

**Strangers and frontiers: the shared citizenship in a border  
region of the Southern Europe**  
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**Abstract:** Reading the past and recent history of the Friuli Venezia Giulia border area leads us to consider this regional community as endemically and anthropologically peculiar. This in different ways: in the sense of being a community that has experienced the dramatic consequences of living at the border, which here has historically coincided with the bulwark of the West opposed to the collectivist system, opening the syndrome of the boundaries. Indeed, to have experienced in the past and currently to test out in its existential biography the richness and the complexity of different cultural references and communitarian destinies, configuring a context of multiple belongings. Thus, the border becomes bridge. The presence of historic, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities socializes to a context characterized by a dynamic relationship between the belonging and the loyalty. The regional community gives shape to an original language, which is expressed like the ability to retain the idea of heterogeneity “as a universal condition”, and the idea of particularity as an “original multiplicity of the universal world”. Further to these experiences, more recently, the region is experiencing additional intense migration flows from various national and ethnical origins. Familiarity with the policies for the protection of minorities evidenced, in this way, the historical background of performing with practices, both at regional and municipal level, viable for supporting the integration of immigrants. The benefits of immigration tend to compensate the involved problems; the collective availability to the “give and take” in view of a general economic and social progress becomes the commitment of the entire regional community.

**Keywords:** borders, identity diversity and belonging, institutional dialogue, integration in the social context, migration spaces

**Introduction**

Our work recalls the potential of an experiential way of the “living together” in a border region inserted in an area of historical contact between the Latin, Germanic and

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Slavic peoples. Here *living together* means to combine ‘unity and multiplicity’ by informing to the cultural heterogenic configuration and *plurality of voices*.

The purpose of examining the potential of the region in defining its way of *living together* has become convincing in particular from the time when the phenomenon of migration assumed a growing relevance. This aspect, recently, is rising more and more disruptive requests towards Europe, concerning economic, political and cultural aspects, to whom offset the *new national self-interests*; however, by betraying the principle that guided the Founding Fathers in the formulation of the European integrational project.

In the border region, individuals were acquiring knowledge, social skills, and value to conform to role and norms essential for integration into a “cultural plural unity”. They were developing the interaction by becoming sensitive to the implicit and explicit rules of behaviour in a mixture of contacts, developing over time the capacity to understand significance of the respect of “the other”, which requires effort and sacrifice, but paying-off over time as they allow access to “a greater freedom” (usurping Bruckner vocabulary).

*Greater freedom* means to reinterpret and invest in new potential the references of the “mixture”, going beyond the universalistic supreme category, in the meaning of the people “without borders”, ideally placed above the specific forms of relationship that intertwine each individual to others. The utopian universalism tracks in fact the risk of reducing any distance to a sort of *sentimental idealism of the belonging to humanity* (usurping an Eliasian vocabulary). Socialisation in a plural cultural setting means, in contrary, for individuals and actors the perspective “to learn” the cultural and ethnic borders by searching equilibrium in the conflicts between conscience and loyalty, which are both conflicts of personal and collective identity.

Individuals and groups with different reference values and social norms, reckon that their mutual difference is important, as underlined by Colombo (2002)<sup>2</sup>. Undoubtedly, it seems easier to build ties based on particular constraints. Nevertheless, referring to a strong concept of special relationship, also means reducing the negative potentials of the

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<sup>2</sup> Colombo’s words summarizes the multicultural scenario, in which different cultures inhabit the same social space but the bridge among them is not assured (2002, 29).

*plurality of voices*, being the origin of mechanisms susceptible to inhibit the evolution of a civic community. Individuals are different from each other (according to their religious beliefs, to their traditions, to their conditions of existence ....); but in terms of the abstract definition of the concept of living together, individuals become subjects in a constructive and open relation.

To observe the identification in a context of a border region with the presence of autochthonous minorities, religious communities and different linguistic minorities, it means to place the “language of borders” in a sort of *familiarity among strangers*. There could be the need to switch from the sentimental idealism of the belonging to humanity, lived mostly as intellectual experience, and going to a conceptual frame, being able, in that way, to reinterpret and give new opportunities to the references of a fair and responsible collective construction, linked to the concept of loyal relationship. That is, by developing ability to create a “we-feeling” centered on the recognition of an history and common regional path based on the value of the individual freedoms, on the principle of equality and mutual trust, respect and, not least, on the cooperative spirit.

### **1 The ‘living together’**

Our reasoning becomes important when we consider the deep changes of the processes related to the explosive strength of the symbolic identities: the ascriptive elements seem to impose on the acquisitive ones, the conflictual and disaggregating elements on those dialogic and aggregating ones.

The identity is not an undifferentiated unity, having social and relational roots; in this sense, it calls attention to complex paths. It is composed by some elements, as the permanence and continuity over time, the unity and unicity (delimitation) and the relationship between subjects that allows them to recognize each other, configuring the intersubjective recognition. In this sense, it seems useful to consider the identity not as an undifferentiated unity, but rather through the functions, which consent individuals and groups to define themselves and realise their self-understanding in term of affinity and affiliation, of commonality, connection and cohesion, and of peculiar stories (see, for example, Melucci 2000; Sciolla 2010).

On the one hand, individual identity implies in fact and entails differences (compared to others), highlighting the subjective aspects of the distinction and identification. We can contemplate the attitude of being part of a community as being perceived *objectively* its own part (distinction), and the disposition of being member of the community based on the *subjective will* to be part of it (equality). Distinction and equality give to the self-understandings a procedural nature: individuals organise and construct boundaries of the community where they belong; they understand distinctive markers and concepts within a social context, recognizing them in a way that “rationally” orders and organizes them through the social frame. On the other hand, societal integration implies “equality” with others, through which a social actor assumes the objective belonging to a community, recognizing all dimensions that transcend the single individual.

