to send money home to help my mother and brother (Interviewee no.2).

Thanks to the social path and the implementation of the Italian law, all these needs were granted to women, facilitating their integration process.

Together with these basic requirements, women included learning the language. Ager and Strang describe the language as a *facilitator:* "Being able to speak the main language of the host community is, for example, consistently identified as central to the integration process" (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 182). As for some of the interviewees, language comes as the first need after which all the others follow. Language is the only tool women can use to communicate.

> The Italian language represents an obstacle in the integration process. Imagine arriving in a foreign country, feeling lonely, and not knowing the language. What can you do if you cannot communicate? How can you find a job? … It took me some time. It is not easy (Interviewee no.1).

Another interviewee supported this argument about the importance of language as well:

> Language is fundamental. After learning the language, you can proceed in the integration process. I needed to be able to talk. Without the language, I could not be myself. When you arrive in a new country, everything looks dark. You do not even know how to say good morning. If you do not know the language, you cannot communicate (Interviewee no.4).

As a result, the Italian language stands out among women's requirements when talking about integration. Language is a pass to all the other needs. Indeed, it would be hard to find a job without speaking Italian or to create social bonds with people who are native speakers or already living in Italy. Thus, if we imagine building a pyramid that includes all women's necessities, the language will undoubtedly form the basis of it.

Following the pyramidal scheme, which was outlined previously in my theory chapter, employment, housing, education, and health could be placed right above the language. As mentioned above, *markers and means* surely play a pivotal role. Health and housing are among the fundamental needs met by NGOs when victims are identified. Support in these categories continues throughout the stay in the community, and even after the programme has ended. All

women interviewed, indeed, were helped in renting an apartment: some of them were first assigned to houses owned by the NGOs and later were able to rent an apartment by themselves.

> I have been here for one year, maybe longer. After that, the NGO helped me in renting a house 10 minutes away from here where I was living for 7 or 8 months. Finally, I found a job in a city nearby, and they helped me find an apartment there as well (Interviewee no.5).

> The NGO helped me in finding a house. I shared an apartment with other girls coming from my home country and then I rented a house by myself. Even if you are alone, the organisation is always there, ready to help (Interviewee no.1).

On the other hand, employment is a step that women reach after a while. As explained, most of the victims need a certain amount of time to recover and feel confident again. Language courses, vocational training, and workshops are some of the tools used by NGOs in this very first period. Interviewees expressed their gratitude for these services because they believe they helped them throughout the process. Also, they received support in finding a job as well.

> When I got out of the community, I already had my job. I started working for a family as a housekeeper, and I am still working for them today (Interviewee no.4).

> I did volunteer work. I attended school for 2 years. This helped me a lot. The NGO helped me in finding a job as well (Interviewee no.3).

Speaking the language and having a job boost women's confidence and independence. Interviewees explain that by accomplishing these domains, it is possible to establish what Ager and Strang refer to as *Social Connection*. "Thanks to my job, I was able to create social bonds with colleagues. If you feel at ease and you can manage the situation, then everything else comes with it" (Interviewee no.2). Social bonds are then a consequence and a step woman managed to accomplish after a certain time. Interviewees explained that most of their social links were women who shared the integration process with them or women they shared the apartment with after they left the community. Some explained that they were able to build relationships at their workplace as well. Thus, according to the women interviewed, the social connection cannot be placed among the basic needs to feel integrated. They do surely help throughout the process, but they are not considered as the very first necessities.

Keeping in mind these first aspects and trying to sum up women's views, integration can be reached if these needs are accomplished: learning Italian, having access to health services, being able to attend courses or vocational training to get an education and develop skills, finding a job,

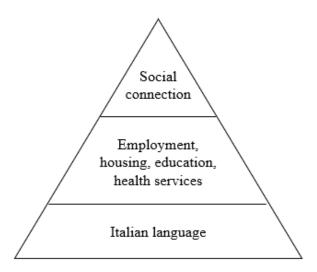accessing housing and creating social connections. The integration pyramid would consequently look like this:

Figure 2 – Integration pyramid based on women victims' perspectives.

Ager and Strang include *Citizenship* among the core domains of integration, as well. In their paper *Understanding Integration: a Conceptual framework* (2008), they develop a lengthy debate on how the multiple meanings of citizenship can relate to the integration in a new country. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines citizenship as the "relationship between an individual and a state to which the individual owes allegiance and in turn is entitled to its protection […] Citizens have certain rights, duties, and responsibilities that are denied or only partially extended to aliened and other noncitizens residing in a country. In general, full political rights, including the right to vote and to hold public office, are predicated upon citizenship" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.a.). Women interviewed were asked if they considered citizenship as one of the requirements to feel integrated. None of them mentioned it as one of their needs.

> You can apply for citizenship after some years, but that is not the most important thing to feel integrated. I live here and I feel like a citizen even if I am not legally one (Interviewee no.1).

To interviewees, having a residence permit and being identified is fundamental, while getting Italian citizenship is not an essential requirement.

To conclude, a final aspect must be mentioned and added to those already included among the needs to feel integrated: time. Women victims of human trafficking need time to recover and to integrate. Thus, national law and NGOs must organize and base their programs on this aspect.

