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Cosmopolitan Ambitions and Everyday Practiced Citizenship

The Ambivalent Experiences of the Second Generation Associations in Bologna (Italy)

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Abstract

This study emerges from a broader research project on 'Urban Contexts, Migration Processes and Young Migrants' (PRIN project 2006-2008) supervised by Professor Matilde Callari Galli, which aimed to explore the socio-cultural experiences of young people of migrant background in two urban and multicultural settings: Bologna and Perugia (both capitals of the two Italian regions with the highest ratio of young people of foreign origin in schools and society). Together with research assistant Monica Russo, I contributed to the research by focusing on the second generation associations of Bologna (Riccio and Russo 2009). Between May and July 2009, I was a guest at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (MMG) in Göttingen and I presented a preliminary version of this paper to a seminar organised by the Department of Socio-cultural Diversity. I thank all the participants for feedback and in particular Susanne Wessendorf for her further comments on an earlier version of this working paper. I would also like to thank Ralph Grillo for feedback on a previous version of the paper.

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Introduction

Italy is by now home to second generation children of the first wave migrants (Ambrosini 2005; Chiodi and Benadusi 2006), who are getting organised in political, sociocultural and religious terms via associations.[1] As Colombo and colleagues (2009: 50) have recently stated, following the lesson of Ulrick Beck (2006), 'the children of immigrants find themselves in a good position to develop a cosmopolitan identification since they experience place polygamy, a permanent link with different worlds and cultures'. On the other hand, the Italian youth of migrant origin are reaching adulthood at a time when Italian society is characterised by a serious 'multiculturalism backlash' (Vertovec, Wessendorf 2009). Members of the second generation are often being depicted as 'different' by the majority society, a phenomenon which is typical of contemporary cultural racism, which draws absolute boundaries to legitimise the incommensurability of cultures and the normalisation of social exclusion and discrimination. Nevertheless, many second generation associations try to carry out cosmopolitan projects. They wish to avoid culturalism and encounter contemporary diversity by going beyond ethnic and national boundaries and by challenging common representations. Therefore, the cosmopolitanism intimated here in part concerns attitudes and practices, but it also informs projects with a certain degree of normativity (cfr. Hannerz 2004; Werbner 2008; Vertovec 2009).

In this sense, second generation associations provide us with a new and different case than the former immigrant associations that animated migration politics in the 1990s and organised themselves mainly according to national, ethnic and cultural differences (Però 2002; Caponio 2005; Carchedi and Mottura 2010). The main objective of second generation associations is to fight against discrimination and to facilitate equal opportunities of social mobility for the youth of immigrant background. Yet, as I will discuss later, these youth associations also encounter various kinds of difficulties and problems resembling the former's experiences. I argue that if they want to ensure consistency in their aim to concretely enter the local public space to realise, as they say, an 'enacted citizenship', they have to deal with the past and with the older organisations too. The problems of who dictates the agenda, of avoiding dependency and of elitism, are only some of the common challenges facing new and old associations, first and second generation. As we shall see, the second generation associations

1 In this paper I will consider 'Second Generation' in a loose sense comprising children of migrant background who grew up in Italy as much as those who were actually born in Italy.

are characterised by cosmopolitan ambitions, familiarity with new media, public assertiveness, transnational connections and better linguistic skills, which facilitate communication with Italian institutions. Despite all that, they too must confront fear of exploitation, frustration of not ensuring active participation, or increase in recruitment together with financial autonomy.

The reflections presented in this working paper stem from a study on second generation associations in the city of Bologna undertaken together with a postdoctoral student of mine (Riccio and Russo 2009). From a methodological point of view, we wanted to avoid metonymic essentialism and we did not pretend that the experiences documented by exploring the social lives of both members and leaders of these associations constituted a representative case of the Italian second generation as a whole. We wanted to study an incipient and recent social phenomenon in itself, that of youth of migrant background organising themselves to enter local public space, with local variations being very important in understanding the management of diversity in Italy. Besides looking up and down (leaders as much as members), we wanted to explore the view 'inside out' and 'outside in' (Grillo 1985), and thus we also interviewed migrants with a long associational experience as well as local government personnel to gather a perspective from outside the associations. Finally, in addition to 20 interviews and participant observation at public events, we added two follow-up group discussions with eight of the interviewees, in which we focussed on the main points emerging from the research.