Observing neighbouring regions, the “new democracies” arisen from the ashes of communism have transformed the ethno-nationalism from a symbol of liberation of the totalitarianism, to an instrument of democracy (ethnic democracy or ethno-democracy), in a menacing and exclusive radical tool. Therefore, the myth, which however is not new, of “ethnically pure” nations seems to have pervaded the search for the identification, relying specifically on the eradication of any dialectic as the art of dialogue. From the brotherhood to the hate and to resentment: the pursuit of difference not always succeeds regardless of the mechanisms of differentiation. In this progressive conceptual dialectic and contradictory processes (differentiation versus integration) the citizenship - understood here in its broadest sense - has developed more blurred contours (Bergnach, Pocecco 1998).

Reflecting on the theme of “living together” it means to establish the moral values that shall be based on the collective life, and to agree with which institutions to implement it, how to reach a collective solidarity making in that way the foundation of the norms. It means, again, to give due importance to the socio-political determinants that are the origin and basis of the integration of the society, and of individuals in the society. It means to analyse the constraints and obligations of the collective life, exploring and interpreting the differences in the processes of transformation of the relationship between the individual and the society; but without opposing the concept of multiculturalism,

understood as a model for the recognition of the peculiar collective identities, to that of adaptation.

Objectives made possible through the sharing of certain fundamental values, and the commitment to defend the key aspects related to individual freedoms (of speech, of property, of faith ....) were based on the principle of equality and mutual respect. In that way it was possible to favour the evolution of the comparison according to forms of behaviour recognized as binding, allowing to function in an environment of predictability of the behaviour and producing, consequently, mutual trust, consideration and, not least, cooperative spirit.

Today the redefinition and renegotiation of the relationship in a context of increasing plurality of values and value models it risks to hamper the development of responsible membership in a community, forcing to re-process some basic concepts of the *living together*.

This will imply the same clarification of the concept of integration, which does not necessarily means levelling (equalization), and diversification nor necessarily separatism. In fact, it seems required, at this stage, to strip the concepts from their instrumental use and interpretation, which often the research has done and is still doing, by absorbing them from the political practice, in order to relocate them in an environment emotionally detached (Schnapper 2007).

Perhaps the word integration *is going to confuse*, according to Mendras's vocabulary. Without making perspective errors, we are forced to observe it as designing a *game of compensated tensions*. Then the unit will look as a system of overlapping differences and intertwined networks, appearing as a social habit, precisely, marked by interlacing relations, and overlapping experiences that distinguish the future of a collectivity.

## **2 The horizon of the regional plot**

As it emerged from the analysis, Friuli Venezia Giulia region took over an action line conformed to the civic virtues of respect and openness; while on transnational level, has addressed its efforts to the collaboration and to the (trans-border) cooperation guided by

the “international vocation”. That is, adopting the attitude characterized by the will of pursuing / enhancing reciprocal respect and trust processes.

The peculiar fertility that characterised the sociological research in this part of the North East is coincided with the particular importance and the paradoxical potentiality of a region situated in the near past along the “most open border in Europe”. The analytical interest that has characterized the sociological research on issues related to the interactions between and among individuals and communities, to the transnational cooperation, to the cultural and political dialogue it has corresponded with the deepening the “plural unity” of the regional community. The sociological valence of a laboratory-region becomes clear to the extent that it would be interpreted as a product and / or matrix of a process of acceptance of the “cultural mixing” that characterizes the social space. This in the sense of being a community that has experienced the dramatic consequences of living at the border, which here has historically coincided with the bulwark of the West opposed to the collectivist system. This condition corresponds, one might say, to the *syndrome of the boundaries*. Indeed, to have experienced in the past and currently to test out in its existential biography the richness and the complexity of different cultural references and communitarian destinies, configuring a context of multiple belongings. In this way, the *border becomes bridge*.

The road to integration occurs (occurred) on the basis of an original *familiarity among strangers*, it conformed to the set of provisions that helps to qualify the collective experience, source of the identity of individuals who self-perceived in terms of the “border community”. This habitus could be understood as a structure of mind. It unfolded in a common spatial framework and structured around collective mythologies and beliefs, values, norms, cultural signs, traditions, lifestyles, social habits, giving a meaning to the collective life through an original “we-feeling”. That is, an image of solidarity that has enabled the integration of individuals in the regional community and society.

By using the research material collected along different studies and by correlating the different researches, we tried to set the main lines and factors that have helped to shape the characteristic features of the regional society and community:

- Transnational integration

- Autochthonous minorities
- Fall of the Wall
- Europe, European-ness
- Immigrant minorities.

*Transnational integration.* The peculiarity of being a region situated on the Eastern border, it has supported the curiosity for investigate the meaning and role of an area that risked to become marginal, but, in contrary, that was able to become a nodal region in the conception of international life (Strassoldo 1973; Strassoldo, Delli Zotti 1982).