> Help is fundamental. Despite the time spent in the community, usually one or one and a half years, women are not able to go and live alone right away. When you are living in the community, you always think, 'I am ready, I want to think about my life outside, I am able, I can do it'… However, when the moment comes you are doubtful because you were protected and helped up to that moment. Starting alone is difficult and you always think you are not going to make it. The past scares you and this makes you feel insecure (Interviewee no.1)

Time is the key to recovery and integration. Talking to women interviewed, it is easy to understand that the time spent in the community was essential to them. First, they managed to recover from a psycho-physical trauma. Services provided, such as health services, and psychological support, helped them to reacquire self-confidence and feel secure once again. Then, other activities such as vocational training or voluntary work helped them in knowing and understanding the hosting country and to start integrating.

However, it is difficult to set a time for recovery. As for the law, women receive a six-month special residence permit, which can be renewed for work or study reasons. Women might need more than six months within the community to fully recover from the exploitation experience they lived. The time needed is, indeed, contextualized and personal. As an example, interviewee n. 5 spent some time in a community in Milan and one a half year with Associazione Micaela in Bergamo, while interviewee n. 3 lived three years in the same community. Therefore, the renewal of the residence permit gives them a possibility to continue their path and accomplish the final goal: integration.

Summing up, the ultimate meaning of integration is hard to define. Depending on priorities and backgrounds, each woman has a different view. Nevertheless, it can be affirmed that women victims of THB see integration as a goal to reach. Exploitation and the experiences lived makes them feel the need to start over again and become part of the society that is hosting them. They are interested in what most define as social integration, which includes getting employment, learning the language and creating social bonds, rather than applying for citizenship and having access to certain rights such as the right to vote. Finally, all women interviewed do feel integrated into the hosting country, which implies that the judicial and social paths, as elaborated, are successful and efficient.

5.4 Integration and Italian society

As for the theories used for this study, most agree on the fact that, nowadays, integration is a two-way process where two actors are involved: the migrant and the hosting society. These parties are equally responsible for the integration's accomplishment. Without reciprocal commitment, the possibilities of a victim of THB to integrate, are fewer and at risk.

In recent years, European policies have changed their orientations, prioritizing securitisation and migration management, rather than migrant welcoming and integration. What is more, neoliberal and populist parties have been able to increase their votes and their supporters, also thanks to their discourse against migration. A similar scenario occurred in Italy as well, where parties such as the Northern League based their political campaigns on the refusal to accept migrants and the closure of Italian borders. Consequently, anti-migrant attitudes grew, and people started becoming more hostile towards welcoming and integration policies.

Society's conditions and its availability to positively act towards migrants' integration are two crucial aspects. The background introduced above is not as favourable as it should be, and women's integration is endangered.

Women interviewed went through the integration process in different periods between 1997 and 2018. During these years, Italian society has been through several political, economic and social changes. Taking into consideration the significant role of the hosting community, women interviewed were asked to share their point of view on Italian society and on how they were welcomed by inhabitants who were neither NGO's members nor authorities.

Most of the women faced some limits and challenges. A very first argument that was pointed out while answering to this question was the feeling of fear. Due to their background and the exploitation they lived, most of the women interviewed admitted being initially introverted towards the hosting society.

> At the beginning it was difficult, I did not want to get in contact with society. I was afraid of making misguided choices. I was scared to meet the wrong persons, someone who could hurt me once again. I shut myself off (Interviewee no.1).

The feeling of fear disappears after a certain time. Thanks to NGO's support, women could get in touch with society. All women address their employment as the first setup where they had been able to interact with someone unaware of their past.

Once you start working, you start creating more connections. I felt better. My colleagues are my friends as well (Interviewee no.1).

I am working with good people. They are marvellous. They do not look at me as if I was different or from Africa. This made me feel good and comfortable (Interviewee no.5).

On the other hand, another interviewee experienced discrimination:

There have been some episodes at my workplace, especially at the very beginning. I started working at the reception, and some customers refused to talk to me. They did not trust me. Firstly, I felt different and discriminated. You are disappointed. In the end, I understood how to deal with them, and they felt at ease as well (Interviewee no.2).

Discrimination is a common experience most of the victims interviewed had to face. Nevertheless, as for integration, discrimination was contextualized and personal. Some women experienced it at their workplace while some others during daily situations. As an example, interviewee n.1 felt discriminated when she had to rent her first house after leaving the community. She explains:

Once I left the community, I started looking for a house to rent. One day a house owner asked me who would have been my guarantor. My residence permit and my working papers were in order and I did not need any additional guarantee. I felt different. They would not have asked for extra guarantees if I was Italian (Interviewee no.1).

Moreover, despite the long period women have been residing in Italy, they admit feeling discriminated against today as well.

Sometimes some people make you feel like a stranger (Interviewee no.1).

There are, of course, people who stare at you when you enter in some places, and they look at you as if you were different (Interviewee no.5).

Nevertheless, a common aspect that emerged interviewing women is their attitude and positivity towards their aim. No matter what experiences and the discriminations they have been through, the skills acquired during the social path in the community made them stronger and capable of facing other people's judgements.

