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How Can Migrants Be *Subjects* of their own Integration?

Discourses and Practices of Migrants Participating in the Italian Left

Draft Paper

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How Can Migrants Be *Subjects* of Their Own Integration?
Discourses and Practices of Migrants Participating in the Italian Left

In the last two decades, the literature on migration studies concerned with migrants' political participation has focused on the role of the receiving society in offering institutional and political opportunities for inclusion (Bloemraad 2006; Caponio 2005; Caponio & Broket 2010; Garbaye 2000; Hochschild & Mollenkopf 2009; Kosic-Triandafyllidou 2005; Ireland 1994; Koopmans 2004; Pilati 2010; Soysal 1994). This framework, called the "political opportunity structure approach," moves the attention away from migrants' specific characteristics and helps to critically assess whether the receiving society is able to address fundamental aspects of the complex processes of integration. It asserts that context matters and that migrants' trajectories of integration are mainly defined by the legislative, institutional, and political discourses and practices of inclusion both at the European, national, regional, and local levels (Campomori & Caponio 2013; Hochschild & Mollenkopf 2009; Mantovan 2007; Rogers & Tillie 2001; Triandafyllidou 2001; Zincone & Caponio 2006).

This view has been adopted by many public authorities (especially from the Left) and stakeholders (such as trade unions, church-based organizations and other NGOs) involved with integration policies across Western Europe (see Campomori 2012; Caritas Italiana 2004; CeSPI 2000; Fondazione ISMU 2010; Gsir & Martiniello 2004; Mottura & al. 2010; Péro 2002). Particularly in contexts where the Right and anti-immigration parties have monopolized the national public debate on migration, as in the cases of Italy (Ambrosini & al. 2012), France (Rassinguier 2010), Greece (Triandafyllidou 2001), the Netherlands (Vasta 2007), England (Péro 2007), and Denmark,[1] this idea that the host society must encourage migrants' inclusion has fostered the implementation of "good practices of integration" both at the regional and local level by left-wing administrations and other stakeholders (Ambrosini & al. 2013; Campomori & Caponio 2013). Moreover, in some cases regional and local authorities have adopted creative strategies of inclusion, thanks to the European Union's incentives (see Council of Europe 2012).[2]

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[1] According to BBC (http//news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Europe/4276963.stm), in 2005 the far-right Danish People's Party (DPP) increased its support from 12% to 13.3% of the vote, moving from 22 to 24 seats in the country's 179-member parliament, the Folketing.

[2] In particular see the "Intercultural City Program," a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The project aims to foster a network of European cities which share ideas and practices for the integration of migrants and minorities (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Cities/Default_en.asp). Some

In my work, I argue that the "political opportunity structure approach," with its exclusive focus on the role of the receiving society, overlooks some crucial aspects of migrants' political inclusion. *First,* by focusing primarily on "good policies" or "good practices of integration" (Caponio 2005; Penninx & Martiniello 2004), it depicts migrants as *objects* of specific policies rather than *subjects* of their own inclusion. *Second,* it reinforces the idea that migrants' options are framed and determined once and for all by the activities of other social and political actors rather than themselves. *Finally,* most studies today using this approach focus mainly on migrants' political participation within institutional channels (Bloameerad 2006; Hochschild & Mollenkopf 2009) and overlook non-institutional channels of participation and thus the wide range of political trajectories available for migrants. This is a problem, because in doing so the literature proposes too narrow a definition of political participation (Bloameerad 2006) and as a result only a partial understanding of the wide range of modalities of participation and of mobilization used by migrants outside—or in concomitance with—institutional channels.

In my research, I attempt to go beyond the three limits listed above and ask two questions: 1) How do migrants who are considered as *objects* of specific policies and discourses participate as *subjects* of their own political integration? 2) Can they redefine what political "integration" means outside and beyond the dominant mainstream view? The first question is empirical and addresses the issue of whether migrants can be agents of their own integration. The second question is theoretical and explores how migrants challenge and deconstruct mainstream approaches to inclusion and to what extent they redefine the meaning of integration and political participation through their discourses and practices.

In order to answer my empirical question, I build on the insights of Davide Péro (2007), Johanna Siméant (1998), Catherine Raissiguier (2010), and Fatima El-Tayeb (2011), who have emphasized migrants' subjectivity and self-determination. In particular, they argue that migrants can be agents of their own integration (Péro 2007) and can challenge mainstream migration and integration policies and invent new ways of making their voice heard, by opening alternative channels of participation (Siméant 1998; Raissiguier 2010; El-Tayeb 2011).

Following these authors, in my research I focus on migrants' agency and conduct a micro-analysis of individual trajectories of political participation and inclusion. In order to do so, I first

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of the city involved in the project are: Reggio Emilia (Italy), Lyon (France), Patras (Greece), Amsterdam (The Netherlands), London Lewisham (UK), Copenhagen (Denmark).

explore regional and local discourses and practices of inclusion by main left-wing actors, such as administrators, members of unions, and the non-institutionalized left-wing political organizations (the antagonist or radical left). Then, I compare and contrast individual migrants interaction with the variety of opportunities offered to them.

As a result, I will construct a contextualized typology of migrants' forms of political participation. So far, my research suggests that specific trajectories of inclusion are shaped by the dynamic and non-linear interactions between:

1. the opportunities offered by different left-wing actors active in the receiving society at the national, regional, and local level (and in particular by political parties, Unions, and the radical left);

2. individual migrants' characteristics (social and economic capital, origin, class, etc) and ability to build on their capital and networks over a long period both in their country of origin and in the receiving society (Lacroix 2004).

In order to answer my theoretical question, that is, whether political "integration" can be redefined outside and beyond the dominant mainstream view, my aim is to give a critical redefinition of the concept of "integration" widely used by academics and by political and social actors (Raissiguier 2010; El-Tayeb 2011). In this sense, the theoretical dimension of my research is a further deepening of the empirical part, because it helps to understand how through their discourses and practices, migrants can be not only promoters of their own inclusion, but also creators of a wider social and political transformation which in turn redefines the contours of politics from below (El-Tayeb 2011).

Arguably, the concept of integration was introduced by academics and policy-makers to replace the concept of "assimilation." Indeed, it was widely believed that the concept "assimilation" was normatively biased because it implied that the responsible parties for the successful or failed of successful or failed inclusion of migrants into society were migrants themselves. Indeed, migrants' individual and collective characteristics, background, class, etc. were held responsible for their trajectories of inclusion. The introduction of the term "integration" was thus an attempt to spotlight that inclusion is a "two-way" process in which both the receiving society and migrants must make the necessary efforts to bridge differences, diminish conflicts, and contribute to facilitating a pacific cohabitation among groups (for a summary of this debate see Ambrosini 2007). By exploring *how* and *why* individual migrants

challenge mainstream discourses and practices of inclusion, in my work I engage with this debate and concentrate on the ways migrants expose the limits and the normative biases of the concept of "integration." Indeed, the variation and complexity of the trajectories of integration experienced by migrants show that the term integration is too narrow, because it assumes that today's society is made up of two groups, the receiving society and migrants. Rather than being a neutral term to describe the levels of inclusion of migrants, the term integration is often used by actors in the receiving society as a normalizing concept, which continuously constructs relations of power between insiders and outsiders of a given society and draws boundaries that create and exclude the "impossible other" (Raissiguier 2010).

My research is a cross-regional comparison of two left-wing cities (Bologna and Reggio Emilia) with two right-wing cities (Brescia and Bergamo) in two regions of Northern Italy, Emilia Romagna and Lombardy. In each city I use an ethnographic approach and combine different methods, such as archival research (official documents, documents and videos published on the internet, etc.), participant observation, semi-open in-depth interviews with key Italian left-wing actors and with migrants participating in the Italian Left. Even though I mainly focus on migrants' political participation at the present time, in order to understand the context of discourses and practices of the Left and responses by migrants, my timeframe begins in the year 1998, when the Italian left started to recognize in a more decisive way that migration was a structural phenomenon (see the so-called "Turco-Napolitano" law).