Borders' *dialogue*, being a relation *between* parties, has produced *highs and lows*, linked with the more general political and economic trends and to the direction that such trends may lead, according, of course, to relations of interdependence. Effort is needed for understanding the complexity of reality, focusing on different perspectives when constructing the delicate equilibrium between the acknowledgement and respect of national realities and the affirmation of common roots; in sense that each of the parties depends upon the other. There we might see a dual tension, moral and political: on the one hand, to transcend misunderstandings and resentments, but also the suspicion that the historical events have helped to develop, in order to confirm and consolidate the style marked by the culture of dialogue and coexistence, as well as the values of the European civilization, such as freedom and rights of the citizen. To encourage, on the other hand, the evolution of political, cultural, economic and trade cooperation with neighbouring countries, ensuring the social and economic development of the border region. This enabled to re-evaluate the constructive exchange between different national systems configuring a context where the *border becomes bridge*.

The experience of cooperation in the Alpe Adria context (Delli Zotti, De Marchi 1985) whose political aim was essentially to create the regional integration with Eastern Europe, it has anticipated with far-sightedness the inclusion in the European integration process of a macro-regional perspective, in the first place (Zago 2000); indeed also global perspective in the new regional and global settings. Moreover, this helped, with a certain optimism, to grow in the perspective of "local" and in the meantime of international weight.

The common planning among conterminous regions situated in neighbouring countries, although primarily aimed at achieving an economic result, has produced some effects not only to the areas of labour, of the technological know-how and organization, and the access to the information networks, etc., but also to the process of changing the attitudes and social habitus of the people, in term of a set of provisions that contributes to characterize the joint experience, source of the identity of individuals who self-perceive as “people border”. The individual’s ability to overcome language and cultural barriers proved to build support to their ability in political planning based on the will to overcome the organizational barriers. The border is charged by plenty of positive meanings (contacts, living together) rather than negative meanings (fractures, separation). This helped to facilitate the evolution of the economic and cultural relations and, in the scientific area, the formulation of hypotheses for integrated cross-border systems. A kind of strategic potentiality complied with the tradition of the dialectics as the art of dialogue.

*Autochthonous minorities.* In the run of time, the issue of ethnic minorities has acquired more and more relevance, pointing out the role played by the ethnic groups. This meaning becomes tangible with the publication of a series of works dealing with the issue of the *autochthonous* minorities in the region. The findings emerged in the major investigations focused on the issue of the ethnic relations and linguistic behavior of the neo-localism in the Friuli Venezia Giulia, the scholars discovered the vitality of the various ethno-cultural communities that constitute the rich and varied ethnic geography of the region. The diversified presence of linguistic and cultural groups, newer triggered radical conflicts as instead happened in other parts in Western Europe. It seems, somehow, that the manifestations of particularistic claims never prevailed over the universalistic visions; confirming the ability to bring together the universality of values with the uniqueness of own culture.

From the results of the survey of Boileau and Sussi (1981), for example, it emerged that the ethnic prejudice is not such relevant to compromise the possibility of confrontation, of acceptance of the *out-group*. Indeed that the stereotype does not prevent the ability to develop critical reading of the own group, locating negative characters next to positive ones; also that the interethnic attitudes are not characterized by closure and

strong distinctive will. Although from a survey on teachers of the Italian schools with Slovene language it emerged, as a further indicator of this opening to the relationship, high availability of this social group to create opportunities for cooperation, for joint activities with Italian schools (Bergnach, De Marchi 1989). Overall, the contributions, which start from empirical research on ethnic communities, highlight the positive value of an experience based on tolerance and coexistence between peoples. We could perceive this positive valence also in some studies, conducted by the sociologist Sussi, on the Slovene minority (1983, 1996, 2002).

The “mutual mistrust” never exceeded the threshold of the civic virtues of respect, as well as, of the cultural curiosity, in its meaning of aspiration to broaden own cultural boundaries and ability to overcome any position intended to magnify its own culture. In this cultural style we might see the rise of the cultural heritage of European civilisation synthetized by the idea of *bringing to the unity and harmony a multiplicity of conflicting data*, using Gadamer’s words (1991).

*Fall of the Wall.* The definition of the region as a source of useful guidelines for a co-existence policy in other parts of the world has become compelling at time of the Fall of Berlin Wall, when the prospect of combining unity and diversity seemed to move away because of the aggressive force based on the exclusivist principle. The borders in Europe were subjected to changes, and this event influenced the integration processes. Some old nations cleaved, and in their place new states born. Much of what happened was due to the action of the ethnic groups. New nationalisms show up; perhaps a necessary step for countries that, during the communist regime, have removed the ethno-national problem, and have found themselves on the road to a new re-composition, not forced anymore by manipulative ideologies. With the Fall of the Wall, Europe has found itself on the ominous path of ambiguity, of contradictions and lacerations that, up to now, have distinguished its history (Bergnach, Delli Zotti, 1994).

“The evils of ethnic politics have strong reasons and weak remedies”, writes Offe (1991, 114). The solution, even partial, of the problem of cultural hostility and of ethnicization of politics is sought (also) in a (re) definition of the border and in the ideal *trait d’union of European-ness*. In this way it takes sense to rely essentially to *Europe*,

which was able always to overcome the historical lacerations, knowing how to apply the ideal of democracy. And that, by observing the pro-European theme, and by going beyond the established clichés un-necessarily reassuring and comforting. A veritable showcase of “hopes” a new synthesis of possible interchanges, with the meaning “to stand behind the closed perspective”, but also the *networks for the new millennium*, with the practices of cooperation.

In this context, the *European-ness* is strengthened to the direction of a greater significance through the cultural and social essence, which can be summarized in the ability to “don’t confine identities”, in dissolving particularisms and entering into relationships with others. Consequently, one could argue that the Europeanisation is an historical, cultural and social process, in the sense that it encloses all of the ways to achieve harmony, a “common understanding” on the subject of economic, social and political human progress. It is not only a technical use of the word and of all related implications (i.e.: Europe as cooperation, as regional experimentation, as economic planning, as re-organization and adaptation to the *acquis communautaire*, etc.), but rather a “re-visitation” of an historical-social way, which hinges on the ability to check progressively the meaning of the values and symbols in the open perspective, developing spaces of new opportunities (Bergnach 2012).

