

# Italy and Lega Nord: Stories of Communities, National (Dis)Integration and Spaces of (Restricted) Citizenship

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*This paper focuses on the conception of citizenship of the Italian political party Lega Nord. To that aim, we consider citizenship in terms of belonging to the political community, which thus also defines the boundaries of exclusion. In our approach, citizenship is a structuring dimension of building a political community and it has two components: the State and the nation. By situating these concepts (State, nation and citizenship) in a theoretical-historical framework, we enlighten the conceptions of the Lega Nord in relation to each of them, by positioning them in long term socio-historical dynamics in Italy.*

## **Introduction**

This paper focuses on the conception of citizenship of the Italian political party *Lega Nord*<sup>1</sup>. To that aim, we consider citizenship in terms of belonging to the political community, which thus also defines the boundaries of exclusion. In our approach, citizenship is a structuring dimension of building a political community and it has two components: a more institutional one, the State (Weber 1922 [2005], Elias 1939, Badie 1985, Genêt 1997, Déloye 2007); and a more social one, the nation (Anderson 1983, Lapeyronnie 2005, Delmotte 2007). By situating these concepts (State, nation and citizenship) in a theoretical-historical framework, we enlighten the conceptions of the *Lega* in relation to each of them, by positioning them in long term socio-historical dynamics in Italy.

Moreover, the subjective and symbolic dimension is approached transversely in each of these sections. On the one hand, we analyse the constructive, subjective and symbolic character of the Nation State and national identities (Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm 1983, Delmotte 2007). On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> Founded in 1991 under the direction of the *Lega Lombarda* the *Lega Nord* gathers various separatist parties (Biorcio 2012).

we examine the way the communities «symbolically and locally constructed how to relate to the universe of the Nation [State]» (Sahlins 1989: 26). In this manner, we will be able to perceive the basis of citizenship and the criticisms related to it (Young 1994, Procacci 1998). Today, citizenship is manifold, included in complex interdependent networks (Procacci 1998, Zolo 2000, Baglioni 2010) and increasingly disputed. Indeed, in the national context, citizenship has its roots in a certain cultural homogeneity capable of absorbing the existing particularities on a given territory (Magnette 2007). Far from natural, it assumes that the national citizen sacrifices a part of its personal identity. It also requires a sharing common memory (Brass P. R. quoted by Déloye 2007) that can be symbolically manipulated by political leaders and (nationalist) groups (Bourdieu 1980, Kertzer 1988, Norman 2004, Mink 2007). And those symbolic elements facilitate the emergence of socio-political organisations such as the *Lega* (Di Bonaventura 2015), through the use of invented traditions. In fact, these invented traditions are «responses to new situations that take the shape of a reference to old situations, or build their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition» (Hobsbawm 1983: 12).

### *The modern state*

In this first part, we analyse how the modern State has freed individuals from the mastery of feudal and communal groups ; and the difficulties that this process has generated, laying however the institutional foundations of citizenship. First, we explore this framework in general. Secondly, we apply it to Italy. And thanks to it, we are finally able to apprehend the State conception of the *Lega* and the way they assert that conception.

Societal changes have led to different forms of political communities that have succeeded or coexisted in space over time in Western Europe. In the end, a political form takes the precedence over the others: the modern State (Badie 1985). Facing various types of power structures such as cities or urban republics, princely States, empire or the Church, the modern State in Western Europe has not been achieved without hurts and resistances. If each State has its own trajectory, feudalism is a central element of its birth. It «is characterized by the breakdown of public authority and multiplication of human to human relationships» (Bloch quoted by Déloye 2007: 28). Therefore, the order and taxation powers are in the hands of many «dominance units», as Norbert Elias wrote. This is what Max Weber calls the «patrimonial domination». Feudalism is a social model that has inherited the Germanic tradition of its hierarchical organisation mode and the Roman tradition of its conception of property «relating private property and sovereignty» (Anderson quoted by

Badie 1985: 625). Feudalism involves some decentralising logic that drives the Lords to enter drastic competition, although they are powerless to cities evolving in the interstices of the lordships. Unlike the feudal model, the city-state model tends to identify with the center, blurring the center-periphery relationship. Thanks to the trade development, it has freed individuals from the patriarchal and familial influence, creating a real community of citizens. Stein Rokkan has applied this city-state model of ancient Greece to the economically rich European backbone (Seiler 2014). But this rokkanian model only keeps from the greek one three elements: a narrow territory, deep particularism and the non-building process of an abstract entity distinct from a civil society. Nonetheless, in this new model, Christianity imposes itself on a plurality of divine beliefs and facilitates the autonomy of the city-States. If the urban phenomenon has existed since the Roman Empire, its geographical limits date back to the Middle Ages. «The fate of the European backbone was that the city-States and the feudal principalities composed of rich prosperous cities [...] were powerful enough to prevent the emergence of an indigenous territorial State» (Seiler 2014: 25).