Associations revealed themselves to be a particularly interesting lens through which to explore various social processes. Such processes include strategies adopted to improve the entry into the public sphere and gaining recognition, the ambivalent adjusting of various sorts of everyday cosmopolitanisms, and the constant struggle to improve the concrete and actual experience of being a citizen in contemporary Italian society. On the other hand, although the objectives of associations almost always sound altruistic and well-intentioned, within them one can find innovation as much as reproduction and strengthening of cleavages and power asymmetries along gender, class and ethnic lines. In this paper, I will focus on the characteristics of these new associations, their challenge of dominant representation, and the differences between them and the previous experiences of migrant socio-political participation.

However, in the conclusion I will also stress the common problems all associations are facing and the need to keep connections with the past to avoid similar mistakes. Before that, I will begin by providing some context by looking at contemporary multi-dimensional racism in Italy, at the delicate issue of citizenship and at the more local

trajectory of migrant associations in Bologna. Then, I will focus on second generation associations' main characteristics, objectives and strategies emerging from the experiences of their members, leaders and outsiders' perspectives. I will be discussing the main challenges they face and reflect on what this recent social phenomenon teaches us about cosmopolitanisation and everyday practices of citizenship.

Racialisation, Citizenship and the Backlash against Diversity

The contemporary Italian 'backlash against diversity' (Grillo 2005) is exemplified by the recent decree on security (July 2009), which, besides legalising security patrols of non-trained personnel, obliges doctors and health practitioners to denounce irregular migrants. This causes a dangerous (insecure) reduction in access to health services for members of ethnic minorities. One month earlier, during the last electoral campaign for the European and administrative elections, the Ministry of Internal Affairs adopted measures aimed at preventing migrants' and refugees' entry into Italy by forced repatriation without any check on potential asylum statuses, causing a serious erosion of humanitarian standards.

All over Europe, during the 1990s and more so nowadays, there have been various attempts to deport or exclude migrants who are regarded as disposable workers, but seldom as citizens entitled to access social welfare. It is now considered 'normal' to allow free movement amongst the wealthy countries, but it is deemed dangerous to facilitate migration from countries that combine poverty and, more so after 9/11, Islam. In Italy, illegal migration has become a focus of aggressive campaigns from the right. This has contributed to the politicisation of migration issues, and helped increase the pressure for migration control and the 'representation of migrants as problems' (Grillo 1985). Furthermore, and more relevantly here, the situation of ethnic minorities of immigrant origin, some of whom may be citizens or members of the second generation, has been badly affected by these anxieties about immigration.

Cultural racism

There is a dangerous dialectic between government policy and public opinion already hostile to immigration. The media increasingly present immigration as a threat, contributing to the 'moral panic' which negatively affects public opinion. In everyday political rhetoric, culture and cultural difference are increasingly politicised and the opposition to foreigners

is cast in terms of commonsense themes such as law and order and the defence of – sometimes national, sometimes local – economic interests. In other words, one witnesses the increasing cultural racism dominating right-wing (and other) ideologies. This kind of discourse underlines diversity resulting from cultural differences and concludes that, because of these cultural differences, integration is impossible. In 2008, for instance, the new Mayor of Rome, talking about the Roma minority in the capital, explained that some of them are good citizens, but others, 'also because of their culture', tend to steal and misbehave.[2] A 'culturalist' reading of difference often translates into segregation of migrants' accommodation. For instance, explanations such as the devaluation of prices due to a supposedly inherited tendency of migrants to live in overcrowded conditions are used by property owners to legitimise processes of discrimination in the housing market (Riccio 2002). Furthermore, as Cole suggested more than 10 years ago, focussing on Italy to explore the emergence of the 'new racism in Europe', popular hostility towards migrants is legitimised by depicting it as the natural response of people protecting their territories (Cole 1997). More recently, comparing contexts as far away as Cameroon and Flanders, Peter Geschiere (2005) argued that these discourses of 'autochthony', apart from revealing the obsession with belonging and the exclusion of strangers assumed in day-to-day politics worldwide, seem able to switch from one target to another. The Northern League trajectory provides a good example here, having moved through the 80s to the 90s from the stigmatisation of the southern Italian to that of international migrants. What is missing in the public space is a debate about the legitimisation of exclusionary practices in everyday life that this new racist discourse creates.