The significant presence of *immigrants’ communities*, which flank the historical ethno-cultural and linguistic communities in Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, strengthens research interest towards the birth of the *immigrants’ minorities* (Bergnach, Sussi 1993). The last three decades of foreign immigration have made a tangible presence, before this phenomenon was a rarity. If in the 1981 year, people without Italian citizenship were just five thousand, thirty years after, their consistency is, in fact, twenty times higher<sup>3</sup>. Beyond the physiological attraction exerted by the four capital cities (Trieste, Udine, Gorizia and Pordenone), here the settlement of foreign nationals is characterized by a

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<sup>3</sup> With annual inputs of several thousand units, the weight of immigrants in the total population rose from 1.8% twenty years ago to the current 8.8%; a figure albeit higher than the national average (8.1%).

relatively regular distribution on the territory<sup>4</sup>, and even where foreigners are present in greater number we can hardly speak of “hyper-ghettos”<sup>5</sup>. In municipalities with a more substantial foreign presence, the percentage of immigrants rarely reaches levels well above the regional average. Indeed there would be exceptions, at least according to the symptoms that accompanied this development<sup>6</sup>.

However, the vitality of the migrants’ religious feelings and the importance of the faith sharing in their social life has not been accompanied by the occurrence typically consequent of immigration processes, as the gathering of ethnic minorities in the frame of the inner cities, and the formation of “ghettos” or “enclaves” or the so called “paradigm of the *banlieues*”. This is one of the more acute problems in the Old continent (Orioles 2013, 2015). A process that recurs instead today in the European metropolis, where “hyper-ghettos” are growing by a number of interrelated issues such as urban decay, social unrest, chronic unemployment, high rates of deviance and of social tensions. A problem that paraphrasing a sentence of the French Premier Manuel Valls, expressed after Charlie Hebdo attack, could be summarized as ‘the parable of the two Europe’, which are more and more distant and hostile, one to each other.

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<sup>4</sup> In the mentioned four cities, where about a third of the regional population lives, the foreigners account for around 40% of their total (the remaining 60% is spread over the smaller 214 municipalities, including those located in the periphery (mountain and foothills areas).

<sup>5</sup> All data on migration and strangers in Friuli Venezia Giulia region we are using here and in the following of our work are extracted from the main reports available in Italy which are, for the region, Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia (2013), and, for the national data, Fondazione Ismu (2014), and Caritas (2015).

<sup>6</sup> The neighbourhood of the railway station of Udine is one example. Here foreign residents now account for over a third of the total, with peaks up to 50% in certain areas. It should be emphasized, however, that this area has taken shape in a space far from overpopulated, with a total number of residents amounting to 2,400 units, of which 879 foreigners. This does not prevented the emergence of social tensions well illustrated from “Kasbah of Udine”, the name utilized to identify this area in order to oppose it, from the *urbanism*, like the style, way of life, forms of individual and social interaction generated from acting in urban life, or relationships that characterize, in fact, the citizen, legally organized according to the principles that regulate the activity of social groups living in the physical urban space. It seem essentially evident to appear the settlement dynamics of invasion and succession dynamics, taking from the School of Chicago; they would explain the territorial-space mobility based on conflict and competition for the acquisition of resources and physical space. The new group (the ‘immigrants’), although facing some resistance and hostility (competition for space), is setting up in-front of the station, showing, if we follow the Simmel’s conceptual categories, the fixation (stable reference points in the area), movement (moving from area one point to another), border (social relations within a frame) and proximity-distance (related to the relationship of social proximity-distance). However, the expression “Kasbah of Udine” seems to reveal a distortion of reality. Far from being characterized as a North African enclave, in this area live foreigners of different origins, and the Arab and Muslim communities are far from being dominant. The mosaic has in fact another notable feature: a relatively low degree of cultural otherness, being foreign residents in the region shares with the native European roots.

In the plot of the ‘multi-ethnicity’ of Friuli-Venezia Giulia region is possible therefore to recognise distinctively European nationals that are accompanied by a number, most often very low, of other not European groups.

The figure here bellow summarises the characteristic features of the regional society and community concerning our reasoning about the political-historical and cultural heritage. This process is set up as one of the strongest elements of unity, revolving many of the resolutions of the process defining the model of citizenship; according to this experience it would be perhaps possible to make the leverage in terms of strategic solution of the complex articulation of mentioned problems, in a time when it seems that the dialectics of conflict is forcefully growing, contrasting with the emergence of shared values and common interests.

