

'Trees without Roots': The Reform of Citizenship Challenged by the Children of Immigrants in Italy

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Abstract: This article, based on empirical research conducted in Milan in 2007 and 2008, analyses the current discourse over citizenship in Italy, considering both draft bills presented in recent months in the Chamber of Deputies, and the views of the sons and daughters of migrants questioned on their perceptions and attitudes regarding citizenship. Starting with a short description of the transformation of citizenship in European democracies, the article then provides a picture of the current situation in Italy. This picture constitutes the framework for a possible reform of citizenship – which is considered through an analysis of the content of the various bills and the discursive apparatus used by their proponents on the one hand, and through the words of representatives of Rete G2, a network of the sons and daughters of migrants, who challenge conventional views of citizenship, on the other. The article concludes with some considerations about the dialectical relationship between institutions (in this case, the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament) and ordinary people (specifically, the second-generation interviewees), highlighting differences and similarities concerning the conditions for acquiring citizenship, the problematic relation between rights and duties, the meaning of integration, and the conception of identity or of multiple identities.

Keywords: second generation, citizenship, integration, identity

“Today we are all like trees growing roots in a land which is then denied to us.
We will not allow ourselves to be trees without roots.”

Appeal launched by the Rete G2, press conference,
Chamber of Deputies, 18 November 2009

In December 2009, a few days before a debate in the Chamber of Deputies concerning possible reform of the current citizenship law, Rete G2 ('Second-generation Network'), which brings together the sons and daughters of migrants born or raised in Italy, held a press conference with the support of two parliamentarians, Andrea Sarubbi of the Democratic

Party (Partito Democratico, PD) and Fabio Granata of the People of Freedom (Popolo della Libertà, PdL).¹

Since its creation in 2005, Rete G2 has campaigned on two main issues: the rights of second-generation migrants without Italian citizenship, and the idea of identity as a mix of various different cultures. Specifically, the network seeks to reform the citizenship law, arguing that relaxing the current eligibility criteria is the only way to give the sons and daughters of migrants genuine equality with those born of Italian parents, as far as rights and duties are concerned. The struggle for these principles has gained widespread recognition, to the point that the network has become the privileged interlocutor of the representatives of a number of national institutions: in November 2007 Rete G2 was even received by the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, who read an open letter in which the second generations' representatives complained that they felt "invisible", like "Italians with a residence permit", and asked for "equal starting opportunities".²

Nevertheless, in recent years the situation has not improved; indeed we might say it has worsened thanks to the way in which the centre-right government and the Northern League (Lega Nord, LN) have legitimised the securitisation of migration issues and the spread of xenophobic feelings among large parts of the population. The chances of reforming the current citizenship law thus appear to be compromised by the composition of Parliament and by the political agenda of the Government. Since 29 April 2008, fifteen bills have been tabled in the Chamber of Deputies.³ On 17 December 2009 the PdL Deputy Isabella Bertolini presented a consolidated text, intended to be a synthesis of earlier bills. This was followed by an alternative consolidated text prepared by the Opposition, headed by the PD Deputy Gianclaudio Bressa, relaxing the eligibility criteria, both for first-generation migrants and for their children. Since then, neither bill has made any progress.

This article aims to analyse the current discourse over citizenship, considering both the bills presented in Parliament in recent months, and the positions expressed by the sons and daughters of migrants when questioned about their perceptions and attitudes regarding citizenship.⁴ Starting with a short outline of the transformation of citizenship in European democracies, we then describe the current legislation on citizenship in Italy. This legislation constitutes the framework for a possible reform of citizenship, which will be analysed on the one hand through an analysis of the content of the various bills and the discursive apparatus used by their proponents, and on the other hand through the words of representatives of Rete G2 who challenge conventional views of citizenship.

The transformation of citizenship

Debate over citizenship in the social sciences has recently begun to focus on the tensions produced by the presence of immigrants in societies traditionally governed on the basis of the classical equation, 'one nation-state = one territory = one people = citizenship', as formulated by Marshall (1964) at a series of conferences held in 1949. This principle for long informed the allocation of the rights and duties that define the terms of peaceful coexistence in democratic societies. Although, historically, local identities have been relevant for enjoyment of the rights granted by citizenship (Fahrmeir and Jones, 2008), the progressive enlargement of the sphere of individual rights has largely been seen as inextricably linked to a strengthening of the nation-state. The establishment republican and democratic states became synonymous with the achievement of individual rights, growing individual freedom and enlargement of the spheres open to the influence of collective action. In the mid-1970s, the close connection between the characteristics of the state, and the nature and extent of individual rights was called into question.

The increasing speed and range of the processes of globalisation – especially flows of people, ideas and goods (Appadurai, 1996), and the global interconnections of people and processes spatially far apart but closely connected through complex systems of dependency and mutual influence (Tomlinson, 1999) – transformed the idea of citizenship, drawing attention to the contradictions involved in the links between the protection of rights on the one hand, and membership of a specific political community on the other. Citizenship then became one of the most important areas of conflict over sovereignty and identity, becoming a vehicle for claims for the recognition of collective differences and, more generally, for the transformation of the rules governing relationships in the political and public spheres (Castles and Davidson, 2000; Delanty, 2000).

Migration processes, in particular, have highlighted the inconsistencies implicit in the assumptions of "State thought" (Sayad, 1999), which defines an area of protection, participation and the development of individual capacities only thanks to its capacity to exclude those who are considered 'outsiders' or 'foreigners'. In so doing, State thought realises its higher aspiration – that is, enlarging as much as it can the extent of its sovereignty and its inclusive ability – but, faces the problem that the more citizenship becomes inclusive and extended, the less it can offer. The presence of the migrant comes to deconstruct the apparent unity of citizenship drawing attention to the fact that recognition of civil, political and social rights, recognition of identity, and participation in community life may be separate components, diverging or competing with one another.

