

## **Changing citizenship: everyday representations of membership, belonging and identification among Italian senior secondary school students**

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*Abstract:* The paper aims to explore the mapping of belonging and identification representations among both autochthonous children and those of immigrants in their later years of secondary education in Italy. It aims to contribute to developing the implication of an analysis 'from below' of citizenship, stressing its active, contested, adjusted contents and showing how the meaning youngsters attach to it may vary according to the discourse and the context. A series of narrative interviews highlights the multivalent and mobile meaning attributed to citizenship and its complex relation with membership and identification. Discussing the criteria for obtaining citizenship, emphasis is placed on the *participative* dimension rather than on the dimension of attributed belonging (determined by fate or blood). Citizenship remains an important formal question but requires an *active* attitude in order to be deserved. The 'honest life' then becomes the main criterion for granting citizenship. Differently from Marshall and his classical analysis, it is possible to note a marked shift of emphasis from rights to duties, undermining the inclusive and universal meaning attributed to citizenship. Narrations become more complex when identification is the main contend. In this case, an essentialist reified idea of belonging reduces citizenship to a specific but not exhaustive part of personal identification. Citizenship then may evolve from being a tool for inclusion to being a tool for differentiation and division between 'us and them'.

*Keywords:* Citizenship, Belonging, Identification, Children of immigrants, Youth

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### **Citizenship in a global world**

The characteristics of contemporary migration processes – increasingly bound up in the context of a growing fluidity of people, goods, images, and information (Appadurai 1996) – contribute to blurring national boundaries and pose new questions about the principles of inclusion and exclusion used to allocate civic, political and social rights (Marshall 1964). In particular, new international migrations question the way in which, starting from the point of view of the nation-state, modernity has conceived of citizenship as the result of a close relationship among rights, nationality and belonging. The increasingly transnational dimension – in imagination, if not in practice, (Faist 2000; Castles 2002) – of international migrations reveals a constitutive contradiction at the heart of liberal democracy between the recognition of individual freedom based on the idea of the universal equality of all human beings and the demands of nation-states to control their national boundaries and to define the criteria for inclusion and exclusion while at the same time guaranteeing the possibility of effective possession of universal human rights (Benhabib 2004).

For some scholars (Brubaker 1992; Joppke 1999) these transformations may be relevant but do not really call into question the central role of the nation-state either in defining criteria for inclusion and exclusion or in guaranteeing effective possession of citizenship rights. Citizenship continues to be based on a strong idea of belonging rooted in the principles of equality and participation. The rights assured by citizenship still require loyalty to and recognition of the national community.

For other scholars (Soysal 1994; Jacobson 1996) a new idea of post-national citizenship is being stated, an idea in which civic, political and social rights are claimed and assured, not based on a specific national belonging but on the recognition of universal human rights granted by supra-national institutions and treaties. These transformations entail a decline in the relevance of national belonging and render formal citizenship less attractive because the civil and social rights it traditionally assures are now guaranteed by the supra-national recognition of universal human rights.

Other students point out that a profound transformation of citizenship is not tantamount to its radical devaluation. The traditional idea of citizenship deeply bound up in belonging to a unique nation-state leaves room for new

transnational (Bash *et al.* 1994; Bauböck, Guiraudon 2009; Portes *et al.* 1999), cosmopolitan (Delanty 2000) or multicultural (Koopmans *et al.* 2005) ideas of citizenship.

Thus citizenship seems to constitute one of the principal arenas of conflict for the claim of human rights protection and difference recognition. This is particularly evident when the debate relates to the fates of immigrants' children. The so-called 'second generations' demonstrate how problematic and complex the ties between requests for inclusion and national identification have become in contemporary global societies. Although the thinking on the role citizenship actually plays in defining the paths of inclusion or exclusion of immigrants' children often derives from macro analysis, focusing on formal dimensions and examining how regulatory transformations affect social mobility and scholastic or professional results, various studies analysing young people's experiences of what being a citizen means are rapidly gaining interest<sup>2</sup>. The focus on everyday understanding of citizenship is connected with a dynamic and relational notion of citizenship in which social meanings and social practices are placed at the core of the matter. As Benedicto and Morán observe, "instead of thinking about citizenship as an individual status, defined by the state's attribution of diverse rights and the ambiguous acknowledgement of certain responsibilities acquired once and for all, it must be understood as a process whose contents and meanings change in the course of life trajectories of individuals, among different social groups, and according to specific historical contexts" (2007: 609).

From the everyday point of view, citizenship appears as characterised by multidimensionality. The formal dimension – the possession of formal status and a passport – can be distinguished from the participative dimension – being considered part of society, being allowed to have a say, expressing and defending specific opinions or interests – and from identification – feeling part of a specific community. The distinction allows us to analyse how these different constitutive dimensions are connected or distinct in concrete, mundane situations in order to express an articulated and mobile idea of inclusion and exclusion, equality and difference and rights and duties.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Lister *et al.* 2003; Hussain, Bagguley 2005; Smith *et al.* 2005; Miller-Idriss 2006; Queirolo Palmas 2006; Benedicto, Morán 2007; Colombo, Domaneschi, Marchetti 2009; Colombo 2009.

This paper aims to explore the mapping of belonging and identification representations among both autochthonous children and those of immigrants in their later years of secondary education in Italy. It aims to contribute to developing the implication of an analysis 'from below' of citizenship, stressing its active, contested, adjusted contents and showing how the meaning youngsters attach to it may vary according to the discourse and the context.