The process of political power centralisation results of the competition and conflicts among medieval houses. «The winner is [...] the monolistic Central of a state organisation under which many of the formerly rival groups and regions merg» (Elias 1939: 300). That Central is the meeting point of the action of various actors and competing projects. Also, (groups of) individuals are not necessarily aware of the multiple interdependent networks there are in. Florence Delmotte (2007) calls «objective integration» this reticular phenomenon. Finally, the central government has concentrated all means of domination. If many authors (Elias, Gellner, etc.) agreed on this point, Tocqueville is the first to denounce all the power of the State, a central power previously scattered in «secondary powers, orders, classes, professions, families and individuals» (Tocqueville quoted by Déloye: 35). According to Strayer and many others, there are societies with strong State and other with weak State: «the more traditional structures (mostly feudal) resist the political modernisation process, the more the centre [...] adopts a strong State, only able to overcome the social, religious or territorial peripheral resistance» (Déloye 2007: 44). Therefore, the State must deprive the Church and the aristocracy of their political prerogatives.

In the end, the State is a social organisation ensuring its security and that of its members through a military and fiscal apparatus, which is legitimated by the consent of society through representative institutions. It «appears as the socio-political framework inseparable from the empowerment of the individuals in Western cultures» (Genêt 1997: 6). Legitimated by French revolutionary ideas and the opposition to Napoleon, this model has spread throughout the

European area. Moreover, «the ideologies [...] of some contemporary European States draw their origin in the reaction against the Napoleonic State and the French model of the State» (Genêt 1997: 7).

### *The emergence of the Italian unitarian state*

Let's apply now this theoretical-historical framework to the emergence of the Italian unitary State.

The development of Italian cities dates back to the Roman Empire and is then amplified in the Middle Ages in a climate of insecurity and high heterogeneity of class and wealth. Besides the great feudal lords and their families, the municipal development leads to the emerging aristocratic patricians and great bourgeois, the middle bourgeoisie, the «common people» and the «excluded of the urban society» (Milza 2005: 237). Merchants (the city) and the manorial power (the campaign) coexist in harmony, the latter holding the municipal power. This municipal movement has grown especially in the North and is «a voluntary pact of all citizens». If an embryonic system of direct democracy exists in the twelfth century, it is replaced by an indirect election system in populated cities. Notwithstanding, holders of municipal power have recruited from the noble lineage knights or *militia*, who manage judicial, fiscal and administrative tasks. In the thirteenth century, despite the substitution of the consulate by the Mayor<sup>2</sup>, the city has remained aristocratic. Italian cities are plagued by bitter struggles, aiming at the control of the neighbouring *contado* or the absorption of a rival town. The loser becomes an exile (*fuoruscito*) aspiring to regain its original fatherland (Milza 2005). In the fourteenth century, this confrontational atmosphere worsens and city-lordships are instituted. This authoritarian system has spread in many padanian cities like Milan, soon under the aegis of the Visconti family. The lordships of Piedmont-Alpine were born long before around feudal families, vassal of the emperor. Two models coexist. In these cities lordships, trade bodies take drastic protectionist measures concerning the local economy that displease the patricians in favour of free trade. Also, foreigners wishing to live in the city must pay a right of citizenship. During the Renaissance, these urban economic strongholds and highly rivals get richer. If in the fourteenth century the idea of a Northern Italy already is in the mind of the *milanese* Lord Visconti (Milza 2005), the ideas of the *Risorgimento* and *Illuminismo* are the real engines of the unitary ideology (Caron and Vernus 2015).

<sup>2</sup> 'Neutral' magistrate from abroad.

Following the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte on the Italian territory in 1796, the liberal ideas have diffused and an Italian Jacobinism is born. A unitary awareness rises in opposition to foreign powers. Different elitist and liberal movements appear; some advocating a federal State (the *Carbonari*), others a unitary State (the Mazzinians or the liberals). These state models generate regional divisions in 1848. For example, unlike the Piedmont, Lombardy defends the federalist solution. The *milanese* philosopher Carlo Cattaneo considers this one as «a deep modernization of the Lombard economy, becoming the spearhead of the Italian federation in the European framework» (Caron and Vernus 2015).