<p><b>A DEMANDING EQUILIBRIUM</b></p>	<p><b>Transnational Integration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transnational exchanges as capacity to construct <i>spaces of dignity</i></li> <li>- The art of dialogue</li> <li>- Interlinking of movements, tensions, relations and interactions among the various border's societies</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Autochthonous Minorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heterogeneity in searching the balance of political and social equilibrium</li> <li>- Opening relationships, interpreting the culture made up of mixtures, cross-fertilisations, likenesses and differences</li> <li>- Equality for construction of the public space</li> <li>- Confrontation with the other through the experiences of everyday life</li> <li>- Moral universalism as a collective willingness of a general advance of civilization</li> </ul>
<p><b>Friuli Venezia Giulia region: the “Open Border of Europe”</b></p>	<p><b>The Fall of the Wall</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New nationalisms, ethnically ‘pure’ nations, ethno-democracy</li> <li>- The affirmation of differences, the end of <i>dialogue</i></li> <li>- Re-definition of the borders</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Europe, European-ness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overcoming the borders, remembering to be European</li> <li>- Opportunity to move beyond confrontation with the other</li> <li>- Civilisation in the plural</li> <li>- Human dignity, highlighting the resilience of the cultural but mostly social heritage</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Immigrants minorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Border and immigration processes</li> <li>- The mosaic of foreign peoples: foreign residents shares with the native European roots</li> <li>- New emergencies without compromising with democratic normativity</li> <li>- Religion, one of the linchpins of the cultural diversity</li> </ul>

### **3. Religion, one of the linchpins of the cultural diversity**

The religion can be considered one of the pillars of the cultural distinction; such a liaison could be represented by the juridical status of citizens, especially with regard to those, starting from the second generation, which are oriented to reconcile and to definitively take root in our national and European territorial space. We are questioning about what could strengthen the feeling of being part of an “artificial” community, favouring the evolution of the (collective) consciousness centred on fairness and collective civic solidarity (cohabitation). These two issues contain problems and phenomena that represent the core of sociological researches on migrations and are, in fact, the background of the path of studies started at Udine University.

Rather than to find exhaustive answers to these questions, up to now, our effort has been addressed to obtain some useful indications concerning aspects described in the following steps. The only definite evidence is the presence, from already long-time of many immigrant communities, as we have discussed previously. A feature of the complex mosaic of the aspects related to migrations in this region is the high number of different citizenships (153) represented in the statistics<sup>7</sup>. Actually, we can observe significant communities, starting from the Rumanians (22,618 people), itself constituting more than 20% of the total amount of migrants, and the Albanian ones (12,470 people and the 11.6%). This mosaic shows another noteworthy feature: a relatively moderate rate of cultural otherness. Seventy percent of the foreigners living in the region share their European roots with the natives. Eight out of the fifteen largest communities are Europeans, meaning the European Union, i.e. members or possibly future members of EU (besides from Romania and Albania, there are individuals from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Poland). But, as far as, the other cases are concerned, they are groups that seldom exceed one thousand people. These are people coming from the former Soviet Union (Moldova, Ukraine), Asian countries (Bangladesh, China and India) and African countries (Morocco and Ghana).

The multi-ethnicity of foreigner’s residents in Friuli Venezia Giulia is therefore characterised by a definite European majority put beside manifold minorities of other

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<sup>7</sup> As we noted previously, data on migration and strangers in Friuli Venezia Giulia region we are using here are extracted from the main reports available in Italy.

national and ethnic groups. Such a frame, leads to further questions and aspects: like how to assign an “aggregating value” to the groups of migrants, or how to explain their role, which is often ambivalent, as both carrier of peculiarities and universal values (the culture of tolerance, of society). Moreover, what kind of society results from such an increasing number of its members, and also to what extent is such a limited cultural difference between natives and new minorities an element able to make coexistence easier. So, which will be the destiny of the immigrant’s minorities, when the reduced numerical presence could impede the survival of differences in the long-term. Our questions are also of a more general viewpoint considering whether the processes of assimilation start and lead to a progressive uniformity or, instead, and above all in case of bigger groups, will stand united front emerging and clinging to their own diversity; and, finally, on what are based those fronts.

Aiming at answering those questions, we decided to give emphasis on a growing line of studies focused on a particular cultural sphere: the religion. The research we carried out in the year 2010<sup>8</sup> documented the appearance in Friuli-Venezia Giulia of an expected phenomenon: the creation of some spaces devoted to worship and the gathering of believers of religions that once did not exist in the region, what American researchers, borrowing Warner’s expression (2000), would call “immigrant churches”<sup>9</sup>.

The research led to the identification of the following situations:

- Nine Islamic ‘mosques’
- Eight “ethnic” Catholic churches
- Five Orthodox Churches
- Fifteen Protestant (African) Churches

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<sup>8</sup> The research was funded by Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia and was carried on between January and September 2010. Its results have been published in the volume edited by Bruno Tellia [2010], which has different chapters on the religions of the strangers which inhabit today Friuli Venezia Giulia and the related “churches”.

<sup>9</sup> See Warner (1998). The relation between migration and religion, and the role of the latter for the inclusion of migrants in the new society are the object of a specific literature which is particularly rich in the United States but is growing also in Europe: see Bonifacio, Angeles (2010), Chiswick (2014) Council of Europe (1999), Ebaugh, Chafetz (2010), Foley, Hoge (2007), Foner, Alba (2008), Gallo (2014), Grodz (2014), Hirschman (2004), Kivisto (2014), Leonard (2006). Modood (2009), Smith (1978). Warner (2000), Wuthnow (2005). The analysis is part of a larger discussion on religious diversity and the making up of religious pluralism in contemporary States. See for instance: Bader (1999, 2002, 2007, 2009), Banchoff (2007), Eck (1996) Laderman (1996), Mookerjee (2010), van Rooden (2010).

- Two Buddhist centres
- Two (Gurdwara) Sikh temples
- Two Baha'i communities.

Such a variety of religions puts Friuli Venezia Giulia in the list of territories undergoing a transformation that could be defined as the emergence of the “religious pluralism”. *Pluralism* is revealing itself as the consolidation - alongside with the Catholic tradition, or the cultural majority, and small religious minorities such as the Jewish and Orthodox one - of a “second religion”, a label Sunnite Islam and the different Orthodox Churches are competing for, plus a diversified whole of creeds followed by a small number of people<sup>10</sup>.