### **Presentation of the research**

In sharing these analytical and theoretical perspectives, the research I present here is an attempt to understand how some adolescents attending secondary high school in Milan (northern Italy) conceive of and speak about citizenship.

I collected 110 in-depth narrative interviews, with both children of autochthonous Italians and children of immigrants. All the youngsters interviewed are between the ages of 16 and 22. The children of autochthonous Italians (72) are all male, and are all enrolled in technical or professional schools. Among the children of immigrants (38, including 24 girls and 14 boys), 11 are enrolled in a scientific or linguistic high school and the other 27 are attending technical or professional training institutes. All of them were either born in Italy (24) or arrived in early childhood (14) and all had their scholastic formation in Italy. The country of provenance of their parents varies considerably mirroring the actual fragmented composition of Italian immigration<sup>3</sup>.

The interviews with children of autochthonous Italians mainly focused on the idea of national belonging, attitudes to immigrants and immigration and the meaning given to citizenship, cultural ties, religion and political participation. Special attention was devoted to understanding how rights and duties contribute to shaping the idea of citizenship, how arguments based on universalistic accounts or on the particularistic defence of privileges are introduced in order to construct or contest the borderline

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<sup>3</sup> 14 are from North African countries (12 from Egypt and 2 from Morocco), 5 come from sub-Saharan countries (3 from Eritrea, 1 from Senegal and 1 from Ghana), 6 are from South America (5 from Peru and 1 from Salvador), and 12 are from Asia (5 from the Philippines, 4 from Sri Lanka and 3 from China). The remainder comes from Russia.

separating 'us' and 'them', the included and the excluded. The interviews with children of immigrants focused on the different possible meanings of belonging – admittance, membership, identification – exploring how they claim citizenship, to what extent they are interested in claiming it, which kind of motivation they advance for its achievement and how they value it. The children of immigrants interviewed do not represent a statistically significant sample of teenage children of immigrants in Italy. They represent a specific segment of this population - those who decided or have the resources and the ability to engage in education beyond compulsory schooling. Thus they may represent an avant-garde which, having acquired a broader and stronger cultural capital, will probably play a key role in defining patterns of living together and integration in Italian society (Colombo 2007).

### **Shifting from rights to duties**

Most of the youngsters interviewed, the children of autochthonous parents as well as the children of immigrants, conceive of citizenship as a set of guarantees and rights which must be allowed only to those who prove that they deserve them. The idea that citizenship constitutes a universal status, that is, that it consists of a condition of equality that is acknowledged for all persons because they are human beings regardless of their actual behaviour does not seem to be very widespread. On the contrary, the idea is put forward that citizenship is a form of guarantee or protection for those who behave properly and contribute to the wellbeing of the community (Lister *et al.* 2003).

Citizenship has to do with the recognition of equal opportunity; it involves behavioural and attitudinal aspects rather than innate characteristics. Anyone who contributes to the wellbeing of society, works, obeys the law, pays taxes and is economically self-reliant can and actually should have citizenship. Far less importance is attributed to blood, ancestors, religion and ethnic or racial characteristics. On the contrary, people who are very selfish or who do not contribute economically to society would be excluded from the benefits accorded to citizens.

In this way, citizenship relates more to the 'way of life', that is, to volitive actions, personal choices, attitudes and behaviours. The form of

inclusion that citizenship defines is based on the sharing of the same principles and on respect for the same rules more than on the sharing of innate and natural characteristics.

*For me everyone could become an Italian citizens, the same as everyone could become German. People just have to adapt to their life styles. Their cultures can stay the same but their life style has to change. Life style meaning the idea of work and the idea of family (Fabio, 18 years old).*

Only apparently, however, overcoming the idea that belonging is defined by 'blood' or by other immutable characteristics seem to mean greater inclusion. In fact, a citizenship that must be earned taken as a 'reward for proper behaviour' can potentially be strongly exclusive. It distinguishes between series A persons (the 'right ones', the 'good citizens' and series B persons (the 'marginal', the 'bad' or the 'non-citizens') (Dean, Melrose 1999; Lister *et al.* 2003). The former must be guaranteed and protected while the latter must be left to their fate and, in any case, excluded from the rights guaranteed by citizenship. The universalistic and inclusive principle that Marshall considers to be the basis for the modern idea of citizenship which tends to broaden participation in public life as much as possible and to reduce economic, cultural and social divisions is replaced with a particularistic and exclusive principle transforming citizenship into a set of obligations, commitments and responsibilities towards the community and converting rights into rewards that must be earned through active and compliant behavior (Ong 1999).