In Piedmont clerical and aristocratic, the liberal Charles Albert has prevented a French-style revolution and has established a strong royal sovereignty through the completion of the *Statuto*<sup>3</sup>. This has been used as a crucial weapon by his successor Victor Emmanuel II to harden the regime and emphasize the Piedmontese dynasty as «the only guarantee of an Italian independence» (Brice 2012: 91). The sovereign wanted to appropriate Northern Italy (and the rich Lombardy), leaving the South and the Centre some autonomy. However, he has enlarged its territorial ambitions because of the many insurrections and border threats, and the possibility of a Garibaldi republic in the South. Helped by Cavour, the king then has led a monarchical political propaganda, marginalizing Catholics and Republicans. Between 1859 and 1870 Cavour organizes plebiscites in each province, to obtain popular consent on the new king. However, they only serve as a way to underline the popular attachment to the monarchy. Besides few people vote (Caron and Vernus 2015). Nevertheless, plebiscites have been a kind of political participation without citizenship, a way to learn voting before time (Brice 2012). A political system of patronage and elitist kind comes up, «trying to consolidate the central politico-administrative structures and peripheral community allegiances» (Badie 1985: 635). This strong bureaucracy system tends to distance itself from civil society and establishes a very limited parliamentary representation. The Italian central government should continue to impose and legitimate itself despite political, socio-economic and cultural resistances (Caron e Vernus 2015). Indeed, the arrival of officials and Piedmontese military is seen as a real aggression, meaning also huge taxes and free trade.

### *A political centralisation of a different kind of order: the Lega Nord*

Let's examine how peripheral nationalism, and more generally the history of the Italian State-building will be instrumentalised and reinvented by the *Lega*, aspiring to political centralisation of a different kind of order.

<sup>3</sup> Constitutional text inspired by the French charter of 1814.

From the 1980s, Umberto Bossi, head of the *Lega Lombarda*, has initiated a «cultural-political battle» against the «Romano-centric regime». Moreover, until 1996, he puts Brussels at the heart of his project. He defends the Lombard autonomy «within the framework of an ideal of federal unity of Europe [...] based on autonomy, federalism [...] and direct solidarity» (Bossi 1996: 9, 12). Also, the *Lega Lombarda* claims a right to self-determination in a defined territory and its own national identity. It seeks Lombard recognition of their cultural specificities «embedded in a puddle of undifferentiated Italianness» (Bossi 1996: 5). Therefore, they long for «the liberation of Lombardy [...] in a broader context of padanian autonomy» (Bossi 1996: 7). The Lombard movement failing to obtain the title region with special status<sup>4</sup>, the leader chooses the path of «ethno-federalism», which unites ethno-nationalist movements «from homogeneous geographical areas due to economic, social and ethnic affinities needs» (Bossi 1996: 21). Thus the *Lega Nord* is born. His political program seeks the «independence of a mythical *Padania*» separated from the Mezzogiorno, «a South decried as attended, corrupt and mafia» (Pouthier 2010: 583). In the padanian conception, psychological and geographical spaces merge and create a cultural, economic and political unification like the Nation State. This psycho-geographical space evokes the reminiscence of a northerner centralisation, and more precisely Lombard, seeking to impose other northern regions, yet diverse, a fictional padanian nation (Di Bonaventura 2015).

If Italy recognises the Romans as its ancestors, the *Lega* recognises the Celts as his ancestors, and if the pride of Italian culture originates in the Renaissance, padanian culture originates in the Middle Ages (Avanza 2003). Indeed, the *Lega* is inspired by the municipal tradition of these local powers in the North who were opposed to centralisation and claims a more localised autonomous community opposed to the ‘imposed’ national community. They then exacerbate the North-South differences: «The *Lega* members like to contrast the northern municipal tradition [...] to the southern feudalism» (Champeyrache 2011: 12). They do not hesitate to defend the small northern industry with protectionism. Also, they dispute the legitimacy of the *Risorgimento* (1848 to 1861). The unification is achieved in defiance of cultural and linguistic differences of the peoples of the peninsula. The *Lega* refers to some intellectuals who, like Cattaneo, advocated federalism (Avanza 2003). More generally, the *Lega* denounces State legitimacy deficit underlining the lateness

<sup>4</sup> «These border and island regions are marked by linguistic particularities, which, from the postwar period, had obtained broad autonomy as the cultural and linguistic level [...] as political and economic levels» (Avanza 2010: 126).

of the national centralisation process and the lack of popular support. According to Bossi (1996), Italy is neither a state nor a nation. The *Lega* is strategically trying to prove that «Italy has no reason to be» and that North-South separation «would only repair the mistakes of History» (Avanza 2003: 86). If the entrance to the government of the Bossi's *Lega* has mitigated their separatist speech (Champeyrache 2011), this is «certainly not because they have changed their mind about Italy, as a nonexistent Nation State» (Diamanti 1993: 132), but by electoral strategy and quest for power in a separatist view. This national strategy is now pursued by Salvini. In *Pontida*, Salvini says<sup>5</sup> he wants «another Italy» or «Italys» and he is there «to conquer», «to make a revolution» (Salvini 2015).

### *The nation*

In this second part, we detail how the nation and national identity are built to legitimate and create a national consciousness and a social cohesion, first in general, then in Italy, in order to highlight how the *Lega* reinvents traditions and appropriates former nationalist strategies.