Racialisation

As Andall's work in Milan has shown, 'the very notion of the possibility of being both black and Italian remains a marginal concept within the broader framework of the contemporary immigration debate in Italy'. In other words, 'being black and being Italian were perceived as mutually exclusive categories. This view was not only evident at the institutional level of the police, but also amongst employers and by the gate-keepers of Italy's physical borders' (Andall 2002: 400). Therefore it is not a matter of mere cultural racism but phenotypic characteristics have also become more and more relevant in fostering Italian internal boundaries.

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2 www.repubblica.it/2008/05/sezioni/cronaca/sicurezza-politica-3/alemanno-rom/alemanno-rom.html

In 2008, a worrying sequence of events occurred. Abdul Gruibe, a young boy who was born in Burkina Faso and raised in Italy, was beaten to death in Milan in September 2008 by a bar's father-and-son proprietors who suspected him of stealing money. Only later did they realise that he had only stolen a package of cookies. During the attack, the two shouted: 'Dirty black'. In another instance, Emmanuel Bonsu, a 22-year-old Ghanaian, was injured in Parma in a scuffle with the police, and afterwards it was discovered that police personnel had taken pictures next to him with the signs of the beating. In Rome, a Chinese man, Tong Hongsheng, was beaten by a group of youngsters, and a Somali woman, Amina Sheikh Said, 51, said she was strip-searched and interrogated for hours at Ciampino Airport. In July, six African migrants were gunned down in Castel Volturno, a stronghold of the Neapolitan Camorra. All these different events conflating occasional harassment by the police, violent attacks by informal as much as very organised but illegal groups, together with a more mundane everyday discrimination in the labour market, are showing that, in addition to the cultural racism mentioned above, very real everyday racialisation also exists as part of contemporary Italian politics of exclusion. As Didier Fassin (2000: 315) explains when talking about France:

> If racism was previously seen as the rejection of foreigners, the discovery of internal boundaries dividing a French community which finds it increasingly difficult to perceive itself as national contrasts with the official discourse prevailing until the 1990s. Nationality no longer suffices to define the basis for exclusion of the Other: the concrete criteria according to which a landlord refuses housing, an employer rejects a job application, a policeman decides to check for identity papers … must be considered. These are phenomenological criteria that tend primarily toward appearance, particularly skin colour, and mainly target people not identified as European.

Contemporary Italian racism rhetorically conflates different kinds of stigmatisations in legitimising social exclusion: cultural and religious difference, soil as much as blood, without forgetting racial difference. Indirectly it creates a 'background noise' (Grillo and Pratt 2002) to the widespread resistance in granting citizenship to migrants and their children.

Citizenship

As Thomson and Crul (2007: 1038-1039) admit, citizenship is an important tool of inclusion, endowing migrants and their children with rights equal to their peers. Yet, 'where more restrictive laws on citizenship exist, however, a discourse of exclusion

is facilitated'. The Italian citizenship law of 1992 made it easier for descendants of Italian emigrants to regain citizenship but also much more difficult for immigrants to apply for naturalisation. With its increase in emphasis on *jus sanguinis* and no consistent *jus soli* principle introduced to balance this change, this law shaped a 'two-tier system for naturalization' with a distinction between EU and non-EU foreigners, and it aimed to reduce the number of the latter entitled to apply for naturalisation: the period of continuous legal residence required was increased from five to 10 years (Sciortino 1999: 255).

The 1992 law on citizenship was also more restrictive with the second generation, foreseeing that children born of foreign parents in Italy assume their parents' nationality and allowing them to request Italian citizenship when they are 18 years old only if they remain continually resident in Italy. This means that the children of migrants born in Italy do not automatically get Italian citizenship, but have to apply for it and go thorough a complicated bureaucratic process. However, the really precarious condition is that of young people who came to Italy when they were children or even when they had already entered adolescence, who, in addition to experiencing problems of exclusion and language acquisition (Bosisio et al. 2005), discover themselves to be 'foreigners' when they are adult. As a leader of one of the associations explained clearly:

> They might have been the best scorer of the inter-schools soccer tournament, but they have now to queue for a permit to stay…

The need to change such a state of affairs concerning citizenship entitlement has spurred the birth of many of the second generation associations, which I will take into account in this paper. However, as we shall see, the experience of various members and leaders we encountered taught us about the need to go beyond the formal dimension of citizenship and also consider the everyday practiced dimensions of citizenship, which I will discuss in further detail below. Some of these witnesses connect well with an emergent tendency of broadening analytically the conception of citizenship to include its participatory dimension, which also depends on social everyday inclusion (Holston, Appadurai 1999; Brettell 2008). Institutional discourses tend to reify complex and ambivalent social and cultural processes affected by negotiation between individuals and groups. Such negotiation is influenced in multiple ways by the representation (symbolic as well as political) of migrants and their descendants.