I will divide this paper as follows. *First*, I will introduce Italy's responses to migration and the channels of political participation available to migrants since 1998. *Second*, I will introduce my research design and my methodological approach. *Third,* I will introduce the typology of political inclusion (still provisory) that I have constructed during my fieldwork. *Finally,* I will conclude by assessing the first results of research and by giving an account of their main theoretical implications.

1. Italy's Responses to Migration

In the past thirty years, Italy has become one of the European Union members with the highest number of migrants in relation to the total population. According to European statistics, Italy now has the third highest percentage of foreign population (that is 7.5%) after Spain

(12.3%) and Germany (8.8%) (Caritas/Migrante 2012, 32).[3] Italian official national statistics also show that there has been a great increase in migrant populations in the last twenty years with a progressively growing rate of increase. In January 1, 1990, the number of migrants in Italy (both EU and non-EU citizens) represented only 1.5 per cent of the total population; by 2001 the foreign population grew to 1,464,589, 3.5 per cent of the total population, and by 2011 to 4,570,317 or 7.5% (Istat 2012; Caritas/Migrantes 2012). Along with this exponential growth of foreign population, Italy had to face the challenges of receiving a very diverse population from all across the globe (Istat 2012). Half of the foreign citizens resident in Italy today come from Eastern Europe. Though the five largest migrant communities—Romanians, Albanians, Moroccans, Chinese, and Ukrainians—represent more than 50 percent of the total number, the population includes migrants from all five continents (Istat 2012). This makes Italy a "hyper-diverse" society (Vertovec 2006) [4] and brings new challenges to the integration process such as the complex tasks of cultural and linguistic mediation in schools, social services, patronage, etc.

TABLE 1. Migrants' Population in Italy in 2012

Total regular foreign population (EuU and Non-EU)	**5,011,000**	
Total irregular foreign population(*)	**150,000**	
Minors	**897,890**	
EU citizens	**1,373,000**	
Distribution in the Italian territory	**North**	**63.4%**
	Center	**23.8%**
	South	**12.8 %**
Areas of origin	**Europe** **(EU 27.4%, Non-EU 23.4%)**	**50.8%**
	Africa	**22.1%**
	Asia	**18.8%**
	America	**8.3%**
	Oceania	**0.1%**
Largest EU communities	**Romania**	**997,000**
	Polonies **112,000**	
	Bulgaria	**53,000**
Largest non-EU communities	**Moroccans**	**506,309**
	Albanians	**491,495**

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[3] This figure excludes smaller countries such as Luxembourg, Cyprus, Lithuania, and Estonia, which may have higher percentages of foreign population: the percentage in Luxembourg reaches 47.1%.
[4] The word "hyper-diversity" was used for the first time by Vertovec (2006) to describe contemporary Britain. Today the term is used more and more to describe the fact that Western societies today are characterized by a great number of migrants who are from diverse origins and bring with them very different backgrounds and cultures.

	Chinese	**277,570**
	Ukrainians	**223,782**
	Philippines	
	152,382	
	Moldavia	**147,519**
	Tunisia	**122,595**
	India	**145,164**
	Egypt	**117,145**
	Peru	**107,847**
	Bangladesh	**106,671**
	Serbia & Montenegro	**101,554**
	Sri Lanka	**94,577**
	Pakistan	**90,185**
	Ecuador	**89,626**
	Senegal	**87,311**

Source: Caritas/Migrantes 2012. The * for the number of irregular migrants indicate the number is uncertain given that there is no way to truly estimate the right number since these people usually are found in the statistics after emersion with the regular amnesties (see below).

As in any other country in Europe, and especially like other new migration countries such as Spain and Greece, the sudden and massive increase of foreign population has found the Italian society unprepared and has "raised socio-economic and political issues that […] governments were not ready to tackle." (Triandafyllidou 2000, 374) Moreover, "the lack of political stability deeply affect[s] immigration policy and the political opportunity structure" (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2005, 23).

According to Meli & Enwereuzor (2000), in 1998, the Law 40/1998, or the *Turco-Napolitano Law,* called with the names of those Parliamentarians who elaborated it, represented an opening towards migrants' inclusion, because for the first time it acknowledged the need to go beyond a "state of emergency" and respond to the "structural phenomenon" of immigration in the country (Italy, Parliament Italiano 1992). However, many promising measures presented in the law could not be implemented completely because, four years later, a new law was introduced by a right-wing majority, the Law 189/2002, or the so-called Bossi-Fini Law (Italy, Parlamento Italiano 2002). Compounding the already difficult process of citizenship and naturalization based on the *jus sanguinis* present in the Turco-Napolitano Law, the Bossi-Fini law adds harsh measures, focusing on issues of "public security" and obscuring some of the crucial issues of integration addressed by the previous law (Colombo & Sciortino 2004; Meli & Enwereuzor 2000, 23).

Henceforth, like many other members of the European Union in the last ten years, Italy's policies on immigration have become increasingly restrictive and centred on security measures (Joppke 2007; Caponio 2005). Moreover, there has been a great proliferation of discourses on integration, social cohesion, and security measures and an increase of strong politicization and polarization of discourses on migration (Triandafyllidou 2000, 374).[5]

Finally, in the last years, the economic crisis has contributed to the increase of xenophobic discourses, anti-immigrant attitudes, and public racist declarations (Mottura 2012), thus generating increasing exclusionary practices and discourses towards migrants (Mantovan 2007)[6] and rendering the processes of inclusion of migrants into society more and more difficult. The situation described above gives a sense of the difficulties Italy has faced with respect to the inclusion of migrants in its society, let alone the full recognition of migrants' rights.

3. Research Design

In line with emerging literature that focuses on the importance of the regional and local contexts in the process of integration (Ambrosini & al. 2012; Campomori 2008; 2012; Campomori & Caponio 2013; Caponio 2005; Garbaye 2000; 2004; Marques & Santos 2004; Moren-Alègret 2001; Penninx & al. 2004), my research (as noted above) is a cross-regional comparison of four cities in two regions of Northern Italy, Emilia Romagna and Lombardy.[7] In Italy, the regions of Emilia Romagna and Lombardy are very similar because they have the highest GDP (and thus strong and stable economies) (ISTAT 2012), the highest number of migrants in relation with the local population (above 11% while the national average is 7.5%)

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[5] Notwithstanding legislative restrictions, the practice of mass regulation of migrants by amnesties have not stopped with the right-wing in power. Mass regulations have taken place in 1986, 1990, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2009, 2012 (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2005, 5). For an interpretation of the reasons of this apparent incongruence I suggest the work *Immigration at the Margins* by Calavita (2005) who analyzes the link between the role of immigrants as a source of cheap labor in both Spain and Italy and their legal prescription tied to social exclusion, criminalization, and racialization.

[6] It is particularly telling that one of the exponents of the Northern League, the Senator Roberto Calderoli, recently stated in public that the Ministry of the Interior, Cécile Kyenge, who is of Congolese origins, reminds him of an "orangutan." This recent episode has stimulated an intense national debate and the Left in power has unsuccessfully asked the Senator to leave the Senate (see the article: http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita-calderoli_kyenge_orango_il_ministro_basta_offese_lega_rifletta_17474.html). This is one of the many examples of the growing tensions in the country on the subject of immigration and integration.

[7] Recent literature has shown that *local* context matters (Caponio & Broket 2010; Penninx & al. 2004; Garbaye 2005; Morén-Alègret 2001). Yet the regional level still remains underexplored (some exceptions are the works of Campomori & Caponio 2013; Mantovan 2007). My research aims to address this gap by combining an analysis of the regional and the local contexts.

(Caritas/Migrantes 2012), the highest level of employment (at least before the economic crisis) (CNEL 2008; 2009), and also some of the strongest traditions of civil society's engagement in the life of the community (Putnam 1993).