The children of immigrants, the so-called second or third generation, make this tension particularly clear. Far from being the simple representatives of the 'homelands' of their parents, and at the same time far

from embracing uncritically the models of their fellow 'natives', these people highlight the distinction between national identity and citizenship (Hussain and Bagguley, 2005) by developing multiple individual and collective identities and claiming forms of recognition and participation criteria differentiated by – or not fully reducible to – ethnic or national identity (Colombo et al. 2009b).

Taking the cultural symbols needed for the development of their specific identity from the global cultural flow – from their parents' countries of origin as well as from those in which they were born and bred – they advance demands for the recognition of citizenship that remain distinct from the full and total identification with a unified community. In their specific social position, any exclusive community seems capable of providing models and meanings for aspects of their experience (Soysal, 2000). Membership, participation and recognition of human rights turn out to be partially autonomous, never entirely reducible to the idea of national identity (Delanty, 2000). Being a society does not necessarily coincide with being a nation, because in some ways, the society exceeds the nation: it is possible to participate without the feeling of being 'exclusively', 'fully' and 'definitely' part of a specific political community. The drive to participate can result not from a strong feeling of identification but because people feel involved (because they have interests, because they feel effected, because that is the way to claim recognition).

'New citizens' in Italy: data and facts

Italy has experienced unprecedented rates of growth of immigration in recent years. According to the most recent Caritas Migrantes Report, foreign citizens legally resident in Italy amounted to 2,670,000 in 2005, around 4,330,000 in 2008, and around 4.5 million in 2009 (taking into account the amnesty granted that year) (Caritas/Migrantes, 2009). In 2008, for the first time ever, Italy overtook the EU average – 7.2 percent of its population being made up of migrants (although in France 23 percent and in Germany 18 percent of the population have parents or grandparents with migrant origins: Caritas/Migrantes, 2009). Moreover, many migrants in Italy regard themselves as permanent residents, even while refusing to rule out of course that they may at some stage return to their country of origin. More than half of the migrants included in the 2001 census had already been counted in 1991 and already in 2000 60,000 foreign citizens were eligible to apply for Italian citizenship. However, only 5,000 had done so (Codini and D'Odorico 2007: 26).

Another indicator of the increasing stability of the migrant population in Italy is revealed by taking the so-called second generation into account. According to the latest available data, more than a fifth of migrants were minors in 2008 (Caritas/Migrantes, 2009); and one year before, in 2007, the

'real' second generation - that is children born and raised in the host country - already amounted to 398,000 (ISTAT, 2008: 295). In the period between 2007 and 2009 the number of minors both of whose parents were of foreign origin increased at the rate of more than 100,000 per annum (Dalla Zuanna et al., 2009: 7). In 2008, again, more than 72,000 children were born in Italy of foreign citizens, equal to 12.6 percent of the total births, and another 40,000 arrived thanks to family reunification (Caritas/Migrantes, 2009). In 2009 and 2010 more than 700,000 children of foreign origin, without Italian citizenship, aged between three and eighteen were enrolled in Italian schools. They represent 6.4 percent of the total, with a peak of 11.8 percent in Emilia Romagna, the region with the highest concentration (*la Repubblica*, 14 September 2009).

Nevertheless, despite a constant increase in the numbers of permanently resident migrants, the numbers becoming citizens are surprisingly low. In the last two decades figures for the acquisition of citizenship in Europe have more than doubled. Over 3 million acquired the citizenship of a European country between 1990 and 2000 (EUROSTAT, 2004). Between 2004 and 2006 alone, citizenship was granted to almost 2.2 million people in the 27 EU member states, with France, the UK and Germany accounting for 60 percent of the total (EUROSTAT, 2008). The trend is also increasing in Italy, but from much lower levels. In 2007, 2008 and 2009 there were around 40,000 new citizens each year, whereas in 2006 they amounted to 35,266, representing an increase of 85.6 percent as compared to 2005 (ISTAT, 2007; Ministry of the Interior, 2007 and 2010; Caritas/Migrantes, 2009).⁵ However, these aggregate figures mask the distribution among the different categories: digging deeper we discover that during the 1990s around 90 percent of new acquisitions were due to the so-called *ius conubii*, that is, marriages where one of the spouses is an Italian citizen. In more recent years the gap has remained substantial: around 84 percent in 2004; 62 percent in 2005 and 84 percent in 2006 became citizens through marriage. Italian legislation is more favourable towards single individuals joining an Italian family, than it is towards entire migrant families who would like to become Italian citizens (Gallo and Tintori, 2006: 120).

The true significance of these figures is revealed by bearing in mind that each year less than 1 percent of legal migrants become citizens and that thanks to the *ius sanguinis* legislation a large number of foreigners with distant Italian origins reacquire Italian citizenship each year: between 1998 and 2007 more than 786,000 people acquired citizenship through Italian embassies and consulates abroad and around 784,000 are currently awaiting a response (Tintori, 2009: 37).

It might seem that people migrating to Italy are less interested in acquiring citizenship than those migrating to other EU countries.⁶ However, analysis of the current rules on citizenship, and listening

carefully to the second-generation children of migrants, suggest a more complex picture. On the one hand, the eligibility criteria are so strict and the system so arbitrary, that many migrants do not even begin to apply, even if they fulfil the requirements. On the other hand, as we shall see, the children of immigrants have a rather particular conception of citizenship and we can expect that in the near future their interest in the legal requirements surrounding it will become more and more apparent to politicians and the general public.