Number of heterogeneous countries have followed the so called «French domination path» (Seiler 2014), a process of political unification, economic domination and cultural standardisation. To do so, the great figures of the State or charismatic leaders use a «nation language» (Lapeyronnie 2005: 297) abolishing hierarchical loyalties networks.

According to Elias, «the [national] integration implies self-awareness shared by most citizens, and not only by the elites» (Delmotte 2007: 91). The nation can thus be considered as an «imaginary and imagined political community» (Anderson 1983), a «symbolic creation», a «language erected in political myth» (Kertzer 1988, Lapeyronnie 2005). These are speeches that maintain its existence by redefining it perpetually. Nevertheless, the nation assumes a national identity that can be rooted in ancient elements that have produced specific habitus. Indeed, identities are based on beliefs, feelings, attitudes, which are usurped by National engineers or nation builders (Norman 2004). Thus, identities are to place in a building process of an imagined community border between a *us* and a *them*. Moreover, Elias shows that a well established group may use positions of power and a strong collective identity, to stigmatise the members of a group and maintain it in a certain exclusion

<sup>5</sup> See the speech of Salvini at the gathering of the *Lega* in Pontida on 21 June 2015 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4i7Q6NnZM8>>.

or marginalisation. If the identity of a community can be based on ethnic or regional criteria (language, dialect), it may not be any objective basis. Indeed, as a member of a culture, we can not avoid societal symbols, even if most are «historically new and largely invented: flags, images, ceremonies and music» (Hobsbawm 1983: 23). These give meaning to things and build our realities (the State, the nation). Thus, the real, the representation of reality and the struggles related to it, as well as social events in which mental images are manipulated, have to be taken into account (Bourdieu 1980).

In this universe of symbolic violence, the nationalist discourse is a «performative speech» (Bourdieu 1980: 66), which imposes a new and legitimate definition of the nation's borders. Categorising or just naming a thing constitutes *per se* a power. In fact, subverting the symbols sets a new vision/division of the social world. To this end, the performative speech can offer a range of performative strategies (Norman 2004), which can be historicised (Mink 2007). And these ones shape the national construction and identity by «reprioritising, sentimentalising, desentimentalising or reconfiguring, remoralising, nationalising» (Norman 2004: 92) as a process of «national engineering» (Norman 2004: 87). This kind of social engineering can be applied at state and sub-state levels. Different communities, identities and national projects are competing in the same territory. State nationalism is mainly used by the Liberals to keep the unity of a highly heterogeneous country that could fragment along regional, ethno-cultural or social lines. And if national identity links the members of a society, it also allows «the achievement of social justice and deliberative democracy» (Miller quoted by Norman 2004: 87).

### *The construction of the Italian nation*

In 1870, if the unification of the Kingdom of Italy is achieved, Italians still have to be made. Hereafter we detail how this nationalisation process takes place in Italy.

«Besides school and the army, monuments policy and civil celebrations, historical museums, music, theater and the rhetoric of celebration contribute to the nationalisation process» (Baioni 2012: 153). And at first the Piedmontese monarchy. The two kings Charles Albert et Victor Emmanuel II strengthen the State and the construction of national identity. Indeed, the monarchy between 1870 and 1914 creates a kind of continuity and a «symbolic unity» (Brice 2012: 86). First, Charles Albert brings Italy into political modernity giving the Italians a liberal constitution and a flag sealing the union between monarchy and nation. Then Victor Emmanuel II tries to develop a greater sense of belonging to the Italian State. To this end, he uses memorial symbols

and instrumentalises the Italian history. In the municipalities, a territorial marking reminds people of major events and the great figures of the Risorgimento. ‘Plaques’ calling to mind the plebiscites or referring to Republican Giuseppe Garibaldi adorn the walls of town halls. Also, pictures of Victor Emmanuel II, Cavour and Garibaldi, playing card for example, reflect the fictitious union between Democrats and Moderates. At his death in 1878, Victor Emmanuel II becomes the *risorgimentale* iconic reference as «*Re Galantuomo* or Father of the Fatherland» (Brice 2012: 93). A true national religion is dedicated to him: number of monuments to his memory, booklets of his actions, plaques and busts in his honour. The names of sovereign Victor Emmanuel II and his successors are used in order to name streets of Italian cities. All symbolic representations related to the Risorgimento is implemented for better national integration. This gives consistency and meaning to the constitutional sovereign as well as to the political regime and the Italian ‘nation’.