In figure 1 shows the percentage of migrant population in each region in Italy in 2011. Emilia Romagna and Lombardy have respectively 11.3 % and 10.7 % of foreign population.

FIGURE 1. Incidence of the Foreigner Population per Region
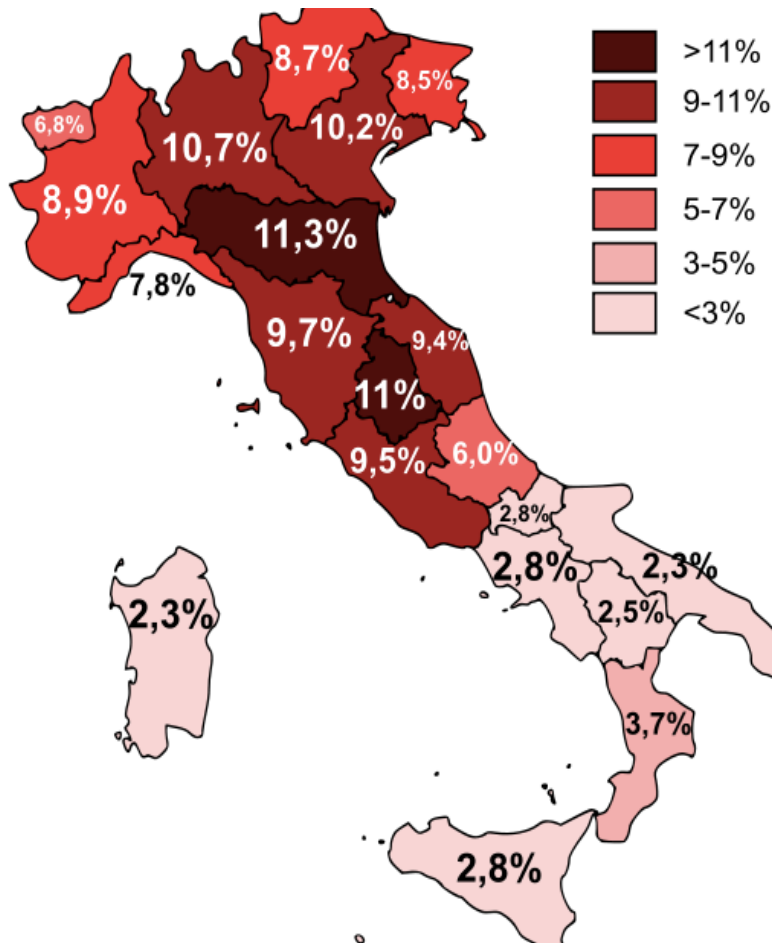
Sources: www.istat.it (January the 1rst, 2011); Candia & Carchedi 2012.

What makes the comparison of Emilia Romagna and Lombardy compelling is that they represent two opposite political cultures. Since at least the end of the second world war, Lombardy is traditionally defined the 'white' region of Italy, a region governed without exception by the Centre-right, whereas the region Emilia Romagna has been the unchallenged stronghold of the Left and the Centre-left.

Henceforth, the opposite and long-established political orientations of these regions allow a comparison and contrast of different approaches to inclusion.[8]

Here below, I present a table with the characteristics of the two regions.

TABLE 2. Regions' main characteristics

	Emilia Romagne	Lombardy
Political orientation since 1998	Centre-Left	Centre-Right (PDL) Since 2013: Northern League
Most recent regional elections as of 2013 And excecutive	Main party: Democratic Party President Errani since 1999	Main party: Northern League President Maroni since 2013
Regional law on integration	2004	No
Total population in 2012	4,377,487	9,794,525
Number & Percentage of migrants in relation to the Italian population in 2012	555,000 (11.3%)	1,048,014 (10.7%)
The first five largest migrants' communities	Morocco Romania Albania Moldavia Ukraine	Romania Morocco Albania Egypt Philippines

Sources: Caritas/Migrantes 2012; www.comuni-itaiani.it; www.regione.emilia-romagna.it; www.regione.lombardia.it; www.comunediblogna.it;

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[8] It is important here to remind the reason why I have not selected a region from the South or from the Centre of Italy for my comparison. Differently from Caponio (2006) and (Campomori 2008), who tried to represent the "main three areas of Italy" by selecting three cities on the basis of their geographic position (Caponio for instance selected Bologna for the North, Rome for the Centre, Naples for the South), I am persuaded that a more thorough selection on the basis of similarities and also on the stable political orientation of the regions can allow a certain isolation of factors which could not be controlled in the Centre and South of Italy in which more instable economies, little industrialization, little unionization, immense amount of irregular workers, just to name a few, would have immensely affected the value of my comparison.

The choice of cities can also be easily justified (see table 3). I have selected two cities left-in Lombardy (Bergamo and Brescia) in order to control for variations within the same political culture. The existing literature considers the political culture as the major factor determining integration policies, predicting pro-migrant attitudes from left-wing organizations and anti-migrant attitudes from the right-wing ones (Caponio 2005). Nonetheless, recent scholarship shows that, despite their different political discourses, left-wing and right-wing political actors can adopt similar practices of inclusion (Campomori 2008) or similar practices of exclusion and opposition to migration (Bellinvia 2013). Through a cross-regional comparison of two left-wing cities and two right-wing ones, I look for dynamics of divergent and convergent patterns of integration by cities with the same political orientation and thus also take into account intraregional variations (Garbaye, 2000; Péro 2007; Caponio 2005).

The contrasting comparison is useful to assess variations in the regional political culture of the receiving society and to make explicit how the political practices and discourses of local authorities and other stakeholders can influence the ways in which migrants seek inclusion and participation in both the regional and local arena (Campomori 2010; Caponio 2002; 2005).

Here below, I present a table with the characteristics of the four cities.

TABLE 3. Cities' main characteristics

	Reggio Emilia	Bologna	Brescia	Bergamo
Political administrations	1998-2013: Centre-left	1998-2013: Centre-left	1998-2008: Centre-Left 2008-2013: Right and Lega North 2013-2018 PD	1998-2013: Centre-right and right-win(PDL and Northern League)
Total population	163, 928	380,635	188,520	115,072
Migrant population & % of migrants population in 2011	30,310 (17.7%)	56,105 (14.6%)	35,253(18.7%)	17.940 (15.6)
Social movements	Città migrante (no migrant militants)	Coordinamento migranti	Presidio della Gru Cross-point Diritti per tutti	------

Protests and confrontational channels	Indian Strikes (2010)	1 Marzo 2010 Migrant strike	2010 (struggle of the crane)	

1. **Methodology**

A. Data Collection

My empirical research relies mainly on extensive ethnography in each city under observation. I plan to spend about two months in each city, the time needed to interview the main left-wing actors, to do some participant observation, and to gather important material. The study is mainly constructed through archival research (newspapers, official documents, and internet sites), participant observation of crucial events related to migrants' political involvement, meetings with militant groups, and semi-open in-depth interviews with key Italian left-wing actors and especially with migrants participating in the Italian Left.

To date, I have already performed 70 interviews (44 with migrants) and spent six months in three of the four cities under observation, Reggio Emilia, Bologna, and Brescia.

Table 5 shows a description of my fieldwork in these three cities, whereas table 5 presents a summary of my interviewees' main characteristics (national origin, gender, generation, status, and type of political organizations in which they participate). The fieldwork was done between March-October 2013.