The current rules on citizenship

Since the beginning of nation states and of modern Western democracies, policy makers have had to deal with the issue of establishing the criteria that are to govern access to citizenship for people who do not belong by right to the national community. Besides the traditional principles of *ius sanguinis* - 'the citizen is born of citizens' - countries have at times introduced a *ius soli* criterion, a right to citizenship based on birth within the borders of the national territory. Today, while all states have maintained the primacy of *ius sanguinis*, *ius soli* has in some cases given access to citizenship to foreigners permanently living in the country.

In Italy the last general reform of citizenship dates back to 1992, when law no. 91 became the most important item of legislation in this field. Its two main axes are *ius sanguinis* which we have already mentioned, and *ius conubii*, that is the acquisition of citizenship by marriage. Compared to the previous law passed in 1912, the 1992 reform has strengthened and increased the privileges enjoyed by foreigners with Italian origins, appearing as an 'ethnic law', according to some scholars (Gallo and Tintori, 2006: 111). Specifically, it made it difficult for people who were already citizens to lose their status; it made the acquisition of citizenship by those who had even distant Italian origins relatively easy; and it made the acquisition of citizenship by those outside the national community longer, more difficult and less certain - so much so that it was possible to talk about the existence of a 'legal familism' (Zincone, 2006).

Such familism is quickly revealed if we analyse the articles applicable to the descendants of emigrants and the partners of Italian citizens. Thus, a provision for dual citizenship was introduced by the 1992 law in order to allow the many Italian citizens who had been residing abroad for generations not to have to renounce their Italian citizenship when acquiring a new one. At the same time, the law made it even more difficult for foreigners without Italian or European origins to have access to citizenship through *ius domicilii*, that is, stable residence. Accordingly, foreigners with Italian origins only have to wait for three years (two if their stay in Italy began before they turned eighteen) while EU citizens can become Italian after four years' residence. Non-EU citizens on the other

hand must be able to demonstrate that they have been living in Italy legally and uninterrupted for at least ten years. The regime even harsher if we take into account the considerable degree of discretion built into the system and the length of time it typically takes to process applications: an average of 2.9 years in 2003, 3.2 years in 2004 and even 3.8 years in 2005 (Zincone 2006: 22).

If we look more closely at the legislation, we discover that the situation is no easier for the so-called second generations. Children born in Italy need to be able to demonstrate that their parents were legally resident in the country at the moment of birth and that they retained legal residence for the entire period between then and their child's eighteenth birthday. In addition, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have lived in Italy without any interruption - meaning that they cannot study abroad or live for a period of time with their family of origin - and they cannot apply for Italian citizenship after the age of nineteen. These provisions result in some children paying for the 'faults' of their parents: around 50 percent of foreigners who currently have residence permits have previous periods without legal residence, and it is not unusual for parents to decide to raise their children in the country of origin, at least for a short period.

Many commentators have pointed out that Italy's citizenship legislation is among the most restrictive. A recent comparative study (Bauböck et al., 2006a, 2006b; Ministry of the Interior, 2007: 164) involving fifteen EU countries places states into four categories using two criteria: 1) length of residence needed for a foreigner to become a citizen; 2) the applicability of *ius soli* to second-generation children born and/or raised in the country. Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Belgium were in the category defined by *semi-restrictive policies*, since second generations benefit from favourable conditions, while first-generation migrants find it very difficult to become citizens. Luxemburg, Sweden and Finland, on the other hand, have *semi-liberal policies*, since they have low thresholds for the naturalisation of first-generation migrants but place high thresholds in the way of second generations. Great Britain, the Netherlands and France have *liberal policies*, because of low thresholds on both dimensions, while the remaining countries including Italy have *restrictive policies*, since both naturalisation of resident migrants and citizenship on the part of second - and even third - generations are particularly difficult to obtain.

Less restrictive rules for second and third than for first generations are not therefore uncommon in European countries. The study cited shows that eight out of the fifteen countries examined enable nationality to be acquired by those born within their borders. At birth or immediately thereafter, *ius soli* can apply *ex lege* (as in Germany and the UK for the second generation and in Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Spain for the third generation) or it may require a declaration by a parent (e.g. in Belgium, Ireland and Portugal). In short, other European countries have rules which,

though far from uniform, offer examples that Italian legislators might do well to follow.

The reform of citizenship law in Italy: a long and tortuous path

Soon after it had approved the 1992 law, Parliament began to consider amending it. The decision about *how* and *who* can become an Italian citizen goes to the heart of what the political sphere is all about, and raises profound issues not only concerning the concrete criteria that must be fulfilled to gain access to citizenship, but also about the meaning and significance of concepts like the State, the nation, community, identity, belonging and allegiance. As Bressa and others put it in the introduction to their bill presented to Chamber of Deputies, “citizenship law is not merely a law like any other, but it is a law which stands as an indicator of the quality of our democracy and legal system and of our humanity” (Bill no. 457, Bressa et al.). Not surprisingly, views about citizenship are influenced not only by partisan considerations, but also by a range of historical, sociological, and even philosophical perspectives.

If we look in more detail at the citizenship bills presented to Parliament during the current legislature only, we find certain recurring elements and that in some cases traditional political divisions are no longer very relevant. It is particularly interesting to consider the proposed rules relating to the second generations, because in this field there is an evident contrast between a conception of identity and belonging based on the place where a person was born and grew up, and a more conservative and traditional conception based on notions of origins and blood right (Remotti, 2010).