There's always someone who looks at you differently, judging… I laugh, and I just let this bad feeling go (Interviewee no.2).

Thanks to the NGO's help I know how to behave and even if they look at me as if I am different, I feel Italian (Interviewee no.5).

NGO support was crucial for all women. They explained that social workers, as well as teachers and all employees, helped them in learning Italian society's elements day by day. Even the smallest hints and suggestions, such as the importance of being punctual and respecting a schedule, gave them the possibility to understand Italian values and costumes. This made them integrate easily and be prepared to create connections within society. As a result, integration into Italian society was achieved by all women I interviewed.

5.5 Conclusion

Article 18 is an innovative and efficient tool. Differently from other European countries, Italy opted for a victim-oriented and human rights approach which 'empowers' trafficked victims and supports them throughout their integration. The law as it is structured has 'social protection' as the core domain and aims to privilege the victim's protection and inclusion into the new society. As stated, "the quaestor […] releases a special permit to stay to allow the immigrant to escape the violence and conditioning of the criminal organization and to participate in a program of assistance and social integration"[6] (Italian Chamber of Deputees, 1998, p. n.a.).

The women I interviewed are a clear representation of the law's effectiveness and implementation. The women integrated successfully into Italian society and explained they received all the services they needed. Thus, the article as such is successful and women's perception of it is positive. They believe Article 18 offers great possibilities like the permit to stay for six months, the possibility to renew it for work or studies , and the chance to be included in what is defined as the integration path.

Furthermore, under the law, women are free to choose whether to cooperate with the authorities. This aspect should not be underestimated, since it assures protection to victims whatever their wish is, always guaranteeing protection. This notwithstanding, as Haynes explains, a victim-oriented approach as the one implemented through Article 18 "empowers trafficked persons, not only to leave the cycle of trafficking but also to become witnesses against their abusers by providing them with safety during the hearing and offering justice (Haynes, 2005, p. 252). Indeed, three women out of five declared to have opted for the judicial path. In other words, they decided to denounce their exploiters and to cooperate with authorities to fight THB.

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[6] "Il questore [...] rilascia uno speciale permesso di soggiorno per consentire allo straniero di sottrarsi alla violenza e ai condizionamenti dell'organizzazione criminale e di partecipare ad un programma di assistenza ed integrazione sociale".

Finally, the article implies the creation of an organisational network composed of NGOs. "The implementing regulation lays down the necessary provisions for entrusting the implementation of the programme to entities other than those institutionally responsible for the social services of the local authority, and for carrying out the relevant checks. The same regulation identifies the appropriate requirements to guarantee the competence and ability to promote social assistance and integration, as well as the availability of adequate organizational structures of the aforementioned subjects"[7] (Italian Chamber of Deputees, 1998, p. n.a.). NGOs are thus essential to the integration system. All the women I interviewed agreed with the previous statement: they believe their integration would not have been possible without the support of social workers and NGOs.

Overall, women's perspectives on legislative tools provided by the Italian government is positive and they believe that what has been provided was good enough to answer their needs both at the time of exploitation and throughout the integration process.

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[7] "Con il regolamento di attuazione sono stabilite le disposizioni occorrenti per l'affidamento della realizzazione del programma a soggetti diversi da quelli istituzionalmente preposti ai servizi sociali dell'ente locale, e per l'espletamento dei relativi controlli. Con lo stesso regolamento sono individuati i requisiti idonei a garantire la competenza e la capacita' di favorire l'assistenza e l'integrazione sociale, nonche' la disponibilita' di adeguate strutture organizzative dei soggetti predetti".

6. Empowerment

Together with integration, empowerment is the second core concept of this research. As previously mentioned, one of the aims of this study is to analyse women's perspectives on the meaning of empowerment and that is why interviews were conducted with this intention. Among the several questions, one explicitly focused on empowerment. Question number eleven states: *what is empowerment to you?* Answers collected can give an overview of women's ideas and feelings on this topic, thus keeping women's voices centre stage and connecting theories introduced in the theoretical framework. An interpretation and analysis of the concept of empowerment will be given in this context.

6.1 Empowerment as a choice

As suggested by Naila Kabeer (2005) empowerment takes choice as a central aspect. Empowerment is a process of change through which people gain the capacity to choose. If we try to apply this theory to the research case, Kabeer's ideas perfectly suit the experiences that THB's victims live.

Women victims of human trafficking and exploitation who get in contact with NGOs can be defined as what Kabeer refers to as 'disempowered' people. In other words, since the very first moment women decide to undertake their journey to Italy, they automatically lose their right and ability to choose. In most of the cases, indeed, women rely on exploiters (traffickers or madams) they fully trust. Thus, they follow their instructions and respect the indications given. Once in Italy, and as soon as they realize the nature of the reality in which they have been placed, the fear of being sent home or being further exploited make them powerless and unable to choose. Women lose what Kabeer describes as the ability of a person to make decisions: they fear retaliation, they feel lost and in most cases the sole solution to survive is to respect the exploiters' rules and accept the situation they live in. Jacques Charmes (statistician and economist) and Saskia Wieringa (sociologist), who studied and analysed the way to measure women's empowerment, clearly explain this situation in their article *Measuring Women's Empowerment: An Assessment of the GDI and the GEM*: "women may be aware of the conditions of their oppression, but if they see no viable alternatives, if there are no choices available, they can only turn their anger inwards, into frustration and bitterness, or into (religious) acceptance of suffering" (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003, p. 425).