Marshall already stressed the need to take into account socio-economic inclusion as a background facilitating actually existing citizenship, defining citizenship as a 'status bestowed on those who are full members of the community' (Marshall 1950: 14), which includes civil, political and social rights and obligations. However, the community Marshall referred to implicitly was, un-problematically, the 'nation', conceived as a homogeneous cultural entity. Various scholars argue instead that a central question in the present debates about citizenship is the extent to which 'difference' discriminates between citizens; whether, rather than citizens being bearers of equal rights, their ability to exercise their full rights is affected by discrepancies in gender, culture and ethnicity. Furthermore, citizenship may be mediated by a person's multiple and intersecting identities and political subjects may be involved in more than one political community (Ong 1999; Yuval-Davis 2008).

Therefore, citizenship is not merely about legal status because formal citizenship may not coincide with active and equal participation. For instance, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have shown that, whatever one's legal status, educational attainment or economic advancement in the US labour market and society can become measures of a sort of second-class citizenship (cfr. also Kasinitz et al. 2008). In other words, as Bloemraad and colleagues explained, participation and activities that

> make people an integral part of their local communities and institutions can be understood as a form of participatory citizenship that allows immigrants to make citizenship-like claims on the state and others, even in the absence of legal citizenship status, and perhaps even in the absence of legal residence (Bloemrad et al. 2008: 162).

On the other hand, we should not forget that legal residence and the permit to stay might affect migrants' social life more than the granting of citizenship. The complex interplay of these factors is also anchored in the specific history of associational life in the local migration context.

Local Contexts of Migrant and Second Generation Associations: the Case of Bologna

In the study of second-generation integration in the USA (Ellis, Almgren 2009) as well as in Europe (Thomson, Crul 2007), the local level displays a particularly interesting setting in which to appreciate the interplay between structure, culture and personal agency.

> By focusing on specific local conditions, it is possible to address concerns that structure only describes the more general, macro-level processes at work, that culture is all too easily reified, and that individual agency often appears to be neglected. One locality compared to another may well display very different patterns of second-generation integration for a variety of reasons: the quality and funding of schools, the availability of post-educational opportunities, the incidence of crime, the level and nature of familial and community support networks, the degree of ethnic cohesion and so on. All these variables will potentially affect how younger residents in a particular area develop and adapt their personal aspirations and future expectations (Ibid: 1030).

However, many studies focus on receiving states, their policies and the political opportunity structure (cfr. Schrover Vermeulen 2005), sometimes running the risk of neglecting agency and, in our case, how youth of migrant background respond, adapt or circumvent laws as much as integration policies, and how their organisations and participation affect the meanings and practices of citizenship. In this paper we will only focus on the experience of associations, but we will also appreciate the limitations of a too deterministic reading through the lens of POS (Political Opportunity Structure). Indeed, unlike the first immigrant organisations of the 1990s, second generation associations show a more ambivalent and sometimes sceptical stance towards the opportunity offered by the institutional complex of Bologna.

Bologna's economy has been historically characterised by the success of highly specialised small and medium-sized enterprises. Global restructuring processes and a very severe demographic decline of the local population are important processes affecting the city as much as the region (Salih, Riccio 2010). Migrants are mainly employed in small manufacturing industries, in the production of handicrafts, and in the metallurgical and mechanical industries. Although the majority are unskilled labourers (mechanics, labourers in small and medium-size firms), one can also find an increasing number of skilled migrants who work below their skill level. From a quantitative point of view, in 2007 one counted 5,047 Romanians, 4,068 Filipinos, 3,477 Bangladeshis, 3,014 Moroccans, 2,302 Albanians, 2,220 Moldavians, 2,198 Chinese, 2,175 Ukrainians, followed by residents coming from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Eritrea. Foreigners aged less than 24 numbered around 11,000 and the minors born in Italy and belonging to a family of migrant origin numbered around 5,000. The most numerous minors were: Filipinos (694), Chinese (592), Moroccans (573), Bangladeshis (540), Serbs (330), Romanians (297) and Albanians (220) (Osservatorio demografico comune di Bologna 2008).[3] The percentage of children with non-Italian