The meaning attributed to citizenship differs from case to case. Many bills emphasise the traditional vision ‘one nation-state = one territory = one people = citizenship’. For example, Souad Sbai, of the centre-right PdL,⁷ defines citizenship as “the act of acknowledging that one belongs to the nation and its people; sharing its social and political values; knowing its history and respecting the principles which are at the basis of the Constitution and of the legal order” (Bill no. 2904, Sbai). Sbai stresses the importance of respect for the rules as a key element of citizenship. Similarly, her colleague Jole Santelli, of the same party, defines citizenship in terms of the act of “acknowledging that one belongs to a people and that one shares its social and political values; knowing its history and antecedents; accepting the rules which underlie the social contract that binds the people of the nation together” (Bill no. 1048, Santelli).

Other politicians stress the crucial importance of changing status: this step presupposes a deeply held desire to declare allegiance to a new nation and renounce the previous status of foreigner. Thus, a foreign citizen with serious intentions of becoming Italian should not be impatient with length

of time required to process applications or with the strictness of the eligibility criteria: “citizenship that can be acquired too easily prevents integration taking place consciously and with conviction, but feeds unrealistic expectations of rights unavailable even to Italian-born citizens” (Bill no. 2910, Garagnani). What is essential is to avoid *arrembaggio*, or the assault on Italian citizenship by “those people coming from poor countries who have every interest in becoming European citizens, and even more in being part of that privileged group assisted by the Italian welfare state”. Consequently, the reform of citizenship law should aim at reducing the cost of new citizens to the public purse; for Italy seems to “represent a real ‘land of plenty’ for those unfortunate individuals born in countries far less rich than ours” (Bill no. 2006, Paroli).

Not all the bills discuss citizenship in such terms. In other cases, the language of rights and freedoms prevails, in recognition of the need to modify the current regime in order to restore equality to foreign citizens living legally in the country. The bill presented by Bressa and others belonging to the centre-left PD, does define citizenship – like the others already mentioned – as “the fundamental political relationship between the individual and the political and juridical order”, but adds that politics should “create conditions that eliminate the kind of social lottery which prevents people from using their freedom to realise their full potential in life”. Thus reform of the citizenship law should concentrate on restoring “the equality of opportunity that derives from legal equality, that is the equal distribution of rights and duties”, as implied by the non-discrimination principle contained in Article 3 of the Italian Constitution (Bill no. 457, Bressa et al.).⁸

Albeit from different perspectives – with alternative emphases on rules and duties, identity and belonging, or freedom and equality – most of the bills criticise the current legislation for its tendency to be merely bureaucratic in nature. The idea is that prolonged residence alone is not a sufficient criterion to establish that candidates for citizenship have genuine feelings of belonging towards their proposed new country of allegiance. A quantitative and chronological conception of naturalisation (which would automatically award citizenship to children born in Italy) is set against a more qualitative and identity-based one (which imposes several requirements designed to establish whether citizenship applicants genuinely ‘feel’ Italian, regardless of whether or not they were born in the country or had attended Italian schools for any given number of years). Even the bipartisan bill presented by Sarubbi and Granata emphasises the need for a paradigmatic shift in the mechanisms underlying the attribution of citizenship: we should change “from passive and quantitative criteria to active and qualitative ones [...] The fundamental idea is to provide every encouragement to processes leading to the full recognition of citizenship rights for those who demonstrate a desire to be integrated into the social

and civic fabric of the receiving county; on the other hand to avoid any automatism where this desire is not explicitly expressed" (Bill no. 2670, Sarubbi Granata).

These considerations are combined in the debate over the relationship between citizenship and integration. Should citizenship be intended as the final step in the accomplishment of full integration? Or should it be an incentive to integration, and therefore a preliminary or intermediate condition aimed at building a feeling of belonging and participation in the future citizen? The large majority of the bills emphasise the need for complete integration before applying for citizenship. According to some members of the right-wing parties, citizenship is not

a subjective right of the applicant, even after the period of residence required by the law. Citizenship cannot be considered as a right to be acquired, but rather as the end result of a process of acceptance of principles, duties and rules set by the receiving country. The acquisition of citizenship is not the starting point of a process of integration; neither is it a means to better achieve that objective. It is rather, and it should continue to be, the final act of a necessarily long and carefully considered path which ends with a solemn oath of allegiance to a specific community" (Bill no. 2910, Garagnani).

Another deputy adds that citizenship should be granted only "at the conclusion of a slow and gradual, but also progressive, process of integration". The founding element should therefore be integration: this is "the central engine of civic loyalty and the basic requirement [...] the premises [of the citizen's right] actually to belong to the national community, the final phase of a full and effective process of integration" (Bill no. 2904, Sbai). An NL representative and the main signatory of one of the citizenship bills, makes it clear that "the acquisition of citizenship should be the conclusion of a process which leads the foreigner to a perfect integration with the territory and with the citizens of the country in which he has decided to settle, and not a mere administrative act completely detached from the social context" (Bill no. 1592, Cota et al.).

Other deputies have a more complex approach and point out that integration is itself a process. According to Bressa and others, for instance, both extreme positions are probably wrong. It is not fair to ask foreigners who want to become citizens to be fully integrated, but at the same time citizenship should not be considered as merely a spur to integration. The deputies suggest a third approach, where "citizenship is both the point of arrival along a path of thriving social and cultural integration and the starting point in the deepening and completion" of this process. "Integration is not a result but a gradual and maybe never-accomplished process (not even for current citizens), because of the inevitably dialectical relationship between the individual and the social context" (Bill no. 457, Bressa et al.). The bipartisan bill presented by Sarubbi and Granata adopts a

similar approach: “Citizenship should become for the adult foreigner a definite, desired and formative process; the point of arrival on a path of social, civic and cultural integration and at the same time the starting point for its endless deepening” (Bill no. 2670, Sarubbi and Granata).