The religious and cultural sphere of Friuli-Venezia Giulia are characterized by such complexity but also by a marked fluidity. The mentioned list of places of worship has undergone important changes in the last five years. Sometimes that is the result of simple moves to another place but, in other cases, with a real increase in the offer. That is particularly related to Islam, which is now not only worshipped in the main urban areas but also in smaller, decentralised villages<sup>11</sup>.

The administering of a questionnaire to a sample of foreigners residing in the province of Udine<sup>12</sup> showed that those places of worship are regularly visited, and not just on occasion of weekly celebrations, nor for religious practice itself. Islamic centres stand out from the others: there some of the believers meet many times a week to take part in both formal and informal activities that are mainly social gatherings. Far from being mere worship places, these centres are reference meeting locations for individuals and families whose social relations, solidarity and sharing needs are met there. Borrowing the language used in the analysis of the social capital and in particularly Putnam's conceptualisation of *bonding* (locking social capital) and *bridging* (opening social capital), to which the concept of *linking* (social capital that creates links) is to be added

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<sup>10</sup> For a description of the emerging Italian religious pluralism see the database of the “Centro Studi sulle Nuove Religioni” (<http://www.cesnur.org>). See also De Vita, Berti (2003), Naso, Salvarani (2009; 2015).

<sup>11</sup> The evolution of the Islamic landscape in Friuli Venezia Giulia after our 2010 field study has been described in Orioles (2015a).

<sup>12</sup> With 315 interviews conducted between March and June 2012, our study measured the migrants' participation to the activities of their “churches”. The results show a strong majority of migrants of all faiths attending religious ceremonies or simply going to the place of worship to meet each other's (Orioles, 2012).

(Putnam, 1993; 2000; Pace, 2013), we could refer to them (reference locations) as spaces where a bonding capital, contributing to unifying the group and determining its identity, gains substance. There are therefore excellent reasons to take Italian sociologist Allievi's suggestions seriously; he argues that *religion, and even more religion lived jointly and in a community, often has its own space and role in the building of the migrants' individual and collective identity*. The fact is, we are probably witnessing a community organization process based on religious affiliation (Allievi, 2009).

Therefore, we could have given a first answer to our questions: religion is emerging as one of mainstays of the 'super-diversity' nowadays marking the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and consequently portray one of the facets of local cultural pluralism, maybe the most important one (Vertovec, 2007; 2004): as all those researchers who are familiar with the literature of the Islamic diaspora know, this seems the direction to be taken. It is well known that Europe is one of the backgrounds of what Gilles Kepel (2003) called *the revenge of God*. In a Continent where the secularization process and individualism are increasing and where people try to 'inhibit' the religious symbols from the public sphere, Islam has given Muslim migrants aggregation strength thus offering a common feeling. Nobody can ignore the value of the 're-islamisation' process now undergoing among the second and also the third generations, i.e. people who, even if they were born, socialised and educated in Europe, have come ardently approached to their fathers' religion, thus starting a new social segment made up of *born again* Muslims (Khosrokhavar, 1997; Roy, 2003).

The rediscovery of own roots helps to build new political subjectivities. But the will to be "dissimilar" tears apart the frame of solidarity, the common feeling that was the tradition in European countries and that leads to the radicalization of their specificity and gradually to fundamentalism, offering the rigidity of the inclusion-exclusion principle. The comparison to be fair and transparent, obviously needs an identity symbolically open, able to strengthen the tradition of the exchange, the basis of the companies aspire to be citizens of society.

Such religiously based identities and communities involving also young people suggest us to address another issue: concerning the second generation of immigrants,

which is a test-bed for each thesis concerning the complex nature of contemporary Western societies. This topic is gradually developing in Italy too. Indeed the studies aimed at setting the condition of a target group that now counts more than one million units - eight hundred thousand of them attend schools in which the rate of foreign students is significant (9%) – and have now increased<sup>13</sup>. Italian scholars have been inspired by foreign literature and are following the prevailing approach aimed at denouncing a supposed *failed integration* of the second generation of immigrants. We are facing a kind of paradigm whose object, second generations, are usually included in the field of marginalization, new poverty and social exclusion. The 2005 revolt of French *banlieues* has actually created a cultural equivalent of the aspects pertinent to the economic sphere. The marginalisation of the migrants' children is so apparent in the transalpine suburbs and beyond to generate - as people reckon - a kind of self-confinement to their ghetto. Being prevented to benefit of equal rights and opportunities, the second generation of immigrants would lead to turn to minority identities, which are embittered by rivalry. The natives' protecting reactions, i.e. their unwillingness to share spaces and resources with people coming from abroad, create a counter-reaction in migrant communities, which hermetically closes their groups and protects their otherness. The ascent of jihadism, as well as the high number of European *foreign fighters*, would confirm the feeling that such a rejection is mainly grown in the Islamic communities (Guolo, 2015).

Italian authors, who are fully conscious of the implicit warnings of the situation across the border, have done their best to verify whether the Italian situation is also worsening. Italian statistics, in fact, document the existence of significant sufferings of the second generation of immigrants in the critical fields of education and the labour market. School failure and the absence or even decrease of a social mobility, seem to be the distinguishing feature of the majority of Italian second generation of immigrants.

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<sup>13</sup> Second generation immigrants are now at the centre of Italian sociologists' attention, since their numbers have begun to grow up, especially inside classrooms, starting from the beginning of the XXIth century. For a review of the Italian literature, see Orioles (2013).