From a national cohesion perspective, the left in power since 1876 has wanted to overcome the dominant historical representation by integrating the democratic tradition. Indeed, the tricolor containing in its center the white and red cross of Savoy has introduced some symbolic ambiguity into the new Italy (Ridolfi 2014). The left invents the consensual tradition of the *Risorgimento*, mitigating conflicts between its actors. Iconographic representations of the meeting in Teano show the complicity between Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, Cavour and Mazzini. Moderates react to this *risorgimentale* reconfiguration and recover the Garibaldi tradition. «The rebel Garibaldi is diluted in the image of ‘disciplined revolutionary’, hero of the fatherland» (Baioni 2012: 154). Francesco Crispi intends to give some popular interpretation of the Risorgimento. So Moderates use the 1861-1870 plebiscites as flag bearers of the Nation State and the national identity. They refer to the Catholic tradition as well to symbolise the fatherland. Italian cities are remodeled as «the scene of a stage of the fatherland history» (Baioni 2012: 155).

Also, local/regional republican demonstrations show some antagonist identity, a divided memory. For instance public events commemorate the proclamation of the Roman Republic in 1849. Other symbols and colors depict alternative socio-political identities in contrast with the liberal monarchy. The ritual celebration of the 1st of May is a good example. Indeed, the Republicans advocate a social republic waving red flags adorned with Mazzinian ivies. The Socialists adopt the identity symbol of the *garofano rosso*, then the Catholics oppose them the *garofano bianco*<sup>6</sup> as a sign of love and peace. They claim a social Catholicism. They make the song ‘O bianco fiore’ of Don

<sup>6</sup> A carnation, coloured in red, the first, and in white, the second.

Dario Flori their anthem, especially to link the nation with the Catholic faith «against the image of the infidel and barbaric Turk» (Ridolfi 2014: 118) during the war in Libya. In the end, the varied symbolic and political struggles aim at appropriating the power, memory and national representation in a fragmented Italy.

### *A case of national engineering in contemporary age: The Lega Nord*

The *Lega* resumes these symbolic and ritualised nationalist practices to create an entire Celtic historical past. Based on historical referents ‘real’ or ‘manipulated’, they rebuild a ‘natural’ community rooted in the history of Italy.

Since the beginning, the *Lega* and then the *leghe* try to define a moveable border identity-alterity between those who belong to the community – the inland friends (the normal people) – and those who do not belong to the community – the outside enemies (the deviants). Whatever the geographical reference level, they defend a cultural community, which is ‘specific’, ‘diverse’ and ‘normal’. They refuse to be an ‘invaded’ community, threatened by both ‘foreign’ cultures (that of *forestieri* then of *invasori*)<sup>7</sup> and by cultural homogenization (made by the Italian central government and then by ‘Brussels’). To this end, they use invented traditions and found an ‘imagined’ community: the padanian nation. In most of the *Lega*’s speeches, Padanians are defined as Celtic. They have a padanian dialectal language and practice a ‘Calvinist Catholicism’ (Machiavelli 2001). The Celtic emblem of ‘the sun of the Alps’ adorns the padanian flag. Also, this Celtic drawing ornaments public buildings in the *Lega*’s municipalities. The *Lega* performs a territorial marking, ‘padanising’ the street names in those municipalities (Avanza 2010). Another example, on the logo of the *Lega* an armored knight symbolizes the victory at the Battle of Legnano in 1167, when the first Lombard League defeats the Emperor Barbarossa. The *Lega* also makes the ‘Va Pensiero’ of Verdi their own national anthem. In addition, the small northern subalpine industry becomes the ‘memorial’ of padanian positive values (work, entrepreneurship) and negative values (tax protest) (Biorcio 1999). These values are still strongly defended by the *Lega* (Salvini 2015).

The ritual gathering of *Pontida* allows the *Lega* to repeat annually its commitment to Northern Italy and the padanian nation. Indeed, this epic of *Lombardorum Societas* is taken over as a symbol by Bossi : «[we] are tired today as eight centuries ago, tired of being a land of invasions, invaded first by the Mezzogiorno and now by the Third World» (Dematteo 2001: 144). Today,

<sup>7</sup> The ‘foreigners’ meaning the Southerners and the ‘invaders’ meaning the immigrants.

Salvini calls for other Italian separatist regions. In *Pontida*, he insists on the need to «liberate *Padania*, *Salento*, Sardinia, Sicily and Europe» (Salvini 2015). Indeed, this European framework has not led to the autonomy of the northern regions. From 1996, Brussels is gradually becoming the ‘enemy’ of the *Lega*: «We will do our best to change Europe, the Soviet Union of criminals [...] who wants to kill the identities and diversities» (Salvini 2015). Even if the Salvini speeches refer less to padanian and Lombard traits, he must deal with these referents entrenched in the history of the *Lega*. The official name of the *Lega* ‘Lega Nord per l’Indipendenza della Padania’ is still on its official website. The name of Salvini has replaced the name of Bossi on the padanian logo. And the representation of the Lombard knight of the Battle of Legnano is still clearly visible in the demonstrations of the *Lega* as well as in the last gathering of *Pontida* (Di Bonaventura 2015).