NGOs play a pivotal role since they can empower victims. Article 18 together with NGOs' activity on the street give women access to 'resources'. Kabeer states that resources include not

only material resources but also human and social ones, which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). The social and judicial path regulated by Italian law makes up women's potential for living the lives they want. As interviewee n. 1 explains: "Thanks to the NGO, I took control of my life and started again" (Interviewee no.1). NGOs make women go from being 'disempowered' to 'empowered'. All women interviewed highlighted their feeling of self-confidence and independence gained thanks to the support received. They are aware of the importance and the essentiality of NGOs and authorities' actions and they believe that they would have not reached an independent life without their assistance.

All women I interviewed reached what Kabeer defines as the 'achievement' or in other words the third dimension: "the term achievement refers to the extent to which this potential is realised or fails to be realised; that is, to the outcomes of people's efforts" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15). Women reconquered and re-established their ability to choose they see alternatives and they can control their own lives.

6.2 Empowerment as a process

According to Marc Zimmerman "empowerment is a process in which efforts to exert control are central" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 43) and "the process is empowering if it helps people develop skills so they can become independent problem-solvers and decision-makers" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46). Marc Zimmerman's approach to empowerment makes a difference across three different levels of analysis: individual, organizational and community. Both individual and organizational empowerment can be applied to the experience of THB's victims.

Individual empowerment, also referred to as psychological empowerment, is the process that women victims can go through if they receive support from NGOs and authorities. In this case, the process includes learning decision-making skills, managing resources and working with others, while the expected outcomes are a sense of control, critical awareness and participatory behaviours. In other words, "an empowered person might be expected to exhibit a sense of control, a critical awareness of one's environment, and the behaviours necessary to exert control" (M. Zimmerman, 2000). All the women I interviewed have proven, not only through their witness accounts but also by the way they behaved, to have efficiently achieved all the expected outcomes. They were able to narrate their own experience and explain the benefit and results they achieved without feeling fear or being introvert. All the women have given me the impression that they are powerful, with a challenging background, yet prepared to share their experiences as a witness.

The social path helped me a lot. It changed everything. I became independent (Interviewee no.1).

If you ask me what I have learnt thanks to my mom I cannot give you an answer because I started working when I was ten years old and my mom could not take care of me. If today I am an independent woman, with a job and able to meet my basic needs it is thanks to the NGO. They taught me how to deal with life. They gave me rules, and these helped me to understand how to live (Interviewee no.2).

I am happy. I have to say thank you to the NGO and the authorities. I was protected. Thanks to them today I am a mother and I am joyful. I am independent (Interviewee no.4).

They helped me to gain self-confidence. I feel strong and safe. Once the social path ended, I felt ready. People here support you. To use a metaphor: they open your heart and they fill it with the positivity you need. They teach you everything needed to regain control (Interviewee no.5).

All the women I interviewed seemed to feel empowered. Despite the suffering and the brutal experiences they have been through, all of them were positive and proud to share their feelings and their personal views. Keeping in mind their past, considering the exploitation and the situations of powerlessness they had lived through, it was impressive to see their strength and crave to share and speak out even after so many years in Italy.

Within this framework, the women interviewed also explained how the NGOs were fundamental to understand and learn how to integrate into Italian society and how to become an independent woman within the new environment.

When I moved out of the community and I started living by myself, I had to learn how to organize my everyday life: work, bills, food, clothes, etc. I learnt how to deal with it. When I left the NGO, I decided to first share an apartment with other girls. I lived with them for six months and then I rented my apartment. It was a great satisfaction (Interviewee no.1).

When I moved to my new apartment after I left the NGO, I learnt how to pay the rent, bills and so on. When you live in the community, you do not realize that there are all these aspects that you have to take care of, but once you are on your own you have to face this as well. Nevertheless, the support I received was a lot and this helped me to overcome all the challenges (Interviewee no.2).

Women also pointed out how their determination and strength were fundamental throughout the process. They believe that together with the NGO's support, tenacity and dedication are needed. If one of these two elements fail, the results cannot be achieved. Indeed, interviewees explain that even if NGOs' services and authorities' support are granted after the identification, it is up

to victims to become fully involved in the activities and to take advantage of the possibilities offered. Without commitment and willpower, the integration path could be longer or even unsuccessful. Here are some comments made when this point was raised:

> I have seen a lot of women who decided not to get help. Most of them were interested in earning money. Thus, they did not want to get support from the NGOs. They usually earned 25.000 lire (local currency) in one night. With a normal job, you could earn this money working for two or three months. They did not want to make sacrifices. I always say: we are what we want to be. So, if you do not want to get help, it means you probably want to keep that standard of life (Interviewee no.2).

> I am empowered. I believe that you must grab the chances otherwise you will not reach the objectives. You must be strong, and you must be brave enough to say that you do not want to do that job anymore. This is what I told myself: I am a person and not an object. You cannot play with people's lives. I am worthy and there is no reason to be treated like they were treating me. You have to be strong. If you do not want to be an object, then you have to fight (Interviewee no.4).

