

New Integration Frontiers for Second Generations. Identity Changes between Interactions on- and off Line. A case study

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DRAFT – Please don't quote

A: I am currently a second year Pharmacy student. I was born and raised in Italy, and I am integrated well even though I had some problems.

I: What kind of problems?

A: I am Italian but I still wanted to respect my culture and my parents' religion by showing people who are close to me that I am also Moroccan and I'm not ashamed of it.

I: How do you show your dual identity?

A: I am proud to be Italian and Moroccan and I try to respect both belongings. I wear the veil. It is a way to tell everyone "Look, I'm Italian and I wear the veil. So what? Are you afraid?" I started to wear the veil once I attended university: I thought I was in a new environment. Nobody knew me then, when I wasn't wearing the veil yet. They got to know me like that and they accepted me. It depends on how you behave and talk. I am always embarrassed when I hear Muslim women wearing veils who can't speak Italian very well on the bus, on the street, in supermarkets. You have to make an effort. We are in Italy and to be accepted as Muslims, we must not create language barriers. This creates fear and distrust: if the imam speaks Arabic, what do Italians understand? And how about the other foreigners? Then it is no surprise that legends are circulating.

Jonas is 19 years old and he was born in Italy to Ghanaian parents.

J: My parents came here 20 years ago from Ghana. I have a 10-year-old sister. I only speak Italian. I don't speak Ghanaian but I can understand it. We all speak Italian at home.

I: Does having foreign parents create difficulties at school?

J: Everything is ok. There is just a problem with a classmate for now. He pretends to be a fascist and says: "Foreigners out". I got angry the first few times but then I realized: they are not used to foreigners, to something that is different. Even teachers are unprepared. It's not like in France. My cousin lives in Aix-en-Provence and everything is different there. What counts isn't the colour of your skin but the fact that you are good. Here in Italy, you can be Einstein but if you have dark skin, you are always perceived as a nonentity. Sometimes people (mostly the elderly) on the bus are surprised to know that I can speak Italian. But I've always been here. What language would I speak? Balotelli is the only black person who is accepted. Even here: but he is not the only athlete of foreign origin. Do you know how many of them were in the Olympics in London? They are almost 20% of the Italian team.

In 2011, the year of commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Italian unification, meetings and discussions were devoted to tomorrow's Italy: foreign minors are among the elements that help define the future of the country. They are the reflection of the ambivalence that binds Italy to its immigrants. On the one hand there are those who see these children and adolescents as the human capital of tomorrow and it does not matter whether they are qualified or not: in any case, they are

necessary for the economy of each local productive district (Fullin 2011). On the other hand, there are those who see them as potential competitor students and college students, carriers of identities that, in comparison with their parents, will know how to move forward in the Italian society in a more effective manner. In both cases, however, they are regarded as foreigners and less and less as immigrants. In fact, the weight of the second generation grows year after year, contributing over time in making the category of immigrant minors who were reunited with their family less relevant compared to those who were born in Italy, or those who say “I’ve been here my whole life”, as in the title of Anna Granata’s recent book (2011). The book emphasises the anachronism of continuing to socially define as foreigners those people whose sole reference point is the Italian one, albeit mixed with cultural references belonging to other specific contexts. The wonder of this inconsistency lies in the fact that the history of Italy is made up of encounters between dialects, languages, traditions and customs, whose difference was perhaps greater than that which can be found between Piedmontese and Romanians or Lombards and Filipinos (Fofi 2009).

Reactions towards foreigners, especially if immigrants looking for work rather than tourists,ⁱ are generally irrational.ⁱⁱ A foreigner is always a foreigner, as one of the above interviewees pointed out.

Somatic traits, first name, surname and religious affiliation “condemn” or “acquit” young people in the eyes of Italians. Mohammd and Fatima are at risk. Even if they possess Italian passports, they are—in the common perception—foreigners. What’s more, since 11/9 they are foreigners and terrorists, a worrying and intimidating association (Guolo 2011). Also Jocelyne and Isabelle, two Filipinas, are trapped within their identity. At school they are considered as “custodians of traditional values and carriers of a religiosity which are not often found among young people today”ⁱⁱⁱ. Then again, Roberto and Victor, two Peruvian boys, whose rapper clothes cause them to be stopped and checked by police. Peruvians attract attention because of rival gangs settling accounts. The next step is easy: all young Peruvians (both boys and girls, those involved in the game of the “boss’s girlfriend” and, playing this role, they become the “bone of contention”) are members of “Latino gangs”.^{iv}