There is general agreement on two assumptions, therefore, even though they stem from different perspectives: the attribution of citizenship cannot derive from an automatic mechanism based only on quantitative requirements (such as time) and it cannot be interpreted as a prerequisite for integration (the most liberal proposals see it as an intermediate but advanced stage on the path towards full integration).

The combination of these two elements could be used to justify even stricter eligibility criteria. Many politicians involved in the reform process believe that the general approach provided for by the existing law is correct, but that more selective criteria should be introduced. For them, Parliament has a responsibility to “preserve the social and political integrity of the country and prevent disaggregation” and to avoid the risk that “an indiscriminate enlargement [of the number of new citizens] provokes a de-individualisation of the foreign citizens themselves” (Bill no. 1048, Santelli). Consequently, almost all the bills propose various tests designed to require applicants for citizenship to demonstrate a genuine intention to *become* Italian, and to acknowledge the fact that to a degree they already *are* Italian.

This approach is particularly evident as far as first-generation migrants are concerned. Like some other EU and non-EU countries (such as the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the US, Canada), the bills often propose to link the acquisition of citizenship to success in tests regarding language, history and the Constitution (Bill no. 457, Bressa et al.; no. 1048, Santelli; no. 2670, Sarubbi and Granata; no. 2684, Mantini and Tassone; no. 2904, Sbai), while Bill no. 1592, Cota et al. even provides for tests of knowledge of *local* languages, cultures, histories, traditions and institutional arrangements. Some proposals would require attendance at civic education training courses (Bill no. 1048, Santelli) besides proof of having met all the residence, employment and income requirements (Bill no. 2904, Sbai). Others make it necessary to prove, in addition, knowledge of the “spiritual traditions” constituting the identity of the receiving country (Bill no. 2910, Garagnani) or to demonstrate respect for the rights and self-determination of women (Bill no. 2684, Mantini and Tassone).

This tendency is also apparent with regard to proposed criteria to apply to the second generation and minors who have grown up in Italy. According to some of the draft proposals, the conditions required of foreigners born in Italy should be even stricter than those currently in force. Proposed requirements include:

- having attended school until at least the age of eighteen (Bill no. 1048, Santelli, and no. 2904, Sbai);

- declaring an intention to acquire citizenship within six months of having turned 18 (Bill n. 1048 Santelli);

The second generation, according to some deputies, should also be subjected to some of the requirements envisaged for their parents: Bill no. 2910, Garagnani, and Bill no. 2006, Paroli, both proposed by members of the PdL, provide for the payment of a €1,500 fee just to start the citizenship application process; the second bill also excludes the possibility of dual or multiple citizenship and introduces a “reversibility clause”, implying that the new citizen might lose his status if – for example – after two years he was not able to prove that his economic, financial and living arrangements were still based in Italy.

Other bills would lighten the requirements imposed on the second generation as compared to those currently in force. To acquire Italian citizenship it might be sufficient, besides a declaration of intent by one of the two parents:

- that at least one of the foreign parents has been legally resident for five years or more without interruption (Bill no. 457, Bressa et al.; no. 2670, Sarubbi and Granata; no. 2684, Mantini and Tassone);

- that at least one of the foreign parents was born in Italy and has been living in the country for at least a year without interruption (Bill no. 457, Bressa et al. and no. 2670, Sarubbi Granata);

Some bills also introduce specific conditions for children born abroad but brought up and educated in Italy – the so-called 1.5, 1.25 or 1.75 generations, according to Rumbaut’s classification (1997), which distinguishes them from the 2.0 generation, that is, children born of migrant parents in the migration country – who would be subject to the same rules as those applied to their parents. For example both bill no. 457, Bressa et al., and Bil no. 2670, Sarubbi and Granata, allow for easier access to citizenship for children who come to Italy before the age of five and remain in the country until they are 18, when they automatically become citizens unless they explicitly decide not to. Any other minor can become a citizen as long as s/he completes a minimum period of schooling.

Overall, the provisions contained in the various bills reflect a view that the current regulations concerning the second generation are inadequate, but there is no support for unqualified application of the *ius soli* principle. Despite the differences between them, the deputies want to make sure that children born or brought up in Italy demonstrate allegiance to the nation and a clear intention to be Italian. The requirements might be simplified and lightened compared to the current regulations concerning citizenship, but the conception underlying the various proposals remains one inspired by a compact and almost monolithic view that ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ are the same thing.

Becoming citizens: The requirements expressed by the children of migrants

Obviously, the children of migrants are not homogeneous in terms of their opinions about citizenship, identity and belonging. A first substantial difference is linked to political engagement and participation, since those who take an active part in associations such as Rete G2 have much stronger and clearer positions regarding citizenship than other 'ordinary' second-generation children. Nevertheless it seems evident from our research, that almost all the interviewees have quite a clear understanding of Italian procedures and laws, and in any case have ideas about what the criteria for the acquisition of Italian citizenship should be.

Some are mentioned particularly frequently by respondents, reflecting the expectations of the politicians involved in the reform process. At the same time the reasons and explanations offered by the second-generation youths are often original and unconventional. One of the most cited citizenship criteria is knowledge of the Italian language, seen as a necessary requirement not only for formal citizenship but also to enable active participation in the life of the country of residence:

"In order to obtain citizenship you should not only have been living in Italy for ten years. It is something which ties you more. Take, for example, the Italian language: I don't say you should speak Italian perfectly, because if I listen to my father, he can make some mistakes, and I correct him since I speak everyday with Italian people. For example there is this Egyptian family who lives next door. The father doesn't let the wife out of the house and she cannot speak Italian. Maybe she will soon get citizenship and she can't speak Italian. I don't say it bothers me, but actually, if I acquire citizenship, I've lived more, I went to school and my parents did the same, attending evening schools to learn more" (V., Peruvian citizenship, in Italy since she was 3).