The 'natural' division based on blood and origins becomes a 'moral' distinction which is just as obvious and incontestable:

*We have to go back to where criminals are criminals and civil persons are considered civil (Andrea, 20 years old).*

Civil persons must not be excluded from citizenship. If a person behaves properly, if he wants to participate in the common good, if he adapts to the will and rules of society, he has the right to all the advantages related to citizenship:

*Being an Italian citizen means belonging and obeying Italian law, nothing more. Accepting being an Italian citizen means behaving accordingly, that is, making choices that are to the benefit of the Italian state. Everyone can be Italian*

*citizens if he obeys the laws of this state and if he behaves accordingly, I mean, once people have accepted the rules, they have to put them into practice. I believe that if a person is strongly convinced of what he is doing, that is, that he wants to belong to this state, then you have to give him a chance to join it and become part of it. The conditions are having a job, I think that is important, and then that he does not commit crimes and that he does not live off the state so that all the citizens have to do something to maintain him. I think citizenship is strongly linked to duties that each one must take on ... following the rules lets you live in peace and quiet just like an Italian born in Italy ... so this gives you the right to vote and therefore to make choices for the country to which you have chosen to belong. Therefore to choose your future life as well and in general that of the state in which you live. I think it is very important, above all to have the freedom of choice is one of the fundamental rights (Norman, 17 anni).*

Belonging to the category of right and deserving people is not a natural and universal characteristic which is acquired once and for all. The right to have your citizenship acknowledged must constantly be reconquered; it is granted to all regardless of the conditions ascribed to them but is revoked in cases of improper behavior:

*citizenship should be given to everybody ... you want to live in Italy? Fine! Get your documents in order, work, support a family ... don't bother other people, then everything is okay and you have citizenship, but if I see a foreigner who rapes someone, jail doesn't solve anything, he should go back to his own country directly and nothing else ... because at that point, you don't want to be a citizen and so I would send him back to his own country (Adel, 22 years old, born in Egypt, in Italy since the age of 4, Egyptian citizenship)*

*In my opinion, the advantages of citizenship must be granted only to those who are right and behavior properly, I mean, people who commit murders, push drugs or commit a robbery cannot have citizenship any more, also if they are Italians, it doesn't matter at all if they are Italians or foreigners, if they don't obey the law they are no more citizens, they cannot pretend to have community housing or the right to vote or any other privilege (Jacopo, 18 years old)*

### **Giving citizenship to foreigners when it is merited**

The young children of 'autochthones' interviewed largely share the idea that citizenship should not be too closely linked to origins and blood. As

already illustrated, personal merit is worth more than alleged natural characteristics; it is a sure and fair criterion for distinguishing between those who may have rights and those who must be excluded from them. Citizenship should be granted to all those who behave properly and therefore show that they deserve it.

*I would give Italian citizenship to whoever deserves it, to whoever earns it, not to everybody! Because it would be a big mess ... but I would grant Italian citizenship to people who work, who bust their asses ... and, in fact, I would even expel anyone who doesn't want to do anything (Gianluca, 18 years old)*

*I think that to have Italian citizenship a person should have a job, have a house ... and then I don't know what else ... for me these two things would be okay, a job and a house ... and he should contribute to pay taxes and things like that ... at that point, Italian citizenship (Daniele, 19 years old).*

Other forms of restriction like knowledge of the language or the political context suggested as indispensable prerequisites for the awarding of citizenship do not seem to be very relevant and justifiable:

*a person who shows that he is here in Italy, that he lives well, he works and does not cause trouble and who is a very normal person can certainly have Italian citizenship. If he behaves like any other Italian ... he can have Italian citizenship [...] There are people who have never learned Italian and work better than Italians do and so... for me, the life they live counts for something, if the person really gets to work at eight in the morning and goes home at eight at night and is maybe supporting two kids whether or not he knows Italian, I mean ... if you bring something good to your job and, I don't know, something that is good for other people, then why can't we give it to him, why do you have to send him back home, because anyway if he leaves, then along comes an Italian who maybe leaves work at six, does less work ... if a person behaves properly, that's okay and he deserves it even if he doesn't know much Italian ... amen! [...] I look at the facts, you've always got to look at the facts and if the facts warrant deserving Italian citizenship then I would give it (Andrea, 20 years old)*

*if a Moroccan comes along or someone like that and obeys the law, that's fine with me, he works ... fine, no problem, but if he starts not obeying the law, then I get pissed off, I mean, especially if you come to my home and start smashing things ... You can come from wherever you like just as long as you use your*

*head, your brains, act right, obey the law and it doesn't matter where you come from, if you just obey the law*

*Some people suggest that there should be tests for the knowledge of Italian and of Italian culture ...*

*No, not that, because that's a lot of nonsense. I think that is imposing your own society and it's got nothing to do with it. It is enough to obey the law, I think it is senseless, it makes no sense in my books. Why should you impose your own society? I mean, it's simpler, you're born where you're born, you've got your memories, the history of your nation ...and, whatever, they're yours, I don't impose mine on you, no way (Alberto, 21 years old)*

Many of those interviewed underline nevertheless that the will to learn a language and Italian customs needed for adequate communication and to engage skilfully in daily relations is the minimum basis for the granting of citizenship. It cannot be linked solely to temporal criteria and it cannot be obtained automatically. On the contrary, it must be desired and must require a minimum of commitment that proves the actual desire for and real interest in integration. The commitment to acquire good language skills is seen as an important indicator of the wish not to 'isolate oneself' and therefore the wish to be part of the community, sharing its burdens and obligations and therefore earning the rights and privileges connected with citizenship. But the conditions that effectively allow a definite distinction between those who deserve citizenship and those who are excluded are having a job, a family, a home, obeying the law, behaving 'normally' and actively seeking to be useful to society as a whole.

### **The immigrants' children's interest in citizenship**

Due to bureaucratic complexity and the arbitrariness involved in obtaining a regular permit to stay in Italy for anybody not considered part of the Italian blood community, it is not surprising that all the children of immigrants interviewed showed a strong interest in obtaining Italian citizenship.