Is there any way out? How can one react to and “survive” daily life so conditioned by damaging stereotypes? According to one young interviewee, their patience has almost run out: “It doesn’t matter who we are, what we do. The only thing that matters is what our parents do. We will always be immigrants for you. Italy should take note of the Paris banlieues and the London riots. Sooner or later we young foreigners, best in the class but judged only according to our parents’ work, will stop being good. We will start shouting and demonstrating, making our presence felt.”^v

And that is indeed what’s happening: young immigrants are trying to find their space, their identity,

in offline associationism and on the web, by involvement in intercultural activities and civic self-promotion. They do not want to be considered as “children of immigrants” or “foreigners children of foreigners”. One side of the coin is how society sees them; the other is how they define themselves.

Self-definition is never easy and can take place on different levels: linguistic or national, local or global, gender or generational. Using labels and categories is not a game, but often awareness of the weight (and consequences) of the use of words (one’s own and others’, spoken and written, enounced and read) is lacking. Sometimes this may help to create or widen fissures, even increasing the spectre of fear. Therefore the role played by the society where one grows and builds one’s identity is crucial. Indeed, how young foreigners portray themselves and what identity they decide to adopt partly depends on how the society where they live sees them. The theme of immigrants’ identity, especially second generations’, is not ascribable to an “either-here-or-there” optional choice. It must be framed in a more general context involving traditionally different actors: 1) The individual (one may feel loss and homesickness or may try to forget and camouflage oneself); 2) The family (which has, in most cases, taken the decision to leave and makes choices about future plans, whether to become part of the new society or stay on the edges); 3) The welcoming society which, with its attitudes and policies may encourage, in migrants, disparagement or revaluation behaviour with regard to belonging and various cultural traditions. Further actors have recently come on the stage: 4) The society of (one’s own or one’s parents’) origin, which continues to be present through transnational ties and local visits; and 5) Virtual space where cyber homelands are constructed, nostalgic sites for the first generation, a refuge for reunited adolescents, an exotic discovery for second generations (Lee 2008).

They are also places where new identities take form, or perhaps rather where the real outlines of one’s identity are displayed. It’s not a matter of experiences connected with Second Life. It is not a matter of inventing an avatar with which to pretend to be someone one isn’t. The web becomes the environment in which “one’s voice is heard”, “one talks things over”, “one can be oneself”. Perhaps, paradoxically, one acts out one’s Second Life personality in real life (Turkle 1996; Rydin and U. Sjöberg 2008; Bargh, McKenna and Fitzsimons 2002). And here there is a risk of wearing a mask, or several masks. Each of us has multiple identities, as Sen remind us. Even reducing the other to a single identity is dangerous, as young people are well aware. Second generations – according to their peers - have learnt—at school, in the street, listening to public debate—that racism is never very far away. It is in a schoolmate’s words, writing on the wall, stray remarks on public buses, political closure to invest in integration—and in the latest modification of the citizenship law. In short, young people know that even though “they too are Italy” in Italy “there is

no place for them” (Fangen et al. 2010). Indeed, in this paper, I focus my attention on a specific sub-groups of the juvenile population dealing with a migratory background. The paper will be focussed on 1) How young Muslims living in Italy use Facebook for developing, managing and discussing their religious belonging and 2) Should internet (and social networks in particular) be the safe arena in contrast with cities, neighbourhoods and groups where anti-Muslim feelings are in the air and break out frequently? Is online religious identity a good strategy for overcoming stereotyping in the real world?

The research scenario: a Catholic country where immigrant generations cohabit

Around 4.9 million migrants were registered at the beginning of 2014 (Istat 2014) in Italy (7.4% of the total resident population in the country), which outlines a complex situation, characterized by immigrant flows from more than 191 countries, especially Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia. In this context, Italy is becoming an interesting case study. It is not only a recent immigration country, facing a growing presence of immigrants, but also this growth has taken place in a short period, compared with other traditional migration countries. Of course the migratory flows follow a growing trend, but they are characterized by internal transformations. Among them, here there is the increasing number of foreign minors: only a sub-group is composed of second generations; others (the majority) are split into different generational categories.

As data show, in the period 1996-2014 the number of minors increased at a much higher rate than immigrant residents as a whole, growing from 125,565 to over 953,785 (Istat 2014). Two factors influenced this tendency: the arrival of minors from abroad and the number of births of children to foreign-born parents (Billari and Dalla Zuanna 2008).