Marc Zimmerman also defines organizational empowerment as "organizations that prove opportunities for people to gain control over their lives are empowering organizations" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 51). Empowering organizations usually have these characteristics "a culture of growth and community building, opportunities for members to take on meaningful and multiple roles, a peer-based support system that helps members develop social identity and shared leadership with commitment to both members and organization" (M. Zimmerman, 2000, p. 52). Under this perspective, Associazione Micaela, as well as all other local NGOs who are dealing with the fight against human trafficking and the integration of victims can be defined as empowering organizations.

The women I interviewed recognized the importance of the NGO's role and how this was crucial to reach the final step of being fully empowered. When asked, they explained in which way the organization was helpful and what they were able to achieve thanks to the support provided.

> Yes, I bettered myself. I started from zero and I got to where I am now. The improvement has been vast (Interviewee no.1).

> I accepted all the teachings. I received everything here. I am not saying this to please someone, but this is the truth. The program enhanced my conditions because I felt good. They taught me everything, even small lessons were useful. As an example, they taught me how important it is to be on time in Italy. I have always been on time and this was helpful for my integration. Even these small aspects helped me in building my future (Interviewee no.2).

Interviewee n. 4 points out the importance of the rules learnt in the community as well:

> The program helped me a lot. I grew up. Rules were crucial. They had an important role. Everyone had their responsibilities, and this is how I learnt to be responsible. Once I finished the program, I was independent. I did not forget my past, I still think about it, but I was ready to start over again. I found my place, my community, my home and I began a new life (Interviewee no.4).

> This place is like another family. You know when your mom gives you a bed or maybe someone adopts you and gives you what your family could not afford. Now I have a job, I have my documents, I have a new life. Gradually, I will have my own family as well (Interviewee no.3).

> Thanks to the NGO, I stopped working on the street. I found a place where to stay. Since I started the social path, I felt free once again. I was protected and I felt safe (Interviewee no.5).

The quotations above provide an evident demonstration of the NGOs' essentiality. Organizations like Associazione Micaela are vital to women victims of THB and their integration. Their mission, together with the activities implemented, plays a key role in women's lives. Thanks to the services provided women have the chance to start over again.

6.3 Conclusion

All the women I interviewed have demonstrated to be fully empowered. Despite their witness accounts, it is still difficult to give a single definition of the concept of empowerment. Nevertheless, most of them agreed on the importance of the process of empowerment they experienced since they believe that without becoming independent, they would not have reached their current situation.

As Cakir and Guneri explain "it is commonly agreed that migration can be one of the most stressful events in life" – "It is therefore likely that migration, as a stressful experience, can be understood through a model of resilience, and that empowerment can be considered an outcome of resilience in which migrants experience positive adjustments within the migration context" (Cakir & Yerin Guneri, 2011, p. 224).

The women I interviewed were helped in their aim to integrate into Italian society and this could have happened also thanks to the support received from Associazione Micaela. Thus, under this perspective and keeping in mind women's views, the role of the NGO is positive and essential at the same time. Victims probably would not have been able to leave a situation of exploitation, to have a second chance and to start a new life in Italy without the support they were given. The

women are satisfied with the support received and when asked they even answer that they could not receive and ask for anything more. As a result, their perspective on the NGOs' work and programs is positive and supportive. One of the interviewees decided to volunteer for the organisation once finished her path as well. This is a demonstration of support and encouragement. All the interviewees believe that the system as projected is efficient and well-structured.

Finally, the NGO's presence and activity were considered essential for the integration process. Thus, in the light of this study, enabling former victims of trafficking to empower themselves with support properly tailored to individual needs from the identification until full emancipation is a solid base for integration. As stated by IOM: "For victims of trafficking in human beings, support can be as fundamental as status in setting the path to becoming a fully participating, active members of society" (IOM, 2013, p. 57).

Thus, the Italian integration system, as structured, is efficient and appreciated. However, looking at the situation itself from a broader perspective, women victims of THB largely depend on the help received from the organisations and on their ability to choose to be supported.

As already explained, 'choice' plays a crucial role for women throughout their integration process. Indeed, empowering women means giving them the possibility to choose and to decide which direction to take. This definition notwithstanding, 'choice' is also central in terms of receiving support. If all the women I interviewed had not decided to ask for help by contacting an organization or the authorities, they probably would have been forced to lead a life of exploitation for a longer period. This highlights a fault in the Italian policies' system or an aspect that could be improved.

Article 18 provides a possibility for more developed policies compared to other European countries' policies. Its implementation relies on organizations like Associazione Micaela and assures support to all victims who are identified. Nevertheless, identification is not an automatic process and authorities do not register or apply identification procedures as soon as migrants cross the border. Also, most of the time, victims of trafficking manage to escape from reception centres by contacting their madams or they manage to reach their new home thanks to traffickers without passing by any police checkpoint. As a result, identification and support are usually granted only if women victims of THB choose to ask for help or if they decide to accept the support offered by the NGOs who usually meet them on the streets in the night.