The interviewees often see citizenship merely as a way of obtaining formal documents, especially a passport, which are useful, if not necessary, for the practical advantages they provide.

The practical dimension of citizenship is considerable: it allows people to live legally and without suffering an excessive degree of discrimination. Citizenship is first of all a *document*, certifying the recognition of equality and being considered a human being, the right to *exist*, to *stay* and to *live* legally in a specific place. It is an essential document for the management of everyday, mundane problems:

*Citizenship is just a legal issue, if there were no tribunals or borders there would be no citizenship. I have two citizenships, I have two documents, but they don't have any value in themselves, for me they don't have any affective value ... I'm not saying they are not important, they are useful and convenient ... If someone offered me an English passport, sure I'd accept it because it doesn't have any affective value, it's only another convenience, it doesn't have any other meaning. If I lost it I'd have a problem, obviously, because I'd have to do it again, but not because citizenship has a value, absolutely not (Kristina, born in Russia, in Italy since she was 5 years old, Russian and Italian citizenship)*

The emphasis on the *legal* dimension of citizenship and on its link with a legal permit to stay in Italy is easy to understand in the light of the long and uncertain bureaucratic procedures. The children of immigrants, especially those born in Italy, consider the obligation to have a permit to legally stay in the country an unequal and oppressive requirement which makes an incomprehensible or unjustifiable distinction between them and their peers with Italian parents who are perceived as similar and with whom they share the same everyday life and the same dreams for the future (Balibar 1988).

In its formal dimension, citizenship is considered above all an instrumental resource. It allows them first to legally *stay* in Italy and bypass the bureaucratic procedures and second to be considered equal to their Italian peers, especially with regard to the opportunity to *travel*, a right involving the fundamental and sacred freedom of all human beings.

As a right to stay and to travel, citizenship involves mundane daily matters. Nonetheless, this everyday dimension can have central relevance and can affect many other aspects of personal experience. The mundane aspect of citizenship, as stressed by one interviewee, can have extremely profound consequences and can turn over a new leaf:

*With citizenship comes the possibility to vote ... identity papers, so I can go everywhere in Europe without showing my passport ... then there is also the*

*passport that allows you to travel more easily ... so, they are ... we can say they are small things, but they can also turn over a new leaf (Loum, born in Italy, with parents from Senegal, he is waiting for the Italian citizenship).*

For the children of immigrants interviewed, citizenship still represents an important document in terms of recognition and participation as well. The right to be recognized as members of a specific community, to be entitled to all the rights connected with that belonging, to be able to stay legally and to have a say and to participate in making common decisions are all concrete factors in inclusion or exclusion. Even more so, citizenship, that is, the right to actively express personal preferences and the right to travel without excessive restrictions is considered as a central element in *personal capacity* (Melucci 1996: 52), a set of resources a person uses in thinking for herself and acting as a person in order to be recognized as a person by others and to invest energy in her personal fulfilment as a human being. Citizenship from this point of view, represents not only a strategic instrumental document, but also the prerequisite for full and concrete *agency*.

Citizenship is still important because it grants a series of political and social rights which cannot otherwise be fully guaranteed at a supra-national or local level; it is also important for recognition of one's "equal" right to be present in a particular place and to participate in community life.

This second aspect is particularly relevant for the children of immigrants born in Italy. For them, citizenship as recognition of "being Italian" is something "natural", something due. Non-recognition of this belonging is seen as an unjustifiable discrimination:

*Even if I don't have citizenship yet, I already feel Italian, I mean, I don't know, to be honest, for me to be an Italian is to be as I am, as I am now, Italian, because I am what I am because I grew up in this place, with a specific point of view, with these kind of people; I live here, I obey the law, I have rights and duties like all the people who live here have... I feel one hundred per cent Italian, so I don't understand why I cannot have the Italian citizenship right now... after all it is always the same story, yes, I am Italian, but I haven't got the citizenship... so you feel different because you only have an alien's residence permit to stay here in the country where you were born while all the other people can stay here without permits... you must have a permit, you don't have the freedom to live in the country where you were born, you have to ask for a permit, and if you are lucky, it's ok, otherwise you have to go back to a country where*

*you have never lived and you barely know ... it really makes you feel different, it makes you feel incomplete... I know that citizenship is only a paper, nothing will change with it, maybe only greater freedom for travelling, but for me it is important, it has always been important... I always feel the lack of it as an unequal and pointless discrimination... I never understand why I cannot have it (Adian, born in Italy, with Eritrean parents, she is waiting for Italian citizenship)*

Citizenship allows actual participation in community life, personal agency and having a say in common decisions. Citizenship ensures the capability of shaping the form of the future, of affecting the definition of situations, it allows a person to make herself heard, to express preferences, to fully exercise the *voice* option (Hirschmann 1970). Without citizenship it is impossible to be the master of one's own future, it is impossible to participate on an equal basis, it is impossible to be protagonist, an auto-directed person. A person who is not allowed to have voice and to participate is not only stigmatized by a discriminating difference but is also deprived of her essential capacity of agency and autonomy. She is dispossessed of the chance to participate on equal terms in building her life and her future.

### **Citizenship and identification: the persistence of an essentialist vision of national belonging**

Both the children of autochthonous Italians and the children of immigrants make a sharp distinction between citizenship and identification. Citizenship relates to the *way of life*. It involves rules, respect for the law of the land, the capacity to be self-reliant, to be economically independent, to have a job, a family and a home. It is something than can be learned and can be changed. It has to do with choice and personal will.