Table 1. Italy. Foreign population: total, minors and second generation (2006-2014, as of 1 January)

Foreign population	2006	2007	2008	2010	2014
Residents	2,670,514	3,432,651	3,891,293	4,235,059	4,922,085
Minors	665,625	767,060	862,453	932,675	1,134,936
Incidence of minors on foreign population (%)	22.6	22.3	22.2	22.0	21.7

Source: Istat.

Foreign minors include second generations in a strict sense (the children born in Italy from first-generation immigrants) as well as the “1.5” generation (Rumbaut 1997), a group which is strongly significant in the relatively new Italian migratory context.

Within this context, Turin¹ represents a particularly interesting case. It is acknowledged to be among the most advanced Italian cities in the field of integration policies. It has been characterized by a high level of engagement with immigration since the 1980s: a special municipal office devoted to immigrants was established in 1982 in Turin, long before most Italian cities. Furthermore, the city has paid attention to immigrant children since the 1990s, and more recently to second generations. The goal of the last two local administrations has been that of strongly involved these young people, supporting them in being active citizens: they (and their juvenile organizations) are evaluated as potential and crucial bridges between first generations and Italian natives. In this framework, the local Muslim organization is strongly supported. Looking at what happens in Turin is therefore particularly interesting, especially as far as intercultural policies and measures addressing second generations are concerned, since these fields are governed mainly by soft laws (i.e. Circulars of Ministries, etc.) and thus the autonomous initiatives of local administrations is very relevant.

With regard to religion, Islam represented the main religious affiliation among immigrants up to 2003: since that year, the increasing arrivals from Eastern Europe have gradually changed the religious scenario. Even if Muslims now represent the second religious group among immigrants, they continue to attract the attention of the media and Italians in general.

Cultural centres and musallas are certainly a point of reference for many immigrants (especially first generation). Over the years, Turin has seen a change in the role of these places: from being less concentrated on initial welcoming needs, more on social and cultural promotion of the community, especially its youngest members. Although, over time, meeting places to develop a multicultural interaction where both adults and children can socialize, understand and confront other cultures, have been created, there is a need for entertainment and meeting places. Recently, the city has been engaged in supporting the project of building a mosque led by the Muslim communities.

Being Muslim, becoming Italian a comparison between the religiosity of parents and children

The Islamic scenario in Turin, as in Italy as a whole, sees a prevalence of backgrounds from the Maghreb, but also from Albania, Senegal, Pakistan and a plurality of attitudes towards religion, its practice and, in general, its relationship with society and the state in its various forms. Perhaps it is precisely in this differentiation of positions and this fragmentation that the weakness of the Islamic

¹ Turin is located in the North-West of Italy, in the Piedmont region. The municipality had 140,138 foreign residents at the beginning of 2014, i.e. 15.4% of total residents (Città di Torino 2014). The main nationalities are Romanian, Moroccan, Peruvian, Chinese, Albanian and Filipino.

Every year it becomes clearer that foreigners' presence in Turin, as in the rest of Italy, is more and more a structural phenomenon. If we analyze the age structure of the immigrant population, it is composed essentially of young people, increasing year by year.

world in its ability to speak with Italian institutions lies. This is a weakness that also stems from the fact that the institutional representative bodies² have loose relations with those who can be defined as Muslim faithful. In addition to a few committed activists, there are those who are indifferent and those who express their belonging along a continuum ranging from cultural proximity to active religious associationism and community, through intermediate positions such as those of individual and/or family practice and regular mosque attendance.

Identity choices have long since been very heterogeneous, with ways of reflection and adaptation of values and norms to the Italian/European context. This is true even from the religious point of view. One would expect more secularized behavior, a distancing from religion that, in a context that is still unaccustomed to interaction with Islam, continues to stigmatize those who explicitly or implicitly refer to it. In fact the positions taken on the matter of religion appear numerous.

“There are people who come here and change their religion, their life... There are Moroccans who come here and experience only the ‘bad’ things in Italy, others see only the good things, others just think about money” (M, 40, Morocco).

“Before coming here, I was not even a practising Muslim in Morocco; on the other hand I noticed that there are people who become more observant once they are here. Why do they say that you need to protect your family, that you must protect your own traditions in the West...? They do it for their children, because they know that when you live here you get used to it in a different way and maybe you take a road that is a bit... while if you become very religious, it is easier to go on your own way. Religion is used to justify, to give clear rules: do not do this, do this, etc.” (M, 48, Morocco).

The first generation’s voices testify the difficulties of being Muslim in an host (and not Muslim) country.