In addition, another crucial aspect that can be discussed is the state's responsibility. States' responsibility is one of the fundamental pillars of the Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of 5th April 2011, one of the main European instruments towards the eradication of human trafficking. Italy, having signed and adopted the Directive, should implement the obligations under the European directive more efficiently. Indeed, as for the European Union, Member States should provide assistance, support and protection, which includes early identification. Thus, victims' identification must be among the priorities of the authorities without the possibility to rely on NGOs or waiting until a situation of exploitation occurs to proceed with the identification process. Today, Article 18 as structured states:

> When, during police's operation or inquires or proceedings […] or during aid interventions of social services of local bodies, situation of violence or serious exploitations of a foreigner are found, and concrete dangers emerge for his or her life, […] the chief of the local Police headquarters […] releases a special permit to stay" (Ventrella, 2010, p. 170).

Under this perspective, Article 18 could be enhanced and early identification procedures could be included so that victims could receive support as soon as they arrive. Indeed, a late identification means longer exploitation and fewer possibilities to integrate into Italian society. Consequently, a State-centred policy which firstly identifies victims of trafficking and then relies on organizations for the integration process could guarantee better protection and faster integration for a higher number of victims.

In a recent online webinar titled *20 Years After: Implementing and Going Beyond the Palermo Protocol* (On the Road Onlus, 2020, 29/06/2020) Maria Grazia Giammarino (UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children) explained that Article 18 and the Italian anti-trafficking system is still one of the few schemes which can be defined as based on a human rights approach and in respect of victims' needs. That being said, it might be considered obsolete. Thus, new policies and a system which take into consideration other realities such as new ways of trafficking could represent a solution.

In this chapter, I have discussed and analysed the data collected throughout the interviews. In the next chapter, I will give a final overview of the topic including the challenges that could threaten the Italian anti-trafficking system in the future.

7. Conclusion

The main research question was to explore the integration process into the Italian society of women victims of trafficking in human beings. The analysis of the literature review shows that trafficking in human beings is a serious crime recognized at international, regional and national levels. Throughout the years, numerous instruments (Protocols, Directives and laws) have been implemented to combat this international crime and several protection systems were designed and established to support victims.

Under this perspective and among the European scenario, Italy is recognised as the most avant-garde country. Article 18 is a milestone in the fight against human trafficking. Differently from other European countries' legislation, Article 18 enables victims of trafficking to obtain a permit to stay even if they decide not to cooperate with the authorities to identify and denounce their exploiters. The Italian anti-trafficking system is victim-centred, and it has a human rights approach since it aims to victims' protection and integration into society and it provides dedicated services.

The data I collected shows that women victims of THB are satisfied with the support received from authorities and the NGO. They believe that the system is efficient and well-organized. Also, the interviews demonstrate that integration and empowerment play a central role in victims' experiences. All women declared that they feel integrated into Italian society and they are grateful to the NGO since thanks to their help the women are able to reconquer their lives and to start over again.

This study put women at the forefront of the debate, trying to analyse topics such as integration, empowerment, trafficking and legislation from victims' perspectives. In other words, the main importance was given to victims' voices.

Maintaining this perspective and keeping a broad view on the topic, I identified some final remarks which among the anti-trafficking framework could be identified as potential challenges and/or features to enhance in the future. Indeed, trafficking in human beings is an international crime that has been increasing and developing in the latest years. Traffickers have new ways of recruiting and exploiting. Organized crime revives and becomes stronger. In the meantime, States' political discourse is constantly shifting and changing priorities. All these aspects are relevant and must be taken into consideration when dealing with women's integration into Italian society.

7.1 The future of the Italian anti-trafficking system

"Italy, by virtue of its socio-political economic and geographical features, has in the course of its history often been the object of numerically significant migration phenomena" (Abbondanza, 2017, p. 76). Nevertheless, in recent years, the Italian political framework has been the scene of numerous instabilities, several coalition governments and constant emergencies. In particular, after the Arab Spring and the European Refugees Crisis in 2015, "policymakers have followed a dual path when dealing with immigration. On the one hand, they have asked the European Union and other Member States for greater cooperation and solidarity in reception and care for asylum seekers; on the other, they have enforced stricter measures for controlling irregular flows and have clashed with Brussels and individual Member States" (Scotto, 2017, p. n.a.). Moreover, centre-right and right-wing parties, whose support has increased as of late, have politicized the issue shaping immigration as a threat and creating an alarming and intimidating political discourse which is influencing the population. Undeniably, "according to the results of recent surveys […] a sizeable part of the Italian population has developed the perception that illegality and criminality are deeply interrelated" (Finotelli & Sciortino, 2009, p. 134). Also, migration controls and border closure have the opposite effect on trafficking: migrants are more inclined to rely on trafficking knowing that the possibilities to enter in Italy are reduced.

The wave of populism and continuing governmental instabilities have made the state's priorities change and issues like integration and the fight against trafficking have been replaced by other political issues considered to be more urgent.