Identification relates to *culture*, conceived in their discourses as the original imprinting arising out of parental ties, the *habitus* and learned and acquired traditions. It is felt as something deeper, more personal, and more complex than the formal recognition of political and social rights or the possibility to participate.

Even if citizenship represents a central part, often perceived as fundamental to the processes through which identity is constructed, by

itself it is not able to express the complex articulation and the dynamic, contextual dimension of personal loyalty and belonging.

*even if you live here all your life you will never be an Italian because Italian means being born an Italian, that is, being born in Italy to Italian parents with generations of Italians, like your grandfather, your great-grandfather and your great-great-grandfather have to be Italian too, not that you just come here for fifteen years and then you're Italian. I mean, that is not the same thing as being born in Italy (Alessandro, age 16).*

*I'm happy to have Italian citizenship... when I think that my father came here a long time ago, he worked hard, he did a lot of things, and only at the end got citizenship, I mean, I did nothing to have citizenship... It's a great thing to have Italian citizenship, but at the same time my roots remain Egyptian, I mean, even if someone said to me: "No, you are no longer Egyptian", I still feel Egyptian ... it is not a paper that can change my feelings... (Silvana, born in Egypt, in Italy since she was 3 years old and with dual citizenship: Italian and Egyptian)*

Feeling part of a specific group, very often understood as national belonging or, less frequently, as religious belonging, is a question of fate. The attempt to radically change this fate is often perceived as a form of 'betrayal', something that goes against the 'natural state of things'.

*I think that to really be Italian, you have to, let's say, be born one. I mean, it's a question of birth, but not a problem of ... the difference of a person. Maybe it's because when you're born in a place, and right from when you are little you see and memorise the place where you are, the things that surround you and everything, and from there if you grow up in a fixed place, you become Italian. But if, for example, I move to another place, I want to go to America, it's not like I am going to become an American. I'll always be an Italian because basically I was born in one place and that's where my roots are. I can't become something else, I can't betray what I am (Cristian, 18 years old)*

*I see Italian citizenship as an advantage for me that must be exploited! When I got Italian citizenship my friends all said "Oh, look, you've got Italian citizenship!" and I said "So what?!" I mean, it is not as if a person changes according to his citizenship, a person is what she is! I feel attached to my traditions down home, and anyway my family belongs to that country, but I think that it does not matter where you are born, in the sense that you are linked ... I am obviously linked to Italy because in any case I grew up and lived here, and besides, I like Italy. But I think is a good thing to be attached to traditions*

*because that's where your blood comes from anyway, in the sense that you are attached. Even if you live somewhere else, there's got to be something that links you, because they struggled so long for nationality and for the sense of nationality so why throw it all up? I mean they worked so hard and then to get there and then you say "No, I don't care", no, I don't like that, it would be like a betrayal. (Romeena, 19 years old, born in Italy, parents from Sri Lanka, Italian citizenship).*

Citizenship is never the same as national belonging. Even when it is strongly desired, it is a demonstration of the will to belong to a certain life style but it cannot signal a 'change of nature'.

*I think that Italian, the term Italian can be belonging, being born in Italy like a civil thing, it's something ... an adjective and ... that is, Italian doesn't mean just those who are born in Italy, like, for example, a Rom born in Italy is Italian. For me, being Italian needs quite something else, it needs ... pride, I think. There are lots of Italian Italians, children of Italians who ... if they had the choice would be born in some other country and that, well ... I just absolutely cannot agree with. For me, being Italian is something to be proud of ... being Italian is an identity and it's not only having a passport. I would give citizenship to whoever deserves it ... whoever adapts to the Italian life style because we did not invite you, but it was you who wanted to come to Italy and therefore you have to and not us, you have to adapt to the Italian way of life. If you're good and you like it, great! I'm happy. If you don't like it, you can't expect things to change for you. That's the way I see it. But then, having citizenship does not mean becoming Italian. You can't become an Italian, you are born an Italian.... You become Italian by law. But then it's not as if I'm saying that if you aren't Italian you're a bad person, no, but you are simply not Italian. You're Italian in the sense of rights, you're Italian in your passport, you have an identity card, you are part of the Italian state but you are not actually an Italian.*

*What does a person need to be totally Italian?*

*He basically needs the fact of being born in Italy but if he is born in Italy and is brought up by foreigners ... a foreigner who after ten years behaves well and all and has a passport and Italian citizenship, he goes around like an Italian but he's not really an Italian, actually, but this is not an insult! I mean ... maybe it may seem that not being Italian ... you're simply not Italian, this is absolutely not ... any kind of discrimination, simply that you're not Italian (Stefano, 18 years old)*

### **Autochthonous multiculturalism**

The most reified and essential aspects of identification come to the fore when reasoning becomes defensive. That is, when it is claimed that one's own freedom and autonomous existence are under threat.

The most widely perceived threat does not come from any economic or financial competition; only a few of those interviewed used the line of reasoning that jobs were being taken by foreigners, nor did they see religion as a threat. Few young people claim that it is right to set restrictions on religious freedom or to generally prevent the building of places of worship for religions other than Catholicism. Even less so do they hold that belonging to a specific religion may be a criterion to be used in considering the granting of citizenship.