### *The citizenship*

In this third part, we focus on how the advent of the modern State and the feeling of national belonging have created citizens. And that through social integration and exclusion mechanisms, from both the highest and lowest levels of society.

Modern States have sought to keep from citizens a certain loyalty. «[They] fashioned national histories, invented traditions without fear of [...] developing national origins more often imagined than real» (Magnetite 2011: 31). That way the citizen feels emotionally linked to the State, to a historical community and enjoy the solidarity among citizens.

As explained by Elias, the social integration process is actually achieved together with democratisation and parliamentary representation of social groups in the twentieth century who were previously excluded. The State is then considered «as a us and less as a group we were talking in the third person plural» (Elias 1991: 274). This subjective dimension can be coupled with a proactive and modernist dimension of integration. However, in order that social integration is not just an ideology of elites, it is necessary to combine these dimensions with a dimension of justice. The national discourse thus refers to the Tocquevillian notion of equality of conditions. By establishing a formal and civil equality, the nation underlines a certain shared belonging or national identity. After all, «justice require a unification of the nation, first civil, then political and finally social according to the theory of T.H. Marshall» (Lapeyronnie 2005: 300).

In medieval times, participation in public affairs are based on social status and rank on the one hand and on property on the other hand. Individuals

who do not meet these criteria were excluded from political participation. Reduced to 'minority status', they are placed under the protection of the most enlightened and wealthy for the common good. No direct right is granted. These privileges are removed thanks to the revolutionary ideals in France and the emergence of the modern State. The process of democratisation of Western European States has primarily focused on obtaining civil rights (the individual liberties); social rights (the right to welfare) and political rights (the right to vote).

These rights have reflected the representative and plebiscitary components of the Nation State, establishing direct and indirect links « between the central organs of the Nation State and each member of the community [which] is the specific meaning of national citizenship» (Bendix 2007: 106). Thanks to the revolutions of 1848 in France, representative democracy and universal suffrage have spread all over Europe.

Iris Marion Young criticizes this ideal of universal citizenship, which since the civic republican conception ultimately produces new exclusions. Thus, holding the status of citizens or not, many groups (workers, women, etc.) have long been excluded by privileged groups under the pretext of the common good. Today, some groups have still this feeling of 'second class citizens'. Indeed, that universal conception of citizenship leads to the reinforcement of privileged groups, whose privileges depend to some degree on «the continued oppression of the others» (Young 1994: 190). However, the issue of citizenship is certainly complex, because it is intertwined with other themes and multi-level social processes: the process of globalization, mass migrations, the crisis of the State, regional groups protests, EU construction and European citizenship, not to mention the rise of ethnic particularities as well as identity and 'normative differentiation' between EU and non-EU foreigners (Procacci 1998, Zolo 2000, Baglioni 2009). All these interdependent networks put the State into a deep crisis or crisis of the Marshallian paradigm. The design of the social-democratic citizenship therefore refers to a discriminating and restricted citizenship (Zolo 2000: 15).

Today, the citizen becomes universal (global, European and national). In this pluralistic and post-national society, national identity tends to be local and consists in local particularistic traits such as language, ethnicity, region. Based on this, some separatist groups claim an identity far from multicultural citizenship. They want to «increase the homogeneity of the civic group» focusing «on smaller assumed solidary homelands» (Magnette 2007: 34). And moving the national citizenship towards an identity vision has the effect of weakening the rights of social citizenship (Procacci 1998).

### *The emergence of the Italian citizenship*

The Kingdom of Italy was a liberal regime but with still authoritarian elements, a path, which has led to civic integration and social exclusion at the same time.

Based on the Piedmontese *Statuto* of 1848, the Civil Code of 1865 has led the basis of Italian citizenship. In Italy it is the belonging to the community that essentially determines citizenship through blood ties. To understand this long tradition of *ius sanguinis*, it is necessary to date back to the Piedmontese monarchy's desire to create a community and a sense of national identity (Girona 2014). Italy has achieved its territorial and military unification in 1870, but a large part of the population is still on the margin of politicisation: the peasantry. They are under the influence of counter-powers such as the Church, the landowners and the mafia. A «rise of peripheral awareness» (Seiler 2014: 47) is spreading within the countryside. Pécout (2001) gives the example of the Tuscan royalist movement that protests against the loss of autonomy of Tuscany and the 'offering' of the Tuscan countryside to Piedmont. Fearing an attachment from the peasants to the old order, a propaganda unit is activated by elites (Fogacci 2006). But in the late nineteenth century, Socialists and Catholic parties use those peripheral protests for their own interests. The peasant movement has led to many insurrections between 1898 and 1920. But during the First World War, many groups are still socially excluded.