For example, as for today, Italy lacks a national anti-trafficking plan. "The first National Action Plan was adopted by the Council of Ministers with the Prime Ministerial Decree of the 26th February 2016 and expired on 31 December 2018"[8] (Save the Children Italy, 2020, p. 12). After the COVID-19 outbreak, the government declared its "commitment to adopt a new National Action Plan by 2020, of whose priorities have already been set, and, on the other hand, the willingness to launch a multiannual call for proposals starting from June"[9] (Save the Children Italy, 2020, p. 12). Up to today, none of these actions have been implemented. As Palumbo explains, "this absence has seriously hampered the development of an effective, coordinated

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[8] "Il primo Piano Nazionale d'Azione è stato adottato dal Consiglio dei Ministri con DPCM del 26 febbraio 2016 e si è concluso il 31 dicembre 2018".

[9] "l'impegno ad adottare un nuovo Piano Nazionale d'Azione entro il 2020, di cui sono state già definite le priorità, e, dall'altro, la volontà di attivare un bando pluriennale a partire dal mese di giugno."

approach among all the institutions and stakeholders working on trafficking issues and, therefore, has hindered adequate implementation of anti-trafficking measures" (Palumbo, 2015, p. 57).

The pandemic emergency, which has affected Italy since February 2020, has further effects on the migration and trafficking frameworks. It shifted the State's priorities: healthcare, school closures, prevention, labour and many more are Italy's urgencies right now. Within this context, right-wing parties seized the opportunity to strengthen their anti-immigrant discourse relying on citizens' fears and anxiety towards the virus. Thus, more and more people are now supporting their political discourses and are willing to close Italian borders once again. In other words, the possibility that the State might use fewer resources on migration policies and supporting victims of trafficking is a reality. Despite the benefits provided by the legal status of victims of THB, the socio-economic conditions of the victims may be in danger in the present economic and political situation in Italy. Research indicates that in Southern European countries, including Italy, the legal-political dimensions of integration often has been more resilient to crises than the economic dimension of integration (Claudia & Irene, 2017, p. 2303)

In the meantime, COVID-19 left thousands of women forced into prostitution to starve. Many NGOs explained that several victims turned to organisations to ask for help last month:

> According to testimonies from volunteers, social workers and NGOs, during the prolonged and strict three-month Covid-19 lockdown introduced by the Italian government, trafficking gangs abandoned women and their children, who were unable to leave their homes or work and were left without food or money to pay the rent. Given their illegal status, they had no recourse to financial assistance or unemployment benefits" (Tondo, 2020, 10th July, p. n.a.).

Finally, it is important to take into account the challenges that NGOs like Associazione Micaela are facing. In recent years, numerous organisations have had to survive without receiving funds from the State. "The lack of adequate financial resources has seriously affected the effectiveness of Italian anti-trafficking policies" (Palumbo, 2015, p. 61). Alberto Mossino, co-founder of Piam Onlus (an association that helps abused and vulnerable women escape their traffickers in Asti – Northern Italy) explains: "More than 200 places in reception centres will have to be eliminated because since July 2019 the operating bodies have not been paid"[10] (Martinengo, 2020 6th May, p. n.a.). As explained by Palumbo:

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[10] "Sono oltre 200 i posti di accoglienza che dovranno essere chiusi perché dal luglio 2019 gli enti gestori non vengono pagati".

Article 18 programme […] depend on the Italian Department for Equal Opportunities, which funds projects through annual calls (named Avvisi). Funds for the programme are therefore determined annually. This funding instability jeopardises the effectiveness and sustainability of social protection programmes, as it produces a structural insecurity, rendering the work of NGOs and associations precarious and, consequently, affecting the relationships between them and the victims.

Up to today, a large number of organizations have been able to continue working and assisting victims, but many will have to close, leaving numerous women without support and possibilities to be saved from exploitation.

This struggling reality is an alarming signal. The possibilities that in the next few years Italian anti-trafficking policies will not be renewed, and that the political agenda will not include the fight against human trafficking among its priorities, are real. The Italian government needs to rethink and restructure its framework on THB, not only to ensure effectiveness and victim protection and integration but also to fully respect and correctly apply the international and regional legal instruments that have been ratified. The system should be victim-centred and have a human rights approach: victims should be at the core of the legislation and their needs and voices should be heard and considered as a valuable starting point for future policies.

7.2 Is a new international instrument needed?

20 years after the implementation of the UN Palermo Protocols (adopted in the year 2000) debates are concerned with a new question: is a new international instrument needed? Throughout the years many countries, like Italy, adopted and implemented the UN Protocols. Nevertheless, most national governments interpreted and focused their work on the eradication of the crime itself leaving on the second-place victim's protection and integration. Among them, the EU model seems to be the most victim-centred since it has wider horizons and it goes beyond the mere fight of the crime.

This notwithstanding, in a recent webinar, Maria Grazia Giammarino (UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children) together with other experts defined the UN Protocols as outdated. As they suggest, there is a need to go beyond the Protocol in terms of implementation. To achieve this, a new instrument is needed to formalize ideas that are already supported by civil society (On the Road Onlus, 2020, 29/06/2020).