3 http://www.comune.bologna.it/iperbole/piancont/index.html

background in schools (around 16%) is among the highest in the country, highlighting a stable phenomenon, mainly composed of families who settle, although maintaining quite substantial transnational links with their countries of origin.

Most of the associations in the city of Bologna were founded in the mid 1990s, when the left-wing local administration started to promote a 'multicultural integration policy' (Caponio 2005). Moreover, from the migrants' point of view, a multiplicity of organisational actors started to play an important role in the interface with Italian institutions as well as being crucial in maintaining transnational connections with the homeland. An important function was performed by the national associations, which are often shaped by migrants who are the most knowledgeable about the institutions in the receiving society. These are often the better educated, the elite who represent the foreign community only to some degree. Other potential forms of organisations developed, such as cooperatives or enterprises targeting more specific objectives together with more focused social associations. Besides the branches of national associations in the various provinces there were also ethnic and village associations. The former refer to the linguistic or ethnic minorities which also organise themselves within the diaspora. The latter tend to develop in the provinces with many migrants coming from a specific village or town.

Home-town associations become involved in projects of various kinds such as construction of a well back home or collecting funds to build places of worship, schools and health centres (Grillo, Riccio 2008; cfr. Mercer et al. 2009). Developed initially to ensure services for funeral ceremonies back in the home village, gradually the purposes of these associations have become more complex, involving the transfer of money or products (medical drugs and equipment) for collective objectives such as community development, the construction of health centres or small hospitals, and the improvement of regional transport. Aside from these common features, one can observe meaningful differences about the purposes and objectives (health, education, etc.) as well as internal organisation (more or less democratic). Finally, one should note individual initiatives based on Italian associational structures which allow socially active migrants to become involved in cultural and economic activities, networking with the actors of the economic and institutional system within specific localities. Associations involved in intercultural events (music, performances, etc.), but also those concerned with entrepreneurial projects, represent good examples of such initiatives. Individuals who address the broader issue of citizenship for migrants within the local context represent another example. Here one may encounter persons who prefer to participate within the trade union or the provincial or communal con-

sultative councils for foreigners to seek to empower and enhance access to citizenship of migrants in general and not just Senegalese or Fulani, Ghanaians or Ewe. This is to say that the diversification with which migrants have been entering the Italian public space is tending to overcome national, ethnic and religious lines (Riccio 2008).

Yet, in the 1990s many of these associations (national and 'intercultural' ones especially) were perceived by various migrants as imposed by the local government rather than the outcome of spontaneous mobilisation. Furthermore, the socio-political participation that should have been facilitated by the establishment of the Metropolitan Forum of Immigrant Associations favoured the increase of migrants' associations, which were formed by unrepresentative leaders (Però 2002). On the other hand, facilities were provided in order to support migrant associational activities. One of the main problems encountered by migrants' associations was access to public contracts and funding. After a comprehensive comparative study of local policies and migrant associations, Tiziana Caponio concluded that:

> The inexperience and structural weakness of immigrants' associations explains the distrust of public institutions, and in turn this distrust has the effect of keeping immigrants' associations even more inexperienced and structurally weak. Breaking this vicious circle does not appear to be an easy task (Caponio 2005: 948).

However, in the last decade there has been a tremendous diversification of organisations within the Italian landscape, with hometown associations transforming into regional associations or federations to better meet the challenges of co-development (Riccio 2007) or, concerning the interplay with the receiving context, the birth of foreign families' and mixed associations together with what are normally called second generation associations.

The Second Generation Associations in Bologna and the Challenge of Representation

These associations of youth with an immigrant background are very dynamic and rich in initiatives, which carry important political weight. While their parents tended to struggle for recognition through engagement in social activities based on Italian associational structures and networking with the economic and institutional system within specific localities, members of the second generation tend to fully address the hot issue of citizenship and tend to cross local and sometimes national boundaries.