As expected, our study has shown the absorption of the migrants' children in the lowest sectors of the labour market<sup>14</sup>. As far as the school system is concerned, principals and teachers describe inequalities such as recurrent *drop-out* cases and language problems that are reflected on the results. It is also relevant what has been labelled as *formative segregation* referred to the concentration of foreign students in schools aimed at steering them into the least prestigious sectors of the labour market. Those signals seem to strengthen the thesis of those who are worried for the *relegation* of foreigners in the lower social classes and therefore, for the consequent stratification of the Italian society on an ethnic basis.

As far as the social and cultural condition is concerned, the Italian study on immigration highlights a peculiar situation, which is proving the prevalence of processes of complete or selective assimilation.

Describing a situation so different from what we can observe in other countries, Italian sociologist Ambrosini (2004, 2005) underlines that the second generation issue in Italy is problematic not because young people of immigrant origin are little integrated from a cultural point of view but, on the contrary, just because of the young generation have absorbed aspirations and ways of life typical of their native peers. Which brings us to what has been described as *integration paradox*. That means: the extremely easy acculturation process of the second generation of immigrants is going parallel to their collocation at the margins of the socio-economic system, which does makes impossible for them *to leave marginalisation and uncertainty typical of the first generation* (Colombo, 2005).

#### **4. The newcomers and the acceptance of collective norms**

Our reasoning has been structured around the complex metamorphosis obviously affecting not only the region but the whole of Europe, which is linked in particular to the demographic flows. Here we can observe the related centrality of particular identities

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<sup>14</sup> With the financial support of Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia, in 2013 the Department of Human Sciences of Udine University developed a research project on second generation immigrants living in the region. The study collected data on education and the job market. One hundred interviews have been collected in order to explore the point of view of the children of immigrants regarding Italian and individuals from Friulian linguistic community and their social relationship with native and immigrant peers: some excerpts are shown in the following pages. The results of the research have been published in Orioles (2015) and presented in many conferences in Italy, the last one in Rome at Università "Roma Tre" in November 26th during a special session of the "Settimo Forum Nazionale Analisi Qualitativa".

and the prevalence of in-group relations, and those aspects that Sartori (2000) calls “disintegrating cultural separations” and other authors call *parallel societies* (Goodhart, 2004; Rowthorne, 2004; Tibi, 2003). Thus somewhat that can be relevant for the so known motto *E pluribus unum*. The question, in this case, is addressed to consider how proceed in order to realise the *management of the differences*, and, as consequence, what could prevent the occurrence of problems that everywhere have accompanied foreigners’ immigration. Otherwise to predict the extent that this goal matches the civic-ness, or better the “culture of citizenship”, which serves as a convergence platform for meeting the exchanges and pacification. Finally, we would investigate how this bond could link with the legal status of citizen, in particular referring to those who mean to take roots in our area.

Referring to the typology of the integration processes worked out by analysts - which, synthetically, are divided into the searching for mechanisms that transform “newcomers” in people capable to live and work by allowing the legitimacy of programs and collective goals, by a sort of *selective acculturation*, and others who reject a similar vision proposing equality between cultures - we can record a breakdown of two profiles, looking how they live and perceive the question of their integration. So there is a good number of people that could be better labelled as ‘new Italians’, as many researchers in our country tend to describe them. Our reasoning is showing more tangible in the words of some of the people interviewed.

A girl of Iranian origins:

*I feel Italian because I was born here. I reckon that, if a child was born here, he/she automatically feels Italian. (...) I feel and am happy to be Italian.*

Similar is the witness of a young Ghanaian:

*I feel more Italian than Ghanaian. (...) I have got out of all the traditions and habits of my country of origin; my behaviour is not as that of Ghanaians anymore. Therefore I now feel I am more Italian, indeed when I go to Ghana they say I am Italian.*

Even more meaningful are the words of a Nigerian boy:

*I feel 100% Italian. On the other hand, I was born here, I was educated here, all my classmates and friends are Italian. I dress up as they do, I hang out with them, we do all what other Italians do: we go to the disco, we have a beer or a glass of wine in the town bars; furthermore I like this town a lot: I feel very comfortable here, I consider it my town. And then I speak Italian very well, just as all the other Italians and I have completely forgotten my parents' language.*

The most numerous category is anyway that of the so called 'Italians with hyphen', the protagonists of a selective acculturation that leads to the development of what the authors label as 'double belonging'. It is the case of the Albanian girl, who declares:

*I will always feel Albanian because these are my origins and I think we shouldn't disown them (...). In any case, by now, I feel more on this side than on the other one, as I grew up here, my friends are here. Sometimes I feel Italian, but I don't forget my roots.*

It is important what a young boy of Somalian origins affirms:

*While growing up I have become more Italian than Somalian also because, apart from my parents, I have no contacts with Somalia anymore. Anyway, I preserve my culture of origin thanks to my parents, but I managed to find my balance. [...] I don't fossilize on a single culture, the Italian or the Somalian one, but take the best from the two.*

The Ghanaian boy is on the same wake and says:

*I feel a bit Italian because my parents have been living here for twenty years by now, furthermore I went to school here, I have lived here, I have grown up here and therefore I feel I belong to this country too. But I also feel Ghanaian because those are my origins.*

This girls thinks the same:

*I feel Ghanaian, but sometimes and under some circumstances, I feel Italian-Ghanaian, mainly according to other people because my lifestyle is similar to the Italian one. I sometimes feel different but in my daily life I feel Italian-Ghanaian.*

In our regional microcosm these first profiles are definitely more common than rejection, which outlines an undoubtedly complicated background. We cannot avoid considering these girl's declarations:

*I absolutely feel Columbian, I don't think I have changed since I arrived here. For sure, I have acquired some of the habits of the Italians but I have preserved my Columbian roots and it will always be so. You get used to living in a new town but you preserve your own identity.*

We are also pointing out the following case:

*Now that I am here, I do not feel different from how I felt when I was in Romania. In the end, I feel Rumanian; this is a strong part of my identity. I do not mind if someone insults me.*

As far as the last profile is concerned, that of cosmopolitanism, we notice it in a significant number of people who declare they are *citizens of the world* and they indifferently enter into relations with native peers, people from the same country or other foreigners. A young Nigerian girl calls them 'blended' friendships, or 'international' as a young Moroccan boy and a Ghanaian girl prefer to call them, People you 'get on well with' specifies a Ghanaian boy, apart from whatever origin or belonging.