"As far as I'm concerned, you should know the language. They should check... I don't say they should check if you are well integrated or not, because they can't really know if you are integrated or not. But they should see if a person has a job, if he knows Italian, these are all things to be considered. Since it might occur that a person has been here for twenty years and he doesn't know Italian, he doesn't have a job, he lives off somebody" (L., Ecuadorian citizenship, in Italy since she was 14).

For many respondents, good behaviour and success in the integration process seem to have the same importance as knowledge of the language. Some of them mention the importance of stable employment; living in adequate accommodation; at least some knowledge of the history and culture of the host country, and having no criminal record. Reflecting the findings of research elsewhere in Europe (Lister et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2005), respondents emphasise the language of duties more than the language of rights. Citizenship, more than a formal status, appears as

conforming behaviour, in line with the expectations and the interests of the community. Accordingly, a citizen is someone who is respectable and economically independent, that is a person who has a house, a job, a family and who behaves 'normally'. To be acknowledged as a citizen you should first of all demonstrate that you respect the duties associated with life in the community, that you strive to be independent, especially from an economic point of view, and that you are essentially the same as other citizens, not 'deviant' in any way:

"When you get to the point of applying for citizenship, you should be... I don't say a perfect person, but a person who knows the language, that's for sure. I mean, one who wants citizenship should necessarily be stable as a person, job, house, someone who is not a troublemaker. If you want Italian citizenship, you should be a conventional person. I don't think there should be any other criteria" (S., born in Egypt, in Italy since she was 3, Italian and Egyptian citizenship).

"To be a hard-working person. In my opinion he should have a regular job, no criminal record, he should know the language, how to write and speak well, because it is important... If you are a citizen of this country and you cannot communicate with other people, then how can you be a citizen of this country?" (A., born in Italy, Eritrean citizenship; she has also just obtained Italian citizenship).

The emphasis placed on correctness and rectitude is reflected in the emphasis respondents give to being able to show that one is a 'good citizen', one who obeys the law and pays taxes:

"The ones who pay taxes, the ones who actively contribute. If you pay taxes and help the State, why shouldn't you enjoy the same rights as any other Italian citizen?" (G., in Italy since she was 1, Peruvian and Italian citizenship).

"People who work and respect the laws. If you are in Italy, you respect the laws. Maybe in your origin country things are different but if you respect Italian laws it is fair that you are considered an Italian citizen" (E., born in Italy of Eritrean parents, Italian citizenship).

Being a 'good citizen', able to show that you have never broken the law and that you do not have a criminal record becomes the central element in this perception of being 'upright', without fear of punishment by the state. Such a status can therefore become as important as citizenship, since it gives protection against the possibility of being discriminated against. A young Philippino born in Italy tells an anecdote where an encounter with the police has a happy ending thanks to his being able to furnish proof of not having a criminal record:

“I was in the underground in corso Lodi and I was coming out of a gallery, listening to my Mp3. I met two police officers on the other side. They stopped me and asked for my documents, then they said not to worry, that there was no problem if I had no problem with the law. We went up and they called the Questura since in the identity card I was not an Italian citizen yet and my residence permit had expired. But I can speak Italian well and I explained my situation to them. I heard them saying over the phone that I had no criminal record and so they let me go” (D., born in Italy, Philippino citizenship, waiting for Italian citizenship).

The insistence on duties leads to a conception of citizenship not as a status which can be attained mechanically and permanently, but as something dynamic to be continuously negotiated. The role of citizenship is to allow a distinction to be made, not between natives and foreigners, but between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ citizens. According to many interviewees the latter distinction is much more significant than the former and it should apply to everyone, regardless of their origins.

Sometimes implicitly, other times explicitly, respondents seem to allude to an underlying injustice, consisting of the different treatment of Italian citizens who are fully acknowledged and protected by the law. The widespread perception is that ‘real’ Italians do not consider respect for the authorities and for the rules as being especially important – as shown for example by the large number of tax evaders – while foreigners often engage seriously in efforts to contribute to the country's performance, even when they are not adequately recognised. The perceived gap between the positive contribution to society and the economy, and the mistreatment it is repaid with, make the privileges enjoyed by Italians – even when they do not deserve them – more unbearable. This disparity between natives and foreigners is noted by many interviewees when talking about the requirements for citizenship.

“The main characteristic is simple stability in Italy. By stability I mean having a job of any kind, having a family in Italy, no matter if the members of the family are adults or children. You don't withdraw citizenship from Italians if they don't have their parents anymore or if they don't have a job” (S., born in Italy, Jordanian citizenship).

Another interviewee reminds us that “Italians who commit a crime still have Italian citizenship: it is not fair” (Z., born in Kosovo, in Italy since he was 15, Kosovan citizenship); the same position is expressed by another respondent who notes, ironically, that “Italians themselves in many cases don't know their own history, and thus what can we do? Do we withdraw their citizenship?”

The discrimination suffered by people with foreign origins but settled in Italy is particularly evident in the experience of members of the 2.0 second generation (Rumbaut, 1997). The discretion shown by Italian

administrative bodies is one of the causes of this feeling of discrimination and inequality. A young woman, who is also a representative of the Association of Young Muslims in Italy, explains the paradox of her situation:

“Next Monday I will be thirty. I was born in Perugia and I still don’t have Italian citizenship because of a three month interruption of my residence in 1986” (S., born in Italy, Jordanian citizenship).