TABLE 4. Description of the fieldwork in Reggio Emilia, Bologna, and Brescia (15 March–15 October 2013)

What?	Number	Type of Organization
Interviews with national-level stakeholders	3	Parliament (Democratic Party) Members Unions' Directive (CGIL)
Interviews with regional – level stakeholders	4-5 each	Administrator Left-wing and right-wing (Northern League), Members Unions' Directive (CGIL)
Interviews with (native) Italians	Between 8-10 per city	Local administrators, Union members, Caritas, representatives of the intercultural centre, cultural mediators, anti-racist associations, the radical Left (militants)…
Interviews with migrants	Reggio Emilia, 11 Bologna, 15 Brescia, 18	Democratic Party (Forum), administrators (Council and executive), CGIL, CGIL-FIOM, CISL

		Social movements and USB
Events organized by regional and local organizations	6 main events	Regional and local events organized by administrations (3) and unions (3)
Events organized by migrants	14 main events plus weekly meetings with social movements	Assemblies, demonstrations, strikes, protests

TABLE 5. Interviewees by national origin, gender, generation, status, and type of political organizations in which they participate

	All cities	Per city
Total number	44	Reggio Emilia: 11 Bologna: 15 Brescia: 17
Nation of Origin	Morocco: 12 Senegal: 12 Pakistan: 5 Moldavia: 2 Tunisia: 1 Algeria: 1 Egypt: 1 Albania: 1 Cameroun: 1 Nigeria: 1 Philippines: 1 Bangladesh: 1 Bolivia: 1 Romania: 1 China: 1 Togo: 1 India: 1	Reggio Emilia: Morocco 5, Senegal 2, Tunisia 1, Algeria 1, Togo 1, India 1 Bologna: Senegal 4, Pakistan 3, Morocco 2, Moldavia 1, Cameroon 1, Nigeria 1, Philippines 1, China 1, Romania 1 Brescia: Morocco 5, Senegal 6, Pakistan 2, Moldavia 1, Egypt 1, Bangladesh 1, Albania 1, Bolivia 1
Women	11	Reggio Emilia: 4 (Senegal, Morocco, Algeria, India) Bologna: 3 (Senegal, Moldavia, Philippines) Brescia: 4 (Morocco 3, Moldavia)
Second-generation	6	Reggio Emilia: 2 (Senegal, Morocco) Bologna: 2 (China, Morocco) Brescia: 2 (Bangladesh, Morocco)
Status	Italian citizenship (16) Resident permit (14) Work and study permit (9) Undocumented (5)	Italian Citizenship: Reggio Emilia 5, Bologna 4, Brescia 7 Resident permit: Reggio Emilia 1, Bologna 5, Brescia 6 Work and study permit: Reggio Emilia 1, Bologna 4, Brescia 4 Undocumented: Reggio Emilia 2, Bologna 2, Brescia 1

Number OF people for type of organization	Democratic Party (Forum and administration)	Democratic Party: Reggio Emilia 1, Bologna 1, Brescia 2
	Links with the administration	Links with the administration: Reggio Emilia 2, Bologna 1, Brescia 3
	Unions	Unions: Reggio Emilia 3, Bologna 3, Brescia 4
	Active in Associations (mainly but not only migrant associations)	Associations Reggio Emilia 2, Bologna 4, Brescia 2
	Cultural mediators	Cultural mediators Reggio Emilia 1, Bologna 1, Brescia 1
	Outside mainstream politics (social movements, struggles against eviction, struggles for recognition, etc.)	Outside mainstream politics Reggio Emilia 2, Bologna 7, Brescia 6

Most migrants I have interviewed so far are first-generation migrants, male, around their thirties, forties, and fifties, who come mostly from North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt), the Sub-Saharan region (Nigeria, Cameroun, and especially Senegal), and Central Asia (in particular from the Indian Subcontinent: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh).

Unfortunately, it was difficult to find interviewees from the larger communities, such as Romanians, Albanians, Chinese, and Ukrainians, second-generation individuals and women of all origins, and either male and female individuals from Central and Eastern Europe or from South America. The reason for this difficulty is that the people listed above are rarely involved in politics and thus are almost absent in the channels of participation I explore in my research. I attempted to avoid these limitations by trying to enlarge my sample as much as possible andto have at least a few representatives of all geographic areas in each city. However, it was not always possible to achieve this goal. Henceforth, the reader should acknowledge that if some nationalities are not represented in this research it is mainly because they are not represented in the political channels I selected, and thus most likely unrepresented in any political channel at all in the cities under observation.

2. Stages of the ethnographic research

In the following section, I will present a brief summary of the main stages of my ethnographic research, which are analytically but not always chronologically distinct. It will appear clearly that this study is highly interpretative and based on the analysis of strong contextualized practices and discourses by individual migrants in the Italian Left (Eliasoph 2001; Geertz 1973).

The *first stage* consists of a reconstruction of the regional and local contexts through archival research, participant observation, and explorative in-depth interviews with key actors, such as political authorities, members of parties and trade unions, and other stakeholders.[9]

In this phase, I construct a cartography of the main actors (individuals and organizations of both migrant and Italian origin) involved with the issue of immigration in the city and assess the links among them and with regional actors. Moreover, I take into account the roles of policy makers and those of trade unions and other organizations, which interact in the regional and local arena. My goal is to gather material in order to contextualize the discourses and practices of the main actors in the territory. (For the importance of trade unions and third-sector organizations in shaping specific policies' outcomes, see for example Campomori 2008; 2012 and Marques & Santos 2004.)

This reconstruction is a necessary step toward the assessment of *why, how,* and *to what extent* individual migrants use and challenge mainstream discourses and practices through their *own* discourse and practices.

In APPENDIX 1, I present respectively a summary of the interviews I performed between March-July 2013 and October 2013 and also a suggestion of those interviews I intend to perform by the end of my fieldwork (the end of November 2013). In APPENDIX 2, I indicate the main event I participated during the same timeframe.

The *second stage* of my ethnography is the most important part of my investigation, because it focuses on the discourses and practices of migrants participating in the Italian Left. Here my research is mainly based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with migrants and on participant observation of migrants' activities in the main left-wing party (the Democratic Party),

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[9] The city I have selected were pretty small, so it was not to difficult to identify the main collective and individual actors I had to contact for my research.

trade unions (in particular, the CGIL, the CGIL-FIOM, and the CISL), and in non-institutionalized political organizations such as social movements and other Italian and migrant organizations. (See Martiniello 2009 for a broad definition of civic and political participation; see Mantovan 2007 for a similar research design in the region of Veneto, Italy.)

These interviews are useful tools to explore migrants' discourses and the ways in which they interact with and deconstruct mainstream ideas and practices about "integration" and "inclusion" within the Italian Left (El-Tayeb 2011). By asking *what* they think and *how* they feel about mainstream society, Italian politics, regional and local discourses and practices of inclusion of the Left, and what political participation means for them, I aim to understand the reasons *why* they took part in specific left-wing organizations and not in others and the motivations behind their actions and political activities. Here the aim is to explore the relationship between structures and agency and thus estimate the relevance of agency of individuals in each given context. During the interviews, I also try to gather as much biographical information I can in order to identify *who* my interviewees are and in order to better determine how their personal experience can shape their trajectories of political participation.

In this second phase of my research, I also combine the interviews with intense participant observation to main events. By observing *how* my interviewees interact and socialize in each setting and by participating in their activities, I am able to identify and reconstruct their *practices* and thus the varieties of strategies of political participation and mobilization they have developed in specific contexts.[10] This method is also useful to explore whether and how migrants redefine the contours of participation by performing specific political actions. Therefore, by combining interviews with participant observation of the various channels of participation in which migrants take part, I am able to critically connect migrants' personal motivations and discourses to their effective practices.

In this phase of my research, I have been very careful to circumvent some of the most typical biases of ethnographic research. In particular, I try to avoid to be caught in one single perspective. For this reason, I intentionally interview people from different political orientations within the Left and some from Centre-right organizations to find diverging understandings and patterns of political participation.

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[10] For a detailed overview of the events I participated during March and October 2013 see Appendix 3.