In its recent report on the situation of the second generation of immigrants in Italy, the OECD (2014, 134), too has recently drawn such a conclusion by underlining that these young people share "the first generations' destiny".

This paradox has clearly emerged in our study. Bad school and labour markets performance notwithstanding, almost all of young people we interviewed declare that they identify with the society they live in, and consider this region as their homeland.

They appreciate the predominant values and lifestyles and concede they have acquired them. They furthermore retain not to distinguish between natives and foreigners when establishing important - even love - relationships.

### **Concluding remarks**

The question turns around the fact whether there is a real possibility in a society, which raises differences and peculiar cultures, to ensure social cohesion and solidarity; better in a word, whether it is possible to combine social links, the sense of civic duty and the right to be different.

The debate is showing the opposing positions between those who defend *tout court* the politics of identity, the right to be different, and those who watch with scepticism the unconditional respect for diversity. In the first case, the idea of *togetherness* is based on the strength of common belonging based on traditional cultural roots (concrete nature of the cultural link). In the second case, the culture is seen as a “unique issue” by virtue of its being the reference in the collective spirit, and the living together “as a citizen” (abstract nature of the social links), which is imagined through the ability to adapt to a community that gives cohesion targets in a *community of citizens politically organized*; here it seems needed to transcend the peculiarities with a view to set up the condition of *equal citizens*.

It would therefore not very easy to imagine integration models according to the collective belonging structured around the “We” different from the “Others”.

Meanwhile the rediscovery of own roots it helps to build new collective identities and political subjectivities. Indeed, the will to declare themselves “dissimilar” it reduces to shreds the tissue of the civic living together that promotes primacy of the civilization on the primacy of cultures.

If the structures and modern institutions probably lost effectiveness in contemporary society, the requests and the needs which they responded, however, remain actual and current: which means to create social forms (solidarity, civic living together), and institutions able to give continuity to the foundation of a democratic society. The problem

at this point lies on the identification of new institutions able to give meaningful answers to these (and other new) requests, without compromising democratic normativity.

In this progressive conceptual dialectic and contradictory processes, the citizenship - understood here in its broadest sense - is becoming increasingly with blurred boundaries. The ability to regulate the contrasts through dialectic as art of dialogue contributes to steer critical issues, especially where the areas of contact and, therefore, of admixture constitute the distinguishing feature.

A difficult conclusion would lead to identify structures and institutions able of responding to the new demands of an increasingly *open* society. As noted by some who dealt specifically with the issue of citizenship, it seems urgent to review some of the parameters in the light of new phenomena that we consider in this paper (see eg. Colombo, Domaneschi, Marchetti, 2009). According to this perspective, the citizenship is seen as encouragement to make an active contribution to the community and, therefore, an important factor of participation: the access to citizenship would be believed not just a way to be recognized as equals, but the exercise of citizenship as endpoint of a process of adaptation.

To what extent the solution of these questions matches the civic-ness, or better the *culture of citizenship*, which serves as a convergence platform for meeting for the exchanges and pacification among the different groups, it should be a demanding choice.

The reference to the dialectics when we speak about the dialogue is being configured as one of the strongest foundations of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, as we have seen above. This border region has taken as a guide an action line complied with the civic virtues of respect and cooperation. It wanted to give momentum to a framework, which involves the subjective desire to know each other and the availability of collective “giving and receiving” a view of a general progress of civicness. Therefore with a moral and political tension: to observe the direction of the combination - even whether discordant and difficult - on one hand being opposed to the myth of purity (ethnic, religious ...); on the other hand the ability to transcend the mutual distrust, misunderstandings and grudges that historical events have helped to develop. In the wake of this heritage, it seems important to seek and find the best answer to the concerns

generated by many unpleasant phenomena that have / are accompanying the foreigners' immigration.

Among the second generation of immigrants residents in Friuli Venezia Giulia region prevails inclusive outcomes and a strong self-understanding with the current context of life; in opposite to what it has been recorded in Europe, where more often, recently, identities of migrants and their children have proved a strong resistance to the changes. In parallel the "border people" are able to understand and transpose benefits of immigration due to the involved problems in the contemporary world; the collective availability to the "giving and receiving" in view of a general economic and social progress it becomes the commitment of the regional community.

This context seems to well explain how it can be ensured membership of a community without being there in the middle of intermediation ties, susceptible to transfer commitment to social links and to ensure the necessary order to the civic community. All this means not only to take note of the dramatic transformation that expended ahead eyes of the contemporary individuals and actors, but also to engage in the activation of formal channels on which dialogue could flow being encouraged (to borrow terms and concepts from Pace, 2013). The challenge is to promote the emergence of a *bridging capital* to act as a counterpart to the *bonding capital* that is going to consolidate within the closed communities of immigrants.

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