This kind of strategy proves to be crucial for youth who were schooled and socialised in Italian society, but who encounter barriers to social mobility and of limited citizenship rights. These 'new Italians', as they often define themselves, try to strengthen their social position. In their struggle for recognition, they often focus on the double meaning of representation (symbolic as much as political). They contest and critique the common representation, which targets them as forever migrants, in order to enhance their access to social resources and political representation and consequent participation. With this purpose in mind they are also well networked through the Internet, and tend to be very active with the use of new media.

The first and oldest association is the *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia* (GMI) association founded in 2001 at the national level. It now has hundreds of members and several local branches in different towns and villages in Italy. The main aim of the organisation is to become a point of reference for young Muslims born or brought up in Italy who want to be protagonists of their lives and in the society in which they live (Frisina 2008). The association maintains good relationships with the media and uses its website for circulating information (www.giovanimusulmani.it). The organisation itself operates simultaneously on local, national and transnational levels (cf. Levitt, Waters 2002). As we shall see, residing in a specific local context may assume particular importance, for it is the arena where people's voices and concerns could be heard and developed into new demands of participatory citizenship. However, along with the local context, second generation Muslims often emphasise the importance of transnational public spheres as a major context in which to direct their efforts, emphasising the abandonment of the national as the main or the only political and discursive arena in which identity politics should be played out (Salih 2004). Indeed, the nation-state is increasingly understood by second generation Muslims as operating through an exclusionary process, which not only denies them access to citizenship but also fails to acknowledge their complex identities. On the one hand, the state persists in crystallising Muslims as permanent and essential 'others', and on the other it offers them assimilation to the national community through a logic which restricts Muslim politics and identities to the private sphere (Salih, Riccio 2010).

The most popular organisation, which is particularly active from a cultural and political point of view, is the G2 Second Generations network born in 2005, a national network of young Italians of immigrant background. Thanks to its website (www.secondegenerazioni.it) it provides members with space for discussion and confrontation together with videos, taking into account issues about citizenship rights, identity construction and everyday discrimination (Zinn 2008; Colombo et al. 2009).

Another well-networked national association was founded by children of Chinese migrants, also in 2005, called AssoCina (www.associna.com). Its aim is to represent young Chinese-Italians, provide a bridge between the parents and the Italian society and contest the dominant stereotypical representation of the Chinese in Italy. As a leader put it at a public event:

> We want to realise a counter-information. This is why we have realised the web site, not only to create a place to encounter each other. There is a section called 'news' where members write their own articles with the aim to counter-inform about all the stereotypical ideas about the Chinese, like that of the Chinese who cook dogs in their restaurants, or that of the Chinese who never die. We also have articles on citizenship or simpler stories but told without all the distortions of the news.

As another member of the association, who is an activist in the local branch of Bologna, further exemplifies:

> We are editing a new video on the electoral participation of naturalised citizens … it is an electorate that the media normally do not consider and that people ignore … we offer the possibility to let ourselves be known to the Italian audience who is interested … to let our everyday life be known like in a simple act of active citizenship as the political elections (member of Associna).

To deconstruct and reconstruct the public image of the Chinese youth means to facilitate a process of 'normalisation' of the presence of the second generation in the public sphere, especially at the local level.

These three national associations represent what Brettel (2008) has recently called 'netizens' to evoke social actors able to empower their everyday struggle to realise citizenship by navigating cyberspace. However, one registers a need for 're-territorialisation' (Appadurai 1996) among these bigger associations, which develop several local branches in different towns. Furthermore, local laboratories exist, such as that of Crossing, an association also concerned with the problem of representation, which has become a nation-wide web TV channel: CrossingTV (www.crossingtv.it). This is a cosmopolitan TV channel stemming from a mixed association, which aims to fight the 'ethnic labelling and stereotypical rhetoric of Italian media'. Here the aim of actively creating counter-hegemonic representation is clear:

> CrossingTV was born to answer to an important need. In the media delirium in which white, black and yellow youth are involved, often in an instrumental and exploitative way, it is important to create a space which is pure, not labelled, not labellable and, more relevant, not labelling (member of CrossingTV).

> I do not want that when you hear my foreign name you think about crime and decay, I do not want that when you hear that I am Albanian you think of me being on the boats in the middle of the sea … (member of CrossingTV).