The *third stage* of my empirical research consists in the attempt to *confirm* the findings through some *ad hoc* interviews. After a first analysis of my data, I contact crucial actors I have already interviewed and ask for clarifications or further explanations of the main issues already discussed. In this phase I also focus on the reconstruction of a highly contentious moment in the city. Thanks to previous extensive fieldwork, I found out that in each city under observation, in 2010, there was a moment of great mobilization by migrants, with conflicts between undocumented migrants and the local administration and other stakeholders in the city. Therefore, in this phase I ask my interviewees to express their point of view on these particular events, on their effects, and their meaning for migrants' recognition in the receiving society.

All things considered, the three phases of my research allow me to reconstruct the dynamics at play in each given context and thus to reconstruct migrants' trajectories of political participation in each city.

A thorough analysis of the data already collected, the reconstruction of each case, and their systematic comparison, will allow me to construct a typology of migrants' form of political participation within and outside mainstream politics.

3. Channels of Political Participation

As anticipated above, in my research I concentrate on three main political channels: the main political party, the *Democratic Party,* the main union, the CGIL and the CGIL-FIOM, and social movements. In this section, I will present the main institutional channels available to migrants since the 90s. Then I will present the first findings of my research and show how my results answer to the empirical and theoretical questions presented in the introduction.

A. Institutional channels of political participation since 1990s

Even though a few attempts to creating channels of participation for migrants have been done since the 80s (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2005; Mantovan 2007), it is in the 1990s that more structured approaches were developed by the state's and non-state's organizations.[11] Arguably,

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[11] The most important incentives were given by the Council of Europe in 1992. By adopting *the Convention on the*

the main institutional channels opened to migrants by the state and non-state organizations since the 90s at various governmental levels were, for civic participation, voluntary, and non-governmental organizations, immigrant associations, and, for political participation, the consultative bodies, trade unions and workplace councils, and confrontational channels (demonstration, strikes, etc…) (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2005, 28).

For what concerns the political channels, the experience of the consultative bodies can be considered concluded. In the mid-1990s in the absence of the right to vote, three different systems of political representation for foreigners had been introduced mainly at the local level: the Consultative Body for Foreigners, the Councils of Foreigners and the Adjoined Foreign Councillor(s) (*Consigliere Aggiunto*)(Danese 2001, 74; Pèro 2002; Pilati 2010).[12] These organisms were meant to foster migrants' participation at the local level, but *de facto* they were a failure (Péro 2004). As many authors have observed, the consultative bodies had the following limitations:

Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at the Local Level (Council of Europe 1992) *t*he Council of Europe encouraged the active participation of foreign residents in the life of the local community and the development of its prosperity by enhancing their opportunities to participate in local public affairs. As it can be read in the official document, "The Convention aims to improve integration of foreign residents into the life of the community. It applies to all persons who are not nationals of the Party and who are lawfully resident on its territory" (Council of Europe 1992). The Convention is constituted of three fundamental aspects. First, the Convention claims that foreign residents should be granted the right of "freedom of expression, assembly and association", including the right to form trade unions (Chapter A). Second, the Convention opens the possibility for the creation of Consultative Bodies at local level (Article 5) elected by the foreign residents in the local authority area or appointed by individual associations of foreign residents (Chapter B). Third, Article 6 invites National authorities to grant foreign residents the right to vote in local elections and stand for election in local authority elections after five years of lawful and habitual residence in the host country. Moreover, the Authorities are also encouraged to inform foreign residents about their rights and obligations in relation to local public life.

[12] Here, I will describe briefly each organism. The *Consultative Bodies for Foreigners* are collegial bodies, usually composed of 33 members, mainly by local representatives (such as representatives of foreigners, social partners, religious organisations, and NGOs) and of a certain number of foreigners appointed by local authorities. Immigrants are chosen among those immigrant associations considered the "most representative" in the local context. The Consultative Body can only give non-binding advice on policies, usually those exclusively related to the issue of foreigners' integration. Its President can be invited to participate in the Council Assembly. Consultative bodies can be found at the regional, provincial, and municipal level (Italy. Ministero dell'Interno 2011; Martiniello 1999). The *Councils for Foreigner Residents*. It is a collegial body, composed only by foreigner people who are directly elected by foreign residents. As the Consultative Bodies, the Councils for Foreigner Residents can be found at the regional, provincial, and municipal level. Finally, the *Adjoined Foreign Councilor(s) are* foreign residents, members of the municipal council, who are directly elected by foreigners legally resident in the municipality. The number of Foreign Councilors depends on the size of the municipality, the proportion of foreign residents, and the will of the local authorities. However, usually there are 1 or 2 Councilors per municipality. The Foreign Councilor(s) participate to the local council, but does not have all the rights as the other councilors who represent Italian citizens (Mantovan 2007; Meli & Enwereuzor 2000). Unlike the Consultative Bodies, Foreign Councilors have the right to participate to all Council's Assemblies. However, all three institutions are consultative posts and therefore *de facto* do not have any effective power (Caritas Italiana 2004; 2005; Gsir & Martiniello 2004).

1) They did not create the political empowerment of migrants;

2) They encouraged migrants ethnic belonging by relying on migrants associations and thus contributed to favor processes of ethnicization and migrant's reinforcement of ties with their groups of origin rather than the inclusion in the wider society;

3) As a result of the second limitation, they discouraged migrants from participating as individuals and thus to engage in forms of representation based on individual capacity rather than "ethnic" belonging (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2005; Péro 2004).

All in all, consultative bodies *de facto* had no influence in the coordination of processes of integration and more in general they were of no help in allowing migrants in earning political skills for their greater participation in the Italian society (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2005; Péro 2002).

For this reason, in my research I concentrate on three main organizations that have created the most important channels of political participation, in response to the limitations of the institutions created in the past. The organizations I refer to are: 1) the main left-wing party, the *Democratic party*; 2) the main left-wing Unions, *the CGIL and the GCIL-FIOM* (that is a more radical category within the CGIL); and 3) the *radical movements*, in which I include the antagonistic left. It is important to remember that other parties and unions, and non-institutional organizations have promoted migrants' political participation. However, in this paper I will concentrate on the main ones. Also, one must keep in mind that the influence of these organizations in fostering political participation varies greatly depending on the level of inclusiveness of regional and local actors in specific settings. Here, notwithstanding regional and local variations, I will offer a brief description of the incentive given by these organizations to migrants' participation. After a brief overview, I will present my first findings.

The Main Left-wing Party, the Democratic Party (DP). The DP was founded in 2007. Since its foundation, the DP made explicit its intention to engage more carefully with issues related to immigration and integration of migrants both within its organizations and in the Italian society more in general. In order to be consistent with this proposal, Livia Turco, the main political figure of the DP involved on this field, encouraged the foundation of the *Forum of immigration* at the national, regional, provincial and local level. The idea was to create a platform in which any person interested in the issues of immigration could participate and contribute to the discussions

in the regular meetings hold each week. People who were not enrolled in the party could also participate in the meetings.

Moreover, the party was also involved in constructing channels of participation at the local level, by increasing the number of candidate who run for elections. Most of the time, the people who run for elections had been previously involved in the Forum. In a short amount of time, these practices brought about their fruits. In Emilia Romagna, one of the most inclusive regions in Italy, starting from 2008, many new citizens of migrant origin were elected as members of the councils of their municipalities or as members of the executive of foreign origin.

It is following this logic that the DP party encouraged the recent elections in parliament of two persons of foreign origin, Khalid Chaouchi, who is the national responsible of the new citizens of the DP (the second generation migrants) and Cécile Kyenge, who after one month from the national elections, was appointed ministry of the newly created minister of integration (in March 2013).

*Unions (*CGIL and CGIL-FIOM). Since 1980s, the main Unions, CGIL, CISL and UIL, were the major "agents of integration" in Italy (Rinaldini 2012, 64; Bassoli 2012). Moreover, in contrast to all other organizations, the Unions' interaction with migrants was mainly based on the individual basis. Only sporadically there were informal relations with migrant associations.