In Italy, voting has long been the prerogative of the elite only. Universal male suffrage is established in 1912. Uneducated people get the right to vote in 1919 and women in 1945. Moreover, the Casati law of 1859 establishing the obligation to follow the elementary school is far from being effective. In 1860, municipalities impose the teaching of national unification measures (i.g. the new monetary system) and organize 'educational conferences' on popular teaching, to disseminate the ideals of the Risorgimento. But these measures basically target boys and Italy still has 75% of illiterates in 1870, 85% in the South (Pécout 2001, Fogacci 2006, Caron and Vernus 2015).

However, in a reverse process, «it is also about how the peasants enter politics» (Fogacci 2006: 97). Indeed, there is an interdependence between the top and the bottom. «A 'descent' from the top cannot be considered successful without local host structures» (Pécout 2001: 86). It is through socialisation – that is to say the commemorations, rituals or public festivals, village folklore, public debates – that masses are politicised, and therefore socially integrated. For instance, in Tuscany public festivals celebrate the plebiscite anniversary of the Tuscan attachment to the State or the disappearance of the great heroes of the Risorgimento, such as Cavour. In public debates on popular education, many rural teachers get involved. Also, the reorganisation

of the National Guard and the public Sunday parades embodies «the spirit of patriotic engagement and civic volunteering» (Pécout 2001: 98). Moreover, these integration mechanisms and public speeches lead to the rural awareness of their Italian civic condition and thus of their new rights.

Notwithstanding, politicisation, social integration and the media have gradually resulted in a diffusion of stereotypes of inferiority and otherness. Naturalist registers are used to justify patriarchal paternalism and misogyny such as the minority status of women. In fact, women are considered as 'incapable' and therefore subject to marital authority. The image of the dominated as the 'good farmer' or 'good worker', illiterate and inferior by nature, keeps them under the control of the dominant and hard work (Nany 2010). «Legitimizing colonies in black Africa through the metaphor of blood and heroic sacrifice, Italy also could aspire to join the ranks of European countries, which bear the superior civilisation of the white race» (Ridolfi 2014: 136) These differentiating discourse equally affect workers, women or colonized, and all figures of otherness defining the Italian nation over time, such as gypsies and the southern, immigrants and foreign citizens. For example, in the post-Risorgimento period, many xenophobic stereotypes target both the Slavic minorities Aosta Valley and the inhabitants of the Mezzogiorno, «stigmatized as a model of non-Italianness» (Nani 2010: 108).

Thus the unswerving *ius sanguinis* is a *novecento* that lasts indefinitely. Its key component remains its territorial element, which defines the cultural and political spaces (Gironda 2014). The 2002 Italian law on immigration is one of the hardest in Europe<sup>8</sup>. Some articles on illegal immigration «have been invalidated [...] by the Constitutional Court» (Avanza 2008: 157-158) for breach of fundamental rights. The law has since undergone various changes but has remained substantially the same. Only the criteria to get Italian citizenship for EU citizens have been lightened.

### *The Lega Nord conception of citizenship*

The *Lega's* conception of citizenship is above all cultural, even if it is based on democratic and socio-economic aspects. They ideally advocate a peripheral

<sup>8</sup> «This latest [from the initiative of the *Lega* and *Alleanza Nazionale*] provides that the police can take fingerprints of all non-EU immigrants (even if they are provided with a residence card); limits family reunification; favors candidates of Italian origin (and therefore the logic of blood); facilitates expulsions and makes obtaining a residence card as the political refugee status more difficult» (Avanza 2008: 157).

citizenship within the borders of the ‘Nothern State’ and aspires to a ‘nothern welfare’<sup>9</sup>.

The *Lega* has been linked to a moving and defensive historic community, «a compact, non-confrontational, anticlassist unit, which introduces itself as a homogeneous and modern *Gemeinschaft*» (Bellè 2014: 32). The *Lega* wants «a modern country» (Salvini 2015) and claims to be «the imbodiment of the new» (Bellè 2014:32). But their conception of citizenship is rather paternalistic and hetero-patriarchal, based on their own idea of justice. This civic pattern is far from universal strictly speaking, but one might say ‘universally particularist’. As in medieval times, they use the common good criterion to remove somehow certain social categories of their rights. Within the organisation of the *Lega*, women are relegated to the private sphere, organisational and housework, while men are at the heart of the public sphere and participate in decision-making and communication processes (Bellè 2015). Considering them as a sexual threat for the community, men are responsible for them. According to the *Lega* homosexuality is a deviance, although Salvini (2015) puts his point of view into perspective by declaring: «Let everyone live his affection [...] as he wants, but marriage is between a man and a wife; and children are adopted by a mom and a dad». The *Lega* stands by the working class, the small (northern) industry of the peninsula. They denounce the democratic deficit of Europe, criticise the representative bodies and claim a direct, plebiscitary democracy (Biorcio 2012, Di Bonaventura 2015). They want to «put people at the centre of the European construction»<sup>10</sup> in order not to turn Europe into a «medieval empire». However, they defend an alternative to today’s Europe, «a Europe of the peoples or of the (macro) regions». In terms of identity, they subordinate European identity to local identity. However, they are opposed to globalism as they consider it as a source of homogenization of cultures. In this vision of Europe, the individual is «alone», «no longer citizen», just a «number».