Rather the threat comes from the excessive attention the state pays to foreigners and which undermines the principles of equality and justice. Foreigners are seen as being privileged, as receiving more help from the state, as enjoying more comprehension and justification in cases of deviant behaviour and as not being required to behave correctly the way any Italian citizen is expected to do. These privileges are guaranteed to the detriment of Italians, especially of those who have greater needs and who live under difficult conditions.

*in Italy they say there is democracy and that the law is equal for all, but that is not true because in the end the non European Community people have more rights, that is, more advantages than we have. For example, I don't know, as far as lawfulness is concerned, they can commit crimes – they push drugs, they commit murders ... but they always get off but maybe if an Italian had done it ... like someone I know, why was he in prison for 32 months? Because he pulled off a robbery because he needed money and because he didn't have a job. Just as an example of how much injustice there is, they find more jobs than we do. Well, for me it's okay if they stay but just as long as they behave themselves, do their duty, pay their taxes as if they were Italian, then there's no problem, but not if they're criminals (Fabio, 18 years old)*

An excessive attention to the 'difference' of the foreigners which is the basis for justifying their non-compliant behaviour and for a disproportionate assessment of their needs, does in fact, transgress the principle of equality which should characterise a just society. A widespread

sense of resentment surfaces with regard to alleged special treatment given to foreigners considered forms of 'reverse discrimination' (Barker 1981, Sears 1988, Taguieff 1995): forms of privilege for foreigners which, disguised as integration policies or moral attitudes of solidarity and understanding, discriminate substantially against the autochthones.

*They want to be equal to Italians when they come here and so we have to give them the same rights and the same duties as Italians. But it happens so often that since they arrive here in such serious condition, they are given more than would be given to a normal Italian and this creates difference and this can be one of the reasons for the acts of racism that you see (Franco, 18 years old).*

*For example, in the case of community housing, first it should go to Italians! It is not acceptable that there are bums in the streets, Italians and all, and that they do not have homes. Those people come from abroad and get state subsidies. I'm not saying that they shouldn't be given to them, but first let's look after our own, first jobs for Italians and then ... first homes for Italians and then ... first the Italian families with problems ... not to someone who just got here and already has council housing, no, and they don't even work! No way! (Filippo, 19 years old).*

*It doesn't matter to me if someone is a foreigner or not, I don't discriminate, but it bothers me that, for example, foreigners cause damage and then they are treated differently from Italians, that is, they are punished less than an Italian would be. The rules now are too permissive ... they are not strict, they are too lenient ... jurisdiction ... because the foreigners who kill, who do these things, murders and various things, maybe they get a sentence equivalent to the one for a person who stole which is one act ... stealing is nothing like killing. Maybe someone commits a murder and gets a lighter sentence than the person who steals, now that is something that irks me. This diversity between Italians and foreigners bothers me. They misbehave and are not punished and they are pardoned. As long as we are all treated equally, that's fine with me, but if the foreigners are privileged and get the upper hand it wouldn't be Italy anymore and so steps should be taken (Cristian, 18 years old)*

The young children of autochthones interviewed are generally against a multicultural society, if by this term a model of society where various groups live together while maintaining their specific differences is meant. The majority of them does not agree with the idea that it is necessary to publically acknowledge and safeguard the immigrants' cultures and it is

against foreigners who decide to live in Italy without giving up their customs or, worse still, who try to impose their rules. It does not accept the possibility of hyphenated Italians who can manifest differentiated loyalties and plural identifications. To live in Italy, people must respect the Italian way of life.

*The foreigner who comes to Italy must anyway consider that he is a guest in a country that is not his own and therefore must ... like in any country, there are rules. You see lots of foreigners who come here, commit murders and maybe do two years and then they are out, but if an Italian does it, he is in for a lifetime. And this is no good, you understand? Anyway you come to a country that hosts you, you don't come here to cause a commotion, like if I go to another country, it's not as if I'm going to do bad things, I mean, have a little respect. There are lots of foreigners who don't have this thing, this respect. There are lots of foreigners who come here and do bad things, push drugs, kill. I think they should all be sent back to their own country ... also because we run the risk of having more foreigners than Italians. But I repeat, the foreigner who comes here, who is humble and doesn't cause harm, is not ... does not bother me, but the foreigner who comes here and wants to tell me what to do, I don't like it, because anyway you are in my country, so don't you come here and bother me, an Italian. I don't like that ... if someone steals, it's not as if because you are a foreigner ... killing is always a crime, regardless who kills is foreigner or Italian, you've still killed. But let's say an Italian does it in his own country, it is not justifiable, but I mean, he does it in his own country ... But the foreigner who comes here ... most of them are foreigners who ... violence ... I mean, most of the violence is committed by foreigners. And then, well, there's the Italian who steals, but ... he's doing that on his own home ground. He should be found guilty all the same, but ... (Fabrizio, 18 years old)*

When identification is the main topic, the requirements youngsters think necessary to obtain citizenship become more restrictive. To prevent citizenship favouring only the cunning or those with bad intentions, it is felt that it should be granted only to those who manifest the clear desire to 'feel Italian'. It is not a question of 'automatic' naturalisation but it must be 'wanted'.