However, more recently migrants themselves have questioned the unions' capacity to facilitate migrants' "social and cultural" integration (Rinaldini 2012, 64; Bassoli 2012). In a study of delegates of migrant origin of the major union in Italy, the CGIL, Matteo Rinaldini (2012) shows that even when they recognize the role played by the CGIL in matters of integration, migrants think that the organization has not done all that it could. Moreover, in the last years, the CGIL and the CGIL-FIOM have recognized that something more has to be done and in 2013 there have been many meetings at the national, regional, and local level, to address these issues. In these occasions, great importance is given to migrants' point of view and criticism.

Social Movements. The radical left is rarely considered as a feasible channel of participation. However, in Italy as else where, when channels of institutional participation are precluded to migrants, these social forces can be crucial to convey migrants' political claims (Ginacola 2008-2009). This is for instance the case of the city of Brescia. It is well known that in

this city, migrants active in politics have mainly developed their trajectories in the radical Left. Morever, as Ginacola's (2008-2009) dissertation shows very well, in the last two decades the city of Brescia has been the place of many struggles and mobilizations by migrants in 1990, 2000, and 2010. All these mobilizations were organized to oppose to ambiguous practices of regulations through amnesties. For these mobilizations, Brescia is also very well known and sometime is also a reference by migrants participating in the radical left all across the country.

B. Main Criticism of the Level of Inclusion by the Democratic Party, the CGIL and CGIL-FIOM and the Radical Left

In this section, I will introduce my first findings. Here I will focus manly on migrants' discourses rather than their practices. The initial results of my ethnography clearly show that migrants' *discourses* can be best grasped through in-depth interviews supported by other ethnographic tools.

The *first finding* is drawn from migrants' discourses within the institutionalized Left. A first analysis of my interviews suggests that migrants are particularly disillusioned about Italian politics in general and are challenging the discourses of inclusiveness by the major left-wing organizations. There is, indeed, a widespread conviction among my interviewees that mainstream left-wing organizations are "inclusive" *only in words* and there is a shared view that the left-wing party in particular uses them instrumentally to gain votes, by showing how "good and welcoming they are" to their left-wing electorate. They also believe that left-wing organizations rarely care about truly listening to them, giving voice to their claims, and supporting their fights for recognition of their fundamental rights. Contrary to their claims that they act in defense of migrants' interests, the main left-wing party and other left-wing organizations *de facto* fail to create the conditions for migrants' "authentic" participation in the receiving society and within their own organizations. In this respect, my research shows that when it comes to main left-wing party's discrepancy between its discourses and practices there is not a significant difference between criticism of my interviewees who come from left-wing cities such as Reggio Emilia and Bologna, or a right-wing city such as Brescia.

One of my interviewees who has been politically active for more than 12 years in the Democratic Party and who is now in the left-wing executive of one of the municipalities in the province of Bologna admitted:

They always talk *about us* but never truly *with us*! When it comes to being truly inclusive, left-wing parties and also trade unions—who according to their discourses should be more inclusive then the others—are all the same. They claim they are more inclusive than the Right, that they are doing their best to help migrants, but in the end they do not tackle the fundamental barriers that keep us from taking full part in society and achieving full citizenship. You can see it by the way they treat us: they never allow us to participate as protagonists in their organizations and very few of us cover strategic offices in their organizations. Not to speak about listening to what we really have to say. The main leftist party in particular is impermeable to our quest for authentic recognition. I can truly say that there is not a real platform in which we can compete in the political arena as equals and make our own legitimate claims as individuals and as collective political forces.[13]

In line with the point of view expressed above, most migrants I have interviewed believe that this lack of "dialogue and political confrontation" is also peculiar to the most "progressive" trade unions in Italy, the CGIL and its more radical category, the CGIL-FIOM. In the past these organizations have been recognized as the major "agents of integration" in Italy. However, more recently the unions' capability to facilitate migrants' "social and cultural" integration has been questioned by migrants themselves (Rinaldini 2012, 64; Bassoli 2012). In a study of delegates of migrant origin of the major union in Italy, the CGIL, Matteo Rinaldini (2012) shows that even when they recognize the role played by the CGIL in matters of integration, migrants think that this organization has not done all that it was in its power. In particular, when it comes to extending citizenship rights and full participation, the union has abdicated its political role as defender of social equality. Indeed they do not recognize in the organization an autonomous political actor capable to "radically change" migrants' blameworthy conditions in Italy (71). Moreover, they hold the organization's practices responsible for the lack of correspondence between the great number of migrants enrolled in the union and the small number of migrant delegates and functionaries within the organization (71).

Migrants' claims in Rinaldini's research are also backed by recent statistical research financed by the FIOM-CGIL, which indicates that the number of migrants who have responsibilities within union organizations are far from being representative of the number of people who are registered to those unions (FIOM-CGIL 2012).[14]

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[13] Interview with a member of the executive in the Council of a city in the province of Bologna.
[14] The research spotlights the great gap between the CGIL-FIOM's discourse on inclusiveness in the last ten years and its actual practices. As I could be able to observe in the meeting of the CGIL-FIOM in June 19, 2013 during a regional meeting in Modena, the results of the research have provoked intense reactions among members of the

With respect to the interviews conducted with members of the CGIL, my research confirms the Rinaldini's findings. There is indeed a lot to do before the CGIL overcomes some of the main obstacles that keep migrants from being fully recognized for their individuals' capacities. However, in addition to previous works, which emphasize the prevalence of structures over migrants' agency, my works helps to put migrants' discourses about unions' inclusiveness in a wider perspective. The exploration and contrast of different points of view, such as for instance, of successful migrants who cover important roles in Union and of those who have left the union after a long period of time and have decided to be active in other channels of participation, is showing that individual characteristics and social capital to a certain extent allow migrants to shape their own trajectories of political participation in the Italian society. In particular, a careful reconstruction of the main reasons *why* individual migrants decide to be active within or outside a specific union in a long time helps to grasp the role of agency in shaping specific trajectories of political participation.

My *second finding* is drawn from migrants' discourses outside the institutionalized Left. Thanks to the interviews with migrant activists in the social movements or in other organizations, I have been able to observe that the deception towards left-wing organizations has pushed many migrants to abandon mainstream politics and to turn towards other forms of participation. This confirms Mantovan's (2007) findings on the case of Veneto, in which she showed that migrants were particularly disillusioned by Italian mainstream politics and decided to abandon representative politics. However, in contrast with Mantovan, who focuses only on institutional channels, my research helps to shed light on the complex trajectories of migrants' activism and to grasp the links between migrants' deception towards mainstream politics and their activism outside mainstream politics. Thanks to the explorative character of my research, I have been able to reconstruct migrants' complex political trajectories over time and to grasp how migrants' can move from institutional channels to non-institutionalized ones and vice versa during many years of activism. This fact is emblematic of the vitality of political activities by migrants and helps to understand individual migrants' self-determination and creativity, which can be neglected by researches which focus on migrants' political participation in mainstream politics alone.

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organization both among Italians and of people from foreign origin, who have criticized the diffuse paternalism in the organization.

As one of my interviewees in Brescia declared: "no matter what the mainstream political situation is, we will always fight for the recognition of our fundamental rights and thus will always be active until our rights will be recognized."[15] This self-determination was always present among migrant activists in the past. In the city of Brescia, for instance, there have been demonstrations and long-lasting struggled for recognition in 1990, in 2000, and more recently in 2010 (Giancola 2008/2009). Some of these struggles brought about some concrete results at the burocratic level. However, above all, for what I have been able to observe, these struggles have helped to raise 1) migrants' consciousness of their need to gain their rights by their struggles rather than waiting someone to give rights to them and 2) migrants' awareness that if they are able to stay unite and construct political paths together, they will be able one day to obtain what they are looking for.