Also, the *Lega* has a rather exclusive conception of citizenship. They exclude alternately the enemies of the (ethno-) nation and assign them the status of ‘second class citizens’. According to the themes and contexts, they move the boundaries of citizenship and carry out a normative differentiation. As noted by Biorcio (2012: 10), together with the saying «we command at home» or «we are masters at home», they state rights differences between the *padroni di casa* and the «guests more or less wanted». «They

<sup>9</sup> This concept means granting socio-economic benefits primarily to northerners through federalism (intermediate stage) or exclusively via separatism (final stage) (Champeyrache 2011).

<sup>10</sup> All subsequent quotes in this sub-section, translated by the author, have been taken from the 2014 European election manifesto of the *Lega*.

legitimate any form of resistance to multi-ethnic society» (Biorcio 2012: 10) and favour the community (local, regional, padanian, national) as access to employment, social services and public resources are concerned. This favouritism as opposed to the way they consider the southern, EU and non-EU immigrants, and EU citizens as Bulgarian or Romanian. The *Lega* is angry with Europe who «gave us thousands of Bulgarian and Romanian community members, pending the integration of Turks and Albanians» (*La Padania* 2014: 1). Previously the *Lega* used ethnic discourses and called Muslims barbarians or uncivilized, referring to the Crusades and culinary dishes (Machiavelli 2001, Champeyrache 2011). They also appealed to an anthropologist for the selection of candidates during the election of *Miss Padania*. Today, if the social events and the website of the *Lega* clearly displays slogans like *stop all'invasione*, they justify hostility towards foreigners using socio-political arguments such as the respect for cultural differences, the support for development policies, the unemployment and lack of financial means to guarantee them decent living conditions (*La Padania* 2014). In *Pontida* in 2015, Salvini quoting Monsignor Maggiolini says: «It is one thing to accept the freedom of religion, it is quite another to accept the freedom of invasion». They are rather in favour of development cooperation policies. Bossi slogan was «Let's help them home» (Avanza 2008: 157), that of Salvini (2015) now is «Africa must grow in Africa». Accordingly, «even rights are localised and are therefore not granted based on citizenship, but according to belonging to the community» (Bellè 2015: 90).

### Conclusion

The *Lega's* conception of citizenship is part of a larger ethno-nationalist conception, that can be described as 'universally particularistic'. Indeed, they aspire to make a particularistic minority group a northern or padanian homogeneous majority group. To that aim, they have anchored their speeches in the construction of the State, nation and citizenship in Italy. However, the *Lega* has deconstructed these processes and has ideologically reshaped them according to its ambitions and aspirations. The *Lega* has reinvented traditions and has shown the same social engineering as the former nationalist leaders using historicizing and performative strategies. In that way, they propose and legitimate a new nation-building project based on historical elements they challenge, sometimes real, sometimes not, but altogether manipulated or of another time. In this context, they challenge the established Italian history, that is to say the French conception of the State or the 'domination path', the civic conception of the nation, the national universalist citizenship, in short all

the achievements of the modern Age. But through their ideological national project based on a certain particularism and self-determination, they try to reverse the nation-building process, reproducing the stigma. In fact, further to its conception, the *Lega* first tend to homogenise socially, culturally and economically the Northerners, creating a fictive padanian nation in order to foster a sense of territorial belonging. Then referring to it, they trace and retrace the subjective boundaries of otherness, stigmatizing and excluding number of groups following their interests, they hold or not formal citizenship. They also define the 'objective' territorial and economic boundaries, which gather the rich and fictitiously uniform Northerners. And all this ethno-nationalist process aiming at one day leading Northern Italy or *Padania* in the heart of a Europe of the peoples or of the macro-regions.

In the end, they assert a cultural nation, a 'universally particularistic' and homogenising citizenship, which is ultimately illiberal and exclusive. Although they claim to be the embodiment of the new and aspire to a modern country, they have a medieval conception of citizenship, a paternalistic and hetero-patriarcal one. In addition, fostering self-determination, they strategically refer to the medieval and municipal tradition to highlight the flourishing and independent period experienced by northern city-States. Also, they use a sort of warrior tone and lexicon in order to defend their conceptions. The *Lega* is there 'to conquer', 'to make revolution' and to exclude the foreigners from the 'padanian fatherland', that is to say putting out the non-community people or *fuoriusciti*. The armoured Lombard knight is also visible at all public and political events organized by the *Lega* as a reminder.

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