Those interviewed said they were against granting citizenship to anyone who clearly wanted to get only instrumental benefits from it. Anyone who asked for and obtained Italian citizenship without giving up traditions, ways of thinking and acting rooted in their original culture were regarded in a negative light. Since citizenship is considered not to be a universal right

granted to every person on the grounds that he is a human being, but rather as a recompense tied to a specific way of life, and since this specific way of life can only be that of the autochthonous group, foreigners who obtain citizenship have no right to manifest their 'difference' in the public sphere. Their every distinguishing act is seen as an act of the (unjustified) imposition of their own will and their own principles at the expense of the will and the principles of the autochthonous group. In the face of the attempt by foreigners to 'impose' their difference, the defence of their own 'difference' becomes a commitment perceived as necessary unless they want to be 'colonised', 'converted' or 'taken over' by 'Them'. Even if the defence of one's own difference against external factors may be a form of reaction against the homologation of global culture at the expense of traditions and authentic local cultures and can broaden the basis for democracy (Eisenstadt 2008), when the arguments on the acknowledgement of citizenship do not take on rhetorical tones of universalism and equality, but those of particularism, threats and fear, the risk is to resort to the register of 'cultural defence' as a form of closure and exclusion.

Limits can then be set on the spread of citizenship to defend the specificities of a specific group. The emphasis shifts from the universalistic dimension to the specific dimension and citizenship no longer indicates a set of fundamental rights guaranteed to all human beings but becomes a symbol of specific historical conquests of a 'people' or a 'nation'.

*for me there should be a law that says that there can be X number of ... of foreigners per city or country or state because sooner or later we'll get to the point where there are only foreigners in Italy and then it will no longer be an Italy but a multistate, it will not be Italy anymore (Alessandro, 16 year old)*

*You always hear on the tv news that no matter whether it is robbery or rape, they are always done by foreigners. And that's what bothers me because it's like, how can I say it, like biting the hand that feeds you because you come to Italy, we take you in, we give you a job, and so you come and do these stupid things! This is the thing ... For example, that guy who came in and wanted to take the crucifix out of the schools. I mean, it's okay if you keep your religion, but it's not as if you can come and intrude on ours, and our customs. I think respect also means obeying the rules and our Italian customs. There are lots of foreigners who want to build mosques ... but there are no mosques here in our country and I don't see why they have to build them in our country ... I mean, do it in your*

*own country. We don't want, I mean, we don't want ... I mean, you are disturbing our customs, we say ... I don't know how to explain it, I don't know how to tell you, but I think that it is disturbing because I don't know why you have to do it ... I mean, here in Italy there's the Christian religion and it's not okay that ... I mean, I don't know how to say it and maybe I sound mean ... it's not good that there are other religions. I mean, if you want to practice your religion, do it on your own, where you are without building mosques, no mosques, so, I say this could be bothersome. I think you should keep your customs to yourself. I mean, I don't know how to explain it, I sound mean. At school they practically wanted to remove the crucifix. I don't believe that if you've got your religion, the crucifix can bother you and then ... you are, let's say, you are here for two days and you want to start setting the rules (Maurizio, 18 years old)*

### **The children of immigrants: the ambivalent ties between citizenship and identification**

The children of immigrants also show an ambivalent attitude towards the ties between citizenship and identification. While the importance given to formal recognition of citizenship and to participation in community life evidences how relevant the “classical” dimension of citizenship can still be for the children of immigrants (Brubaker 1992; Bloemraad 2004), these youngsters also find that the ties between citizenship and identification seem more articulated and more complex.

For the most part, citizenship first and foremost makes sense as an *additional* recognition, when it recognizes the Italian side without consequently requiring the renunciation of other identifications and other ties. Citizenship cannot be considered as an abandonment of any previous identification in order to embrace a new one. On the contrary, it is seen as the necessary deployment of the irreducibility of one's own identity into a unique dimension. Dual citizenship constitutes the recognition of the deeper character of identity, inevitably hybrid and plural.

*Look, I really feel like this - Italian and Moroccan... because after all... I am what I am... I mean, even if I say “I'm of this or that extraction” ... in the end everyone can see that I'm this way - Italian and Moroccan... Yes, and after all I like it... I love my culture, I love the fact that I'm Arabic, I'm proud of this, I don't want to keep it secret. So, yes I'm Italian and Moroccan... I feel strongly*

*Italian too, otherwise I wouldn't have all this hope of obtaining Italian citizenship (Kenza, born in Morocco, in Italy since she was 2 years old)*

Citizenship is never fully equivalent to identification; the youths interviewed make a sharp distinction between the recognition of formal rights and the bureaucratic dimensions that legitimate the presence in a specific community on the one hand and the feeling of belonging and national identification on the other. Citizenship has mainly to do with *inclusion* – that is, the possibility to participate, to have the right to a voice and to take part without discrimination in social life. It is related to the experience of inclusion and exclusion. Identification has mainly to do with *cohesion* – that is, the feeling of being part of a specific community, of feeling safe within it and having a stake in the future of such a community of membership (Anthias 2006: 21). While citizenship can have a direct influence on personal capacities and on living conditions, identification has to do with the symbolic and affective dimensions. These two aspects are not necessarily in conflict each other, but the indispensable recognition of equality and human rights cannot be reduced to the restriction of having one single passport or to the demand for total loyalty and total recognition in one unique national belonging.