A third finding of my research is that most policy-makers and other leftist organizations lack an adequate knowledge of the ways migrants think of themselves. In particular, they keep defining migrants in ethnic terms and assume migrants' identification to their own 'ethnic' community. This finding is in accord with the research in the CGIL by Rinaldini (2012) that shows that migrants lament that there is a generalized tendency towards a "stereotyped management" of migrants' representatives. Delegates and functionaries of foreign origin who work in the CGIL denounce that the union's integration approach is based on migrants "alleged diversity" and tends "not to valorize migrants real and specific competences and capacities." (71) Moreover, Rinaldini adds that migrants do not deny that their presence in the union represents a change for the union, but they "lament the fact that this diversity is assumed by the union as static and monolithic, and not as dynamic and complex." (71)

In addition to Rinaldini's insight, my research shows that this "stereotyped" vision of migrants within left-wing organizations is considered misleading by migrants, not only because it gives a false representation of the variety of migrants' viewpoints and affiliations in Italy's "super-diverse" and pluralistic society, but also because it implies specific policies towards migrants which are based on ethnic differentiations. Moreover, my research is suggesting that there is an ongoing shift of the social construction of ethnicity. Progressively people of foreign origin are no more identified with their own national or ethnic origin, but more in general with

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[15] Interview July 2013 in Brescia with a migrant activist.

the category of "migrants." Moreover, the use of this emerging social construction is visible both in the practices of Democratic Party, the CGIL, the GCIL-FIOM and in many local administration.

All things considered, most of my interviewees active in politics see policies and discourses based on ethnicity as backward and also detrimental to their inclusion into mainstream society. They claim that this is emblematic of the fact that Italian society continues to consider them as an homogenous whole, different from the Italian one.

As one of my interviewees put it: "As consequence, this very fact reinforces the social construction of 'us' [migrants] as "outsiders," no matter how hard we try and no matter how "integrated" we truly are."[16]

A woman of migrant origin, who has been part of the Advisory Council for foreigners of the city of Bologna since its beginning in 2007, says,

> […] what is even more distressing about all this is that "they" [the left-wing local authorities and policy-makers] do not even see how extensive this lack of recognition is. However, many of their measures convey this fact. They keep reminding "us" that we are outsiders by their discourses and by using us as representatives of our ethnic community. Why can't they consider us as representatives of the entire community, as any political system supposes? Treating us as equals would mean that when one of "us" is in office, he/she should be considered as representative of the entire community and not *his or her alleged ethnic group*.[17]

Thus, many migrants I have interviewed think that most measures taken in the last years by left-wing organizations to foster migrants' civic and political participation in mainstream society are *de facto* exclusive in their own specific ways. They share the idea that all they need is full recognition in mainstream Italian community without specific ethnic distinctions, which are expressed in parallel channels of participation, such as the advisory councils, or in specific ethnic roles within institutional organizations who reveal of a widespread tokenism instead of practices of effective inclusion.[18]

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[16] Interview with a migrant in Bologna (June 2013).

[17] Interview with a member of the Advisory Council of Foreigners of the Province of Bologna.

[18] Most strikingly this insight emerged from an interview with the president of the Federation of Associations of one of the most powerful communities in one of the cities I was studying. This woman is considered the representative of her community by local authorities and she's been working for them for ten years. However active she is in her community, she denies any vision of an ethnic affiliation. She defines herself as half Bolognese and struggles to understand why after 30 years of presence in the Countries the exclusionary practices are still so powerful.

This very approach to "ethnicity by the Left" has been contested and challenged by migrants in non-institutionalized left-wing organizations. Some collectives of migrants I have observed during my ethnographic research express the will to break with all ethnic identifications and affiliations by no longer referring to themselves in terms of national origin. In particular, among neo-Marxist collectives, there is a widespread idea that ethnic identification is a strategy used by those in power to divide migrants and to impede them from become aware of their precise condition as a marginalized and exploitable class in the present labor market. Other collectives of different ideological orientation prefer to talk about processes of "hybridization" in society and claim that ethnic distinctions deny completely the processes of socialization from below of which Italian society is testimony.

Thanks to my interviews with migrants outside mainstream politics, I have been able to reconstruct many migrants' point of view on politics and practices based on "ethnicity" and also to assess in which ways they contest mainstream views by deconstructing a "stereotyped" vision of who they are outside mainstream politics.

Finally, in line with works done in other European countries, such as in UK (Péro 2007), France (Siméant 1998 and Raissiguier 2010), and El-Tayeb (2011), my work suggest that, notwithstanding the difficulties caused by the financial crisis, creativity and self-determination of migrants is not undermined. On the contrary, my research shows that in some cases, the crisis is pushing migrants to organize in a more resolute way, through the creation of new associations and new form of mobilizations all across the country, and is creating the condition for a new migrant identity which goes beyond any national identification.[19]

All things considered, my research shows that first- and second- generation migrants in Italy are proactive actors and politically aware subjects who have their own points of view on the specific dynamics at play in the national, regional and local contexts in which they live (see also Consumedmind 2012).[20] In particular, a great number of migrants who work within the main left-wing party and within trade unions recognize that the Italian political system is strongly

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[19] This fact is most visible among migrant workers who are fighting in the workplace. See for instance the recent creation in 2013 of the association "Prendiamolaparola,"created by intellectuals and people of migrant origin active in politics with the aim of fostering migrants' self-consciousness about their role in the Italian society and their need for more recognition (www.prendiamolaparola.org).
[20] This documentary shows is one of the most powerful example of the political consciousness of youth of migrant origin in a suburb in Sweden (https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=LCmAdyilI60).

dependent on the mediation of powerful actors and corporations and that there is very little space for self-determination of individuals, whether they are migrants or Italians. In this respect, they claim a strong will to be politically active, not only in order to find recognition for themselves, but also and most importantly "to improve the Italian political system and to create a more democratic and inclusive society in a larger sense." [21]

A similar reasoning can be also observed among migrants who participate in social movements and in the radical Left. In line with some of the political attitudes of Italians, more and more migrants are disillusioned and very critical towards mainstream parties and trade unions. However, as I have pointed out above, while many migrants have turned to civic and political apathy (Mantovan 2007), a great number of migrants are politically very active. Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that the present crisis is becoming a new stimulus for the creation of new collectives and new mobilizations all across the country. The ethnographic research in the three cities of Reggio Emilia, Bologna, and Brescia show that, during the crisis, migrants' within social movements are taking the occasion to transform their political action from a 'latent' to a more 'visible' phase (Della Porta & Diani 2006, 95).

As one migrant activist I interviewed in Bologna puts it:

> No one can talk for you! Only you who know your situation also know what you need. We feel *no one really represents us*. We only represent ourselves, because we are the only ones to know what we need and want and because we are the ones who know what it means to be an "outsider" in the Italian society! In the time of crisis, I don't understand why Italians do not stand up for their rights and protest against injustices. "We" [the "migrants"] will fight for the improvement of this society because we have nothing to lose! In this sense, Italians should join our fight for recognition because it is also about them and about the health of their democracy.[22]

The strategies used by migrants for recognition are various and here I will not be able to go into details. What is important to underline about the quotation above is that an intense political engagement by migrants is often justified by the fact that their situation in Italy needs to be exposed to Italian society and there is no other way for migrants to be heard and to express their own needs than "take the word" and "to talk for themselves."[23] This explains why a

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[21] Interview with a member of the Democratic Party in Bologna.

[22] Interview with an activist of a political movement in the city of Bologna.

[23] These expressions are widely use nowdays. Migrants have used them in many events I have participated to such as the Regional meeting in Emilia Romagna of the CGIL in Bologna (6 June 2013), at the Regional meeting in Emilia Romagna of the CGIL-FIOM in Modena (14 June 2013), at the meeting with the National Forum of immigration of the Democratic Party in Rome (6th July 2013) and in many assemblies and demonstrations by migrants active in the

considerable number of migrants I have interviewed so far have come to the conclusion that one's fight for recognition of his/her fundamental rights can be brought about only by oneself. Following this reasoning, some of them defend the idea that their full recognition in mainstream society will bring an improvement into the entire society, because it will make it a more tolerant society, in which solidarity and civil virtues will flourish and in which politics will be more representative of the society as a whole. Moreover, they think that Italians' hostilities towards migrants reveal the incapacity of the society to adapt to the ongoing societal transformations that are taking place at the global level.