Like Associna and Crossing, other associations also try to combine the outward communication aiming to challenge common representations with more internal reflections on cultural essentialism and on the need to recognise more complex forms of identifications that are able to conflate their family experiences with everyday life within Italian society. In this regard, GMI, the association of young Italian Muslims, constitutes a crucial example.

> We were born to say that you can be comfortably Italian and Muslim, it is not a problem, neither a contradiction, they are not contrasting identities (member of GMI).

All of these associations look for the recognition of youths' multiple and situational identities. Instead of playing on a strategic essentialism, they prefer to invoke a cosmopolitan self-representation. They publicly question an essentialist rhetoric of autochthony, which refers intermittently to blood and to soil. Perhaps because of the context, which seems particularly racist, they carefully try to avoid various forms of culturalism. They also try to avoid the essentialisation of the second generation as a social category. Despite similarities, it seems to be a slightly different case than that analysed in Switzerland focusing on the Secondo Movement:

> In [second generation migrants'] discourse, which emphasised economic success and cultural belonging to Switzerland, they essentialised 'the second generation' as successfully integrated members of Swiss society. This discourse was coloured by a culturalist stance, celebrating cultural diversity and marketing a cosmopolitan 'secondo life-style' as integral part of 'being Swiss', while at the same time emphasising the cultural similarities to the Swiss as legitimisation to access to Swiss citizenship. On the one hand, this discourse helped to deconstruct the essentialist images of the violent, vandalising and jobless secondo. On the other, it did not represent those secondos who are structurally less successful and who are repeatedly under attack of right-wing populists (Wessendorf 2008: 196).

Instead, in this case, the priority remains the fight against discrimination and the commitment to a cosmopolitan morphology of the associations able to go beyond the race line (cfr. Aparicio 2007). For instance, Next Generation, an association born two years ago in a town (Imola) within the province of Bologna, managed to reunite young members of different national origin, including Italians. However, such cosmopolitan projects may fail in their implementation. Arcimondo, a local association born two years ago with the help of Arci (an Italian cultural association of the left) in

Bologna, with the objective of fighting discrimination and aiming for a cosmopolitan membership, could not avoid a striking majority of Moroccan members. This was partially due to the fact that the recruitment occurred through personal networks of the leaders, who are themselves of Moroccan background.

Furthermore, as anticipated in the first part of the paper, members of the local second generation associations are more interested in realising a practiced citizenship in social everyday life than on paper. They think that discrimination and social marginalisation are the crucial issues:

> Yes, I am a foreigner, this is a fact. If they give me citizenship, that's a bureaucratic thing, I am always a foreigner, if I walk in the street, I am always a Moroccan, not kidding; even if you show the red passport of Italian citizens you are always a Moroccan. For the Italian law you are a full citizen, but for the Italian people you remain a foreigner (member of Arcimondo).

> Among us we talk more about the meaning of citizenship, not about the bureaucratic peace of paper, I know that's important too, but the priority remains your recognition (member of GMI).

Although the question of citizenship played the role of a springboard for most of the national associations of the second generation in Italy, these local branches and the local associations seem to favour a broader objective:

> The campaign for the change of citizenship law is important, do not get me wrong, but if and when this will be granted, what will you do? Do you stop working? Do you cease the associational life? I think the second generation should go beyond formal citizenship and work on the sense of belonging to a territory and on the meaning of participating in its life (member of GMI).

The main objectives of both national and local second generation associations is the struggle against discrimination and the enhancement of equal opportunities of social mobility for the youth of immigrant background. Clearly, the experience of these associations is somehow different from that of their parents, who are often accused of being unable to understand the main characteristics of Italian society on the one hand, and, on the other, to be begging for just a bit of space and recognition. Members of the second generation feel Italian and, in a more assertive way, want to communicate their priorities 'loud and clear' (Zinn 2008). They openly criticise their parents for being in-ward looking and for being unable to interact with Italian institutional and associational structures. However, they too experience various problems

of participation, mobilisation, and networking with the institutional complex that shapes the local contexts.

For instance, the problem of who dictates the agenda is still very much felt. There are some public funds that have begun targeting the second generation in recent years, but most of the people I have worked with displayed a certain degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, the majority feel the need to shape a stronger organisational identity:

> Before diving in we need to better understand who we really are; we need to strengthen our structure and our credibility at the local level (member of GMI).