*I'm Russian, but I don't know anymore ... I lost a lot of the Russian culture I had before... If I go to Russia now all the people think I'm a foreigner... because I don't dress like them anymore, they don't recognise me as Russian ... You surely lose something, obviously I have breathed so much Italian air that obviously I recognise myself in a lot of Italian things, I have Italian citizenship, I'm Italian... but that doesn't mean I'm less Russian... it's more complex than a single choice (Kristina, born in Russia, in Italy when she was 5 years old, with dual citizenship: Italian and Russian)*

In the narrations of the children of immigrants we often find a clear distinction between these two dimensions of identity (recognition and identification) perceived as acting on two different planes and differently connected with citizenship (Colombo, Leonini, Rebughini 2009).

While citizenship is perceived as an indispensable and central element for complete recognition – and its absence represents one of the main contemporary forms of discrimination for most of the children of immigrants born in Italy - it does, however, represent only one of the multiple constitutive elements of identification. This is always plural,

differentiated, open to change and adaptable to the situation, fully consistent with the everyday experience of living in contexts that are changeable and dynamic, that multiply social positions, networks and reference groups, and that require a plurality of involvements and the constant ability to adapt one's own position (Melucci 1996; Wise, Velayutham 2009).

### Conclusive remarks

The image of citizenship transmitted by the youth interviewed is multivalent and mobile. Rights and duties, blood and personal choice, inclusion and exclusion appear more like discursive registers to be used in various ways depending on context and the purposes of the discussion rather than absolute criteria in clear opposition among themselves from among which to choose. The preference for the idea that citizenship is tied to attributed factors or is based on the voluntary choice of sharing a specific life style does not reveal the personal attitudes of those interviewed but rather demonstrates their ability to use equality and difference as 'political' tools to advance requests for inclusion and exclusion (Colombo, Semi 2007; Semi *et al* 2009; Harris 2009). The same people in different argumentative contexts and for different purposes can and do know how to use different discursive registers (Baumann 1996; Noble *et al.* 1999; Butcher 2004, 2009; Colombo 2006).

The interviews also point up the distance that can exist between the institutional and formal dimension of citizenship and the meaning attributed to it in daily interactions. In the Italian case (which is no different from what was shown by Miller-Idriss (2006) in the German case) a citizenship statute based formally on *ius sanguinis* does not imply that people see themselves as a racial or ethnic population. Among the young people interviewed will, behaviour, birth place and economic criteria take precedence over race and ethnicity in determining the parameters for those who should be recognized as citizens.

Emphasis is placed on the *participative* dimension rather than on the dimension of attributed belonging (determined by fate or blood). Citizenship remains an important formal question but requires an *active* attitude in order to be deserved.

The 'honest life' then becomes the main criterion for granting citizenship. It is no longer a package of universal rights (and duties) to be granted to each human being *per se*, to be awarded so that each person may fulfil himself and participate actively in community life. Instead the tendency is to define a package of duties (and rights) that each civil and 'normal' person must observe in order to become a legitimate part of the community. However, the 'securitarian' short-circuit between immigration and criminality (Huysmans 2006) tends to consider the migrant as a deviant who should therefore be excluded from the granting of Italian citizenship (which thus goes back to being an attributed characteristic limited in principle to those who 'are' Italian) unless he shows that he deserves it.

Citizenship and belonging maintain a strong bond, but when the possible meaning attributed to belonging is changed, the meaning given to citizenship can consequently change as well. Belonging can mean membership as well as identification. In the first case, citizenship constitutes a part of the minimal personal capacity (Melucci 1996) people can rely on in order to act as active and accountable individuals. Everyone, regardless of his or her 'natural condition' must be recognized as a potential member of the community. Admittance to everyday community life must be allowed on the basis of personal capacity, will, and engagement, and must be revoked whenever these personal characteristics prove to be lacking. In the second case, the tie between belonging and citizenship is more complex and blurred. Citizenship cannot be an equivalent for identity. Beyond personal will and ability lie deeper and more stable attributes which cannot be either easily ignored or changed. When identification is the main contend, citizenship ceases to be a pre-requisite for participation and becomes what is really at stake in determining social inclusion and exclusion.

But even when speaking of membership, the positions of the children of autochthonous parents and those of the children of immigrants may be different. For the children of autochthonous parents, citizenship must above all be earned. It is a reward that cannot be given until the merit of the individual has been verified. It thus tends to be considered as a prize that can be granted to immigrants as certification that integration has taken place. For the children of immigrants, citizenship, however, is a necessary prerequisite for playing their card to their best advantage and on an equal basis with their companions so that they will be legitimately recognised as

part of the world they live in, where they can be active participants and the protagonists of their own future. More than as a final reward, citizenship should be the prerequisite for integration. A prerequisite to be granted to all on a basis of trust, and revocable when it is clear that there are no grounds for such trust and that it has been misplaced.

Both groups felt that citizenship should be granted only to those who share a life style based on work, the family and independence, that is, only to those who are considered 'one of us'. But the dividing line that defines those who are 'one of us' for the autochthones is drawn by the distinction between natives and foreigners who must earn that trust before they are accepted, whereas for the immigrants' children, it is drawn by the distinction between those who behave properly and those who behave badly, an assessment that can only be made on the basis of concrete behaviour.

The potential exclusive character of citizenship comes to the fore in the discussion of identification and national belonging. In this case, an essentialist vision of identity and belonging tends to favour the factors bound up in tradition and the ties with family teachings and considers the 'natural' and attributed characteristics more important than the assessment of merits. Citizenship then evolves from being a tool for inclusion tending to broaden the field of participation to the point of including each human being to being a tool for differentiation and selection.

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