In other words, nowadays the protocols do not consider many aspects which are fundamental to guarantee the respect of victims' human rights. As an example, the protocol should define a scheme for the identification procedure. In most countries, identification is a synonym for

detention. Thus, procedures that enable States to identify those who require protection and have been victims of trafficking and exploitation are fundamental. Also, long-term assistance for victims must be foreseen. As already explained throughout this study, victims of THB need time to recover and to conquer their fears. Consequently, a model which provides long-lasting support is the only one which enables victims to feel safe and integrate into the new society. Finally, respect for migrants and labours' rights are mandatory. Victims of human trafficking must be treated as persons who have access to rights, and not only as a means to identify and address exploiters. For this reason, all rights must be respected.

I believe that the updating of the Protocols could represent a good starting point. Too many new specificities are not mentioned in the Protocols, such as child trafficking, the role of technologies in recruiting or new forms of exploitation. On top of this, ratifying States could take this renovation as an endorsement to reinterpret, update or even draft new national anti-trafficking legislation keeping human rights standards as the core of the policies.

7.3 Final remarks

In Italy, women victims of THB are assisted and supported by a structured system which empowers and enables women to start a new life. Despite its shortcomings, the Italian legislation together with the related framework can be considered as efficient, victim-oriented and with a human rights perspective.

As explained above, the challenges within this context are numerous and rising based on political and governmental changes. The reinterpretation and renewal of policies are inevitable if the aim is to focus on the victim's protection and the respect of their fundamental freedoms.

This study aims to understand if the system as it is structured is efficient, keeping women at the centre of the debate. A voice was given to victims who often remain unheard. Their testimonies are valuable and have potential since they could be the inspiration for future steps in the eradication of human trafficking and victims' integration.

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Annexes

Annex 1 – Information letter and Consent form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
University of South-Eastern Norway

Introduction

- This is a Master Thesis project
- This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore the topic of trafficking and integration.
- In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.
- The interview will take place on period January 2020.
- The researcher asks that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to being interviewed.

Purpose of the project

The interest of this study is to explore the topic of integration and the challenges that women migrant victims of trafficking must face in the integration process. Consequently, the research question that the project will try to answer to is the following: How do women migrant victims of trafficking perceive the process of integration in Italy and which is their point of view about local associations/organizations' support?

Consequently, questions on your personal experiences such as the migration and the integration process will be asked.

Ultimately, this research will be published as part of a Master thesis.

Who is responsible for the research project?

Student Clara Tripodi, master student at University of South-Eastern Norway.

Why are you being asked to participate?

The interviewees' sample has been chosen basing on the principles of convenience sampling which practically means that together with the organizations contacted it has been established who will be asked to participate to the project. Participation is strictly voluntarily. In order to participate to the interviews you need to be 18.

What does participation involve for you?

- The method selected for this research is interviews.

- You will be asked to answer to 11 questions. It will take approximately 1 – 1.5 hour.

- Questions will cover your personal experience about the migration and integration process. This means that topic such as trafficking and integration will be dealt. You are free not to answer to questions and you can choose which experiences you want to share.

- Information will be collected on paper and the sound will be recorded electronically. Interviews will be made anonymous.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw your consent.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purposes specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- The researcher will take necessary measures to protect the identity of the participant.
- The researcher has a duty of confidentiality as a student.
- Collected data will be accessible only to the researcher.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept safe in a folder on the researcher's computer with 'password protection'.
- The researcher will not include any information in any report we may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end 30.06.2025. The collected data will be store in anonymous form. Personally, identifiable information will be removed, re-written or categorized.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified

- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with University of South-Eastern Norway, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, feel free to contact:

- *Clara Tripodi* at *tripodi.clara@gmail.com* or by telephone at +39 3931856134. Additionally, you can contact the project supervisor Professor Östen Wahlbeck Department of Culture, Religion and Social Studies at the University of South-Eastern Norway by Mobile Phone +358-40-5256312 or by the E-mail Östen.Wahlbeck@usn.no
- Data Protection Officer at USN: Paal Are Solberg, by email personvernombud@usn.no

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader   Project Supervisor

Clara Tripodi   Östen Wahlbeck

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project '*Reconquering life:* vulnerable women migrant victim of trafficking living the process of integration in Italy' and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent (check the boxes to indicate to what you are giving consent to):

☐ To participate to this research project taking part to interviews.

☐ For a sound recording to be made during this interview.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 30.06.2025

(Signed by participant, date)

Annex 2 – Interview guide

Interview guide for migrant women

Nationality:

Over 18: YES or NO

Country of Origin:

Migrant status:

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1. When/How did you come in Italy?
2. Why did you come to Italy?
3. What kind of work did you do in your country if any?
4. How did you get to know the organization (ONLUS/association)?
5. How did you get to know about (ex) Article 18?
6. When did you start being 'under protection'?
7. Which services have been provided to you?
8. How do you view programmes with (ex) Article 18?
   Prompts:
   - Are you satisfied?
   - Do you think that the program as structured is helpful towards your integration?
   - Could more be done? If yes, what would have been useful to you?
9. Do you think the integration program with the organizations has improved your conditions?
10. What is integration to you?
    Prompts:
    - Which aspect of it (social integration, labour integration, linguistic integration, citizenship) do you believe is the most important/necessary to feel integrated?
11. What is empowerment to you?
    Prompts:
    - Do you think the organization's support has helped towards your personal empowerment?
    - Do you now feel independent?
12. How do you see your future?