> We are not ready yet, we need a better organisation with more members, we cannot only be a small group of people (member of Arcimondo).

On the other hand, many express the fear of being instrumentalised and exploited, like the following common refrains testify:

> The first steps are to let ourselves be known and gain a bit of visibility … the issue about the second generation is becoming fashionable and we do not want to be used, we need to learn to relate ourselves with the different institutions (leader of Arcimondo).

> I do not like it when the personnel of the commune has already organised everything and only then call us to participate, but if you have done everything what should you need me for? I say no, thank you! Either you call me at the beginning and you take me as a serious interlocutor, or you only want to use me to play big with your potential electorate (member of GMI and Arcimondo).

> We did not want to be instrumentalised, we want to be an active part, not to help them only to achieve the honours for some issue (member of Associna).

> We do not want that they do things 'in our name', we are sick and tired of being beneficiaries of local policies, we want to be partners (member of Next Generation).

The assertiveness we find in most of these claims is new, but the suspicion of being manipulated is an older problem that the parents' associations got to know quite well in the 90s. Furthermore, like the parents, the second generation organisations confront various difficulties in ensuring participation of the members in common activities and, consequently, they run the risk of not reaching that financial autonomy which would ensure that they participate in projects as partners rather than beneficiaries. There is a complex vicious cycle to be avoided of which the past experiences remind us (Però 2002; Caponio 2005).

Conclusion: Continuity and Change

Therefore, one registers various forms of difference between first and second generation associations, with the latter seeming more interested in acting towards the society they have grown into. If for the former the finding of a common sense of belonging and unity within the host country was the priority, the younger generation's main goal is to see this society no longer as host but as their own. They feel Italian and they do not seek to be 'accepted' by Italian society, but to be considered full members with respect to equal opportunities of social mobility for all members.

> We share some common enemy, like racism, but we may differ when looking at job opportunities. We struggle to ensure the same opportunities between Italian youth and the youth of immigrant background (member of Next Generation).

However, despite the differences and the claimed desire of autonomy from both Italian institutions and parents' associations, most of the interviewees recognise the need to cooperate among associations. Thus, although the two forms of associations, first and second generation, are different, it seems that they intermittently need to hold dialogues to create better links to the institutions of the receiving society. This is even more necessary if the focus of the associations is, as is often claimed, the participation in social life and an everyday experienced citizenship. On the one hand, this more ambitious objective differentiates second generation organisations from previous migrant associations, while on the other hand, it obliges members of the second generation to take into account these same older associational experiences and to intermittently create links for common strategising.

Another common problem is characterised by how representative associations' leaders may afford to be. As with the former migrant organisations or with the Secondo Movement in Switzerland (Wessendorf 2008), the leadership consist of politically aware well-educated youth of immigrant background, mainly students, who engage in local cultural and social politics. This feature translates into problems of trust and recruitment. According to some activists, the worst problem is time. Most of the young workers of migrant background do not find time to participate in the associations' activities. Furthermore, the difficulties of everyday life (permit to stay, work relations, salaries, rent, etc.) make the issues debated within the associations a bit remote for many members. These are problems typical of associational life in general, not only of the second generation, as a member of Arcimondo explains:

> In all associations one finds 'intellectuals', people with a better educational standard than those who go to work early, often confront serious problems, at work or with permits … they do not see associational participation as worthwhile.…

On the other hand, at high school or university one develops different expectations of social mobility and contests diffuse discrimination. Moreover, this elite may constitute 'a vanguard' able to create a strategic place within Italian public space, which can reveal itself to be crucial for youth of immigrant background more generally (Colombo 2007). We are dealing with a very recent phenomenon and most of the young persons we have worked with have shown themselves to be aware of all these problems and ready to engage (Riccio, Russo 2009). In this context, they are helped by a promising critical and sophisticated reflexivity. Furthermore, as we have seen, the aim to foster a more cosmopolitan understanding of 'being Italian' becomes indirectly relevant for the realisation of citizenship rights within a society ever more hostile towards diversity. Despite constraints and limitations, the ongoing socio-political trajectory of these associations leads us to think of citizenship as a negotiated and contested process of everyday inclusionary and exclusionary practices. In other words, it reminds us all that the rights acquired or gained in the past should not be taken for granted because they can be erased in the future.

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