So even if many interviewees accept that a foreign adult coming to Italy must wait for some years before being eligible to apply for citizenship, others notice that the treatment received by Italian-born children is unfair or at least excessive:

“If you are born in Italy you can become a citizen when you are eighteen, it’s quite a lot, isn’t it? Eighteen years if you are born here, it seems too much to me. In contrast, if you marry an Italian you get it; that seems too easy. Now it costs €3,000 to make arrangements with somebody to get married” (A., Egyptian citizenship, in Italy since he was 1).

“If you are born here [there should be no condition for the acquisition of citizenship]. My classmate was born on 27th of December, I was born on the 28th. We were both born here, on the same day in the same country. The only difference is that her parents are Italian and my parents are not. But the important thing is us. I don’t care where my parents come from; the important fact is that I was born here. I’m a citizen of a country where I’ve been five times in all my life and I’m not a citizen of the country where I was born. It is ridiculous from this point on view” (A., born in Italy, Eritrean citizenship; she has also just obtained Italian citizenship).

Moreover, a young Senegalese interviewee born in Italy, now waiting for his citizenship to be recognised, shows some uneasiness about the procedure applying to second generations:

“These papers, this bureaucracy, it takes a long time. They told me I would have to wait for more or less two or three years, so it’s quite long. I mean, I have to wait a lot, a lot. And besides it seems very bad to me to take the oath on the Constitution of the country where I was born” (L., born in Italy, Senegalese citizenship, waiting for Italian citizenship).

In addition, many interviewees emphasise a contrasting perspective concerning integration and citizenship. That is, they do not fully share the emphasis given to the ‘past’, that is, the period of time spent in Italy, as an eligibility criterion. From their point of view the same importance (if not more) should be given to the ‘future’, that is, to the intention of building a life in the country and expressing the desire to become Italian. According to some of the young people who took part in the focus groups, it is, for

example, crucial “to be convinced that you want to stay here, to be convinced that your future will be here” or to show an intention “to be part of” the society, because “if I say that I want to go home, that I want to go back to Kosovo, but at the same time I want to have Italian citizenship, what’s the meaning of that?” Two other young girls stress the importance of the choice of future residence when applying for Italian citizenship:

“The choice of citizenship depends on where you are. If I am sure that I will live in Italy forever, for a large part of my life, then I desire Italian citizenship; if I know that I’ll go back to Bulgaria, then I prefer Bulgarian citizenship” (D., Bulgarian citizenship, in Italy since she was 11).

“If you decide to stay here, you have citizenship and so you can stay here as long as you want, you can vote, you can do anything, you are like an Italian. If you have to go back, then you don’t need Italian citizenship in Morocco” (F., Moroccan citizenship, in Italy since she was 8).

This emphasis on the future and the feeling of belonging to the same ‘community of fate’ as all other Italian citizens and residents is even more explicit in the documents issued by Rete G2. For example, the above mentioned letter to President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano asserts:

“We young sons and daughters of immigrants will soon find ourselves deciding, together with others of our age group, about a future which already seems so uncertain. But starting our adult lives as «Italians with residence permits» makes our place even more uncertain and our future even more precarious. We are proud of our parents who work in Italy to give us a better future, but, Mister President, we, who were born here or arrived as children, also feel like sons and daughters of Italy and now we are asking you to help us and our younger brothers and sisters to be acknowledged as such”.

Once again, in the words of young members of the second generation, citizenship appears as necessarily interwoven with integration, but also with non-discrimination, equality and the ‘capacity to aspire’ (Appadurai, 2004).

Conclusion

This overview of the reform process, and the interviews with the sons and daughters of immigrants suggest a number of conclusions about the dialectical relationship between institutions (in this case, the Chamber of Deputies) and ordinary people (specifically, the second-generation interviewees). At first glance, there seems to be a surprising overlap but we must be careful when examining the apparent similarities.

Strict conditions (but what about Italians?)

Many respondents are ready to accept a number of binding prerequisites for the acquisition of citizenship. They do not exclude the possibility of naturalisation or citizenship tests, as proposed by many deputies. From their perspective this is proof that citizenship is an important and crucial goal and not a trivial issue. Citizenship is related to having certain characteristics; to having spent a long time in Italy and to the recognition of stratification among foreigners (or 'future-Italians') as well (Morris, 2002). At the same time, acceptance of these requirements makes the discretion, the arbitrariness and the unpredictability of the process of applying for citizenship even more unbearable and humiliating. Moreover, because they are so ready to respect the rules and to fulfil all the requirements laid down by the law, respondents demand that Italian citizens and institutions be the first to respect the same rules. If not, the feeling of discrimination will corrupt the integration process itself.

Duties versus rights (but why are duties so important?)

Respondents tend to mention duties more than they do rights. It seems that it is crucial for them to prove that they are 'good people' above and beyond the requirements for citizenship. This attitude also appears to back up the most conservative proposals presented by the deputies. At the same time, however, we need to contextualise this emphasis on duties. Those of the second generation – more than first-generation migrants or their foreign-born children – want to show that their lifestyles make them closer to Italians than to the illegal immigrants who are often marginalised and criminalised by the Italian population. Those immigrants remind them of the precariousness of their own situation and of the widespread tendency to define all immigrants as dangerous *tout court*. Those immigrants show members of the second generation where they (or their parents) came from and their closeness to a 'family' from which they need to keep their distance if they want successfully to assert a claim to residence and participation in the life of the country. Respondents have internalised the climate of mistrust and fear of immigrants and therefore try constantly to place themselves as close as possible to Italians, not thanks to a straightforward identification process but to be protected – like Italian citizens – from the pervasive criminalisation process. For this reason we cannot be entirely optimistic about their attitude, since there is the risk that the same experience of xenophobia that drives their sincere adhesion to duties will prevent them, even if they are *formally* recognised as Italians, from actually being able to belong to the Italian community. And this may lead the second generation to dangerous feelings of disillusionment, betrayal and mistrust.