Finally, some dream of a "better society in which everyone is respected and welcomed" and in which everyone's diversity has its own right to be expressed. This is line with the point of view of a young person of foreign origins, a so-called second- generation migrant, who underscores that in order to achieve this goal

> [a] change of mentality is much needed. By now, Italians should recognize that this society has *de facto* become multicultural. My mission here is to be a bridge between migrants and Italians in such a way that everyone recognizes that we are brothers and sisters and in order to avoid reciprocal closure.[24]

On the whole, the first findings presented above are emblematic of the great discrepancy between, on the one hand, the discourses and the practices of inclusiveness of regional and local left-wing administrations, parties, and stakeholders, and on the other, the more variegated and complex understandings of what "integration" and "inclusion" mean for migrants themselves. A further analysis of my data will be able to show more clearly that migrants are also promoting their inclusion by inventing engaging in different forms of mobilization.

4. Conclusion

My research aims to deepen our understanding of migrants' viewpoints on matters related to their participation in the receiving society. On one hand, it sheds light on the extent to which left-wing organizations are creating adequate channels of political participation faor migrants.

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radical Left. See for instance the Assembly with the Coordinamento migranti in Bologna (30 June 2013) and the Demostration in Brescia (28 September 2013).

[24] Interview with a migrant who is very active both in the civil society and in the political mobilization of migrants in the city of Bologna.

My first results show that the Left still tends to dismiss important measures to improve the modes of political inclusion by migrants. The interviews I collected so far suggest that migrants lament that their voices and claims are too often silenced by discourses and practices by left-wing organizations and that there is indeed a need for a more radical reconsideration of the ways in which the receiving society conceives integration and inclusionary measures. On the other hand, my findings demonstrate that migrants do not always wait for other actors to act on their behalf. On the contrary, they indicate that migrants are fighting to open up new possibilities of inclusion and to create the conditions to talk for themselves. Thus, there is currently a great variety and complexity of political trajectories of integration developed by migrants, and this very fact demands to develop a more pluralistic vision of society.

My findings also indicate the necessity of reconsidering the way we use the concept of "integration." The concept is presented by academics and social and political actors as a neutral term or even a quite positive one, because it foresees that the adjustment of migrants into the receiving society as a 'two-way' process, in which also the receiving society has to make the effort to include migrants.

However, my ethnographic research shows that the use of the term "integration" in Italy is a clear example of the ways in which left-wing organizations, explicitly or implicitly, construct foreign people as "others." As a matter of fact, the concept reflects the idea that the society is divided in two main groups, the mainstream society and the "migrants" and clearly conveys a relation of power and subordination rather than parity of treatment. Indeed, when it comes to "integration issues," the left-wing organizations both institutional and non-institutional tend to describe themselves or the society they represent as a homogenous whole in which migrants have to be incorporated or excluded (Triandafyllidou 2000). Moreover, the use of the category of "migrants" reveals a process of external construction of migrants' belonging to a specific group. This in turns shapes specific practices by left-wing organizations, which create meaningful marks of differentiations and which are clearly in contradiction with left-wing rhetoric of inclusiveness.[25]

Only by breaking with the idea that migrants are passive subjects and allowing their self-determination to flourish and to come to light, can left-wing organizations hope to fully

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[25] For a discussion on the meaning of being Italian in "super-diverse" Italy and also for the contrition of otherness see the debate that followed the interview by the journalist Lucia Annunziata with the Minister of integration Cécile Kyenge (http://www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-4dbbc163-56f4-4c99-ad85-704c9fa8f4ac.html).

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appreciate diverse viewpoints and trajectories of inclusion, and thus help Italian society become more inclusive. Arguably, my empirical findings suggest that migrants are challenging mainstream discourses and practices by their own discourses and practices, and in doing so they are contributing to transform Italian society and the very meaning of "integration" and "inclusion" from below, notwithstanding the limited channels of political participation offered to them.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS

Organizations	Total number (done)	Total number (to be done)	Total number (by the end of the fieldwork)
National actors	1	1	2
Regional & local administrations	5	2	7
Intermediary institutions	3	0	3
Radical Left (movements, extra-parliamentary groups)	3	2	5
CGIL	4	0	4
CGIL-FIOM	3	0	3
USB	0	3	3
CISL	3	0	3
CARITAS	3	0	3
Experts	1	0	1

Total		**26**	**8**	**34**	

APPENDIX 2. MAIN EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL LEFT

EVENTS Meetings	Date	Place	Organizers	Who	Goals
RE-Morrocans event	24-24-26 May 2013	Reggio Emilia (ER)	Municipality of Reggio Emilia Corradini Adil (director of Mondinsieme)	Maroccan communities Ambassadors from Morocco Yossef (Novellara)	Reinforce Paternship btw Reggio Emilia - Morocco
Regional conference CGIL	10 June 2013	Bologne (ER)	CGIL Bassoli		
Regional Conference CGIL-FIOM	17 June 2013	Modena (ER)	CGIL-FIOM Landini		
Regional Conference EMILIA ROMAGNA REGION	1 July 2013	Bologne (ER)	Region Emilia Romagna Marzocchi-Fantini (Regional executive)		
National Forum on Immigration PD	6 July 2013	Rome	Forum PD Livia Turco Cécile Kyenge		The role of the forum in the PD What has been done What should be done

APPENDIX 3. MAIN EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE NON- INSTITUTIONAL LEFT

Events	Date	Place	Organizers	Who	Reasons
CASA OCCUPATA		CASA OCCUPATA (Reggio Emilia)	Città Migrante (FEDERICA) Zaman +3	Casa Bettola Amabile (CGIL)	Right to housing Refugees
Celebration 1rst May	1 May	Centre Reggio Emilia	Città Migrante & Casa Bettola from via Turri	CGIL CISL	
Meeting Casa Bettola (Dinner)	7 May 2013	Casa Bettola	Casa Mettola	Amabile Flavia and GA3 Città Migrante	Stop citizenship Denial

Assembly	19 May 2013	San Giuliano Milanese (Mi)	Coordinamento Migranti	Cross-point	Build a network with migrants from Milan
Event organize by Onthemove	16 June 2013	Piazza dell'Unità (Bolognina-Bologne)	On the Move	Coordinamento Migranti	Against racism For Ius solis
Assemnly Coordinamento	30 June 2013	Via Paolo Fabbri, 110 (Bologne)	Coordinamento	Cross-point	
Br- Party (2 weeks) Radio Onda d'urto	30 August 2013		Radio Onda d'urto	Cross-point Diritti per tutti	Raise fundings
Meeting evictions (weekly)	5 September 2013 14 October	Magazzino 47 (Brescia)	Umberto Gobbi		
BR- Assembly For the demonstration of 28 september	14 September 2013	Magazzino 47 (Brescia)	Cross-point Diritti per tutti	Coordinamento migranti Collective Against Evictions	Appel to the construction of a unitary movement against racism for the rights of migrants
FL-Meeting Prendiamo la Parola	21 September 2013	Florence	Prendiamo la Parola		Organization of the national demonstration by migrants
BR- Demonstration Brescia	28 September 2013	Piazza Loggia- station (Brescia)	Cross-point Diritti per tutti	Coordinamento migranti Migrants of the group against eviction!!!	
Br- Assembly after Demonstration		Magazzino 47 (Brescia)	Cross-point Diritti per tutti	Sfratti !!!!	
RO- Demonstration ROME-USB	18-19 October 2013	Rome	USB Si cobas		

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