Need for integration (but what kind of integration?)

All the respondents recognise the importance of integration as a prerequisite for citizenship. The words and the concepts they use are not very different from those we find in many of the bills. Nevertheless the importance placed on the future is almost absent from the parliamentary debate on the reform of citizenship. When talking about the desire to spend their lives in Italy – to work and contribute to the Italian economy; to have a family whose members will live in the only country they really know; to make decisions along with others of the same age for the well-being of the community – they refer to a precise biographical experience which is often neglected by politicians. It is very hard to imagine a citizenship test based on future aspirations and desires. But at the same time if we fail to consider integration as a process where the future has at least the same importance as the past, we will end up with a reductive conception of citizenship and belonging.

Identity (but why not to talk about identities?)

As we have already mentioned above, the conception of citizenship underlying the various bills still refers to a compact and almost monolithic idea of identity and belonging. To be an Italian citizen, you must *feel and be* Italian. From this point of view there would be a contradiction in all of the so-called hyphenated identities. But respondents often refer to themselves as Italian and Moroccan, Italian and Peruvian, Italian and Bulgarian.

“In certain ways I feel Italian, maybe in certain habits that I have, in other aspects I definitely feel Bulgarian, that is I’m something in between ... exactly how I feel at the moment, I feel both Bulgarian and Italian. It depends on things... It’s just because for me my roots and the way I am make me feel Bulgarian still, that is it’s in my soul inside that I’m Bulgarian, but in terms of my habits, daily and maybe even more in general in my way of thinking, I find myself more Italian” (I., 19, born in Bulgaria, living in Italy since the age of 11).

It is interesting to note that identification and a sense of involvement appear able to cohabit within the various ‘practices of citizenship’ (Sassen, 2006) in such a way as to produce innovations in the meanings attributed to citizenship. In this sense, our interviewees certainly do not consider citizenship as a channel for abandoning a previous *full identification* in favour of a *new full identification*. Rather, it is presented as a device for once again highlighting the impossibility of reducing the identificatory dimension to a single social force (Semi et al., 2009). In the words of the second generation, then, citizenship, although constituting a crucial element of *full identification*, is never necessarily *equivalent* to the latter, insofar as it represents just one of the multiple forces at work in the construction of the sense of belonging.

The second generation is already part of Italian society and is keen to contribute to our cultural and political life. Its members are not a separate minority to be protected or reified. Sometimes they are even more 'Italian' than Italian citizens, as we have seen, but at the same time they are unwilling to renounce their multiple identities. Somehow, they reproduce and multiply the contradictions but also the resources of our modern age, giving us the opportunity to redefine words like citizenship, belonging, duties, rights, integration and identity. They represent a bridge between many different areas, the past and the future, their parents' homelands and the receiving country, traditions and possible innovations. Like the trees of the title, they take care of their roots - which are already growing in Italy - insofar as they believe they will be allowed to sprout new branches and leaves in the near future. The next move is up to us.

Notes

1. Sarubbi and Granata are the first signatories of a bipartisan bill aimed at incisive reform of the citizenship legislation and more specifically at easing the citizenship requirements for the second generation (Bill no. 2670, Sarubbi and Granata).

2. In the period between 2006 and 2007 they were also invited by the ministers of the interior and of welfare in the then centre-left government, to attend the official meetings taking place about reform of the immigration law (laws 189 of 2002 and 286 of 1998) and were asked to give evidence. Again in 2007 Rete G2 took part in the national consultative body established by welfare minister to tackle the problems of migrants and their families, and in the observatory for the integration of foreign students and intercultural education, established by the education minister.

3. The fifteen bills concerning the reform of citizenship, the consolidated text proposed by Parliament's first Permanent Commission, and the opposition's alternative consolidated text, all presented between 29 April 2008 and 17 December 2009, are available from the Chamber of Deputies website at www.camera.it.

4. The research, conducted in 2007 and 2008, was funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research and it also drew on parallel research carried out under the auspices of the 'Non uno di meno' project, sponsored by the Province of Milan and the Centre Come (Colombo et al., 2009a; Colombo et al., 2009b). It involved 115 children of immigrants attending Milanese high schools. The researchers collected unstructured interview data from 69 girls and 46 boys between the ages of 16 and 22 (over 80 percent of the interviewees were aged between 17 and 19 years). Of these, 35 were attending scientific colleges, 53 technical institutes, and the remaining 27 professional institutes. The origins of their parents are fairly diverse, reflecting the spectrum of Italian immigration: 31 came from Asia (7 from China), 22 from North Africa, 7 from Sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from eastern Europe, 7 from other European countries, and 32 from South America. Almost half had completed all their schooling in Italy (34 were born in Italy, 15 arrived before they were 7 years old), and a third (42) began attending

primary or elementary school after beginning their schooling in their parents' native country, while the others (24) came to Italy as adolescents and began their Italian education at high school.

5. Official national figures concerning acquisition of citizenship do not include data about the second generation, since their processing is managed by the individuals' municipality of residence.

6. According to the latest available comparative data, in 2006 154,015 persons received British citizenship; 147,868, French citizenship, and 124,566 German citizenship; in the same year Italian citizenship was granted to 35,266 migrants (EUROSTAT, 2008).

7. Sbai was born in Morocco and migrated to Italy. She became an Italian citizen in 1981.

8. Article 3: "All citizens have equal social status and are equal before the law, without regard to their sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal or social circumstances. The Republic has a duty to remove all economic and social obstacles which, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent full individual development and the participation of all workers in the political, economic, and social life of the country."

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