What happens among the younger generation? Are the immigrant children who were born abroad and reunited during the period of compulsory schooling, or were born and socialized entirely in Italy, following in the footsteps of their parents or do they share with their peers an attitude that oscillates between indifference and an autonomous mode of belief, which is often far from institutional participation?

The young interviewees can be divided into three groups. For some, religion is a key element of their identity, sometimes in contrast with the generation of parents who have attained a more private

² In particular, the UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities in Italy), the CoReis (Islamic Religious Community) and AMI (Italian Muslim Association). For further details, see Guolo 2005; Coppi and Spreafico 2008.

and barely visible religiosity.

“My mom does not wear the veil. I decided to wear it after a trip to Egypt. Even if we were born in Italy, we cannot deny our roots. And religion is a part of these roots. I’m not afraid to say that I come from a country that is rich in culture and important for the history of the Mediterranean. I am proud to be the daughter of Egyptians and to be a Muslim. My mom made a different choice: she decided to stop fighting. We know that Muslims did not have an easy life here in Italy. Today, it is a little bit different. There are many of us who wear the veil in college, nobody makes jokes about us, wherever we go, to the cinema, shops, pizzeria, no one looks at us in a strange way. It was different twenty years ago. So to cut it short and to avoid being the target, my mother said: No more veil” (F, 24, Morocco).

These are tough decisions in a scenario of youth religiosity where one reasons more in terms of the weakness of faith and “do it yourself” religion than in the recognition of mainstream religiosity.

“It is up to us to prove that we are true Moroccans, true Egyptians, true Muslims, but at the same time we have to prove that we are worthy to live in Italy. Even when we have Italian citizenship, every day is a bit like being under scrutiny. It is something that you feel. Maybe it is because here it is not like in Amsterdam or London, where going around with the veil, entering a bookstore to look for books about the Koran, having world-class restaurants that pay attention to all religious diets, are not considered as something strange. Our parents had to settle for that. Could they have done something else? We must work to avoid being moulded in their image. Generally it is said that we do not want to do the work of our parents. It is not just that. We do not want to be labeled as they were. Even with regard to religion. We are different. The way of experiencing religion does not remain constant through time. Even for Italians it is not the same. Where are the processions? Where are the veiled women in the church? And do young people go to Mass like their grandparents? Like their parents? Do they observe Lent? Why do we, children of Muslims, not have the right to be different from our parents? Why are they amazed? Isn’t this what Italy hoped for? Do they call us new Italians, second generation, to erase our past, perhaps?” (M, 24, Morocco).

Those who are tied to religious associations are aware of the distance that separates their generation from that of their parents in the way they live and interpret their faith, as well as in their relationship with Italy and their countries of origin. The intergenerational comparison on aspects of the religious highlights a deep reflective ability of young people, particularly those with higher levels of

education, in understanding the challenges they face as children of immigration. This is in addition to perceiving the differences with respect to the education and socialization of their parents, which took place in an environment permeated by religion and where cultural, religious and national belonging merged to become at the same time a unique, indistinctive ensemble within the local community and a distinguishing feature compared to external interactions.

Lastly, there is the group who believes that religion is part of their family's upbringing and little more.

“To you, a Muslim is the figure of a man who always goes to the mosque, who follows only what the imam says, who observes Ramadan. To me and many of my friends, being a Muslim means coming from a family tied to Islam. Many of us, young people, only observe Ramadan and we participate in festivities, like the Feast of the Sacrifice. We are Muslims in our own way. We live here, not in Morocco or Egypt. We must try to adapt” (M, 21, Morocco).

In this third group, religion only becomes a point of reference to the family environment, to a cultural background in which one grows up, to a relationship that is more or less intense until adolescence and is then followed by detachment. In these cases, being a Muslim is a (small) piece of the identity puzzle.

“My father is very religious. I had been a practising Muslim from the age of 8 to 18. I had always observed the five daily prayers, Ramadan, etc., because my father passed me down his religious fervor. Then at some point, when I started to think a little bit for myself... I don't know, going dancing or drinking alcohol became an incompatibility between belief and what I put into practice. Although I do not pray any more, I still observe Ramadan. Obviously, this displeases my father but it is my choice. It is useless to pray just to please your father. I do not observe the five daily prayers and I do not go to the mosque on Fridays, because going to school or working prevents me from doing so, unless I have a day off on Friday. Even my sisters have followed my path: one of my sisters stopped much earlier than me, another resumed after years of interruption, the other two are believers but they do not pray. However, we all observe Ramadan. In short, there are minor differences but we all chose, more or less, the same path. My father continues to go to the mosque and during Ramadan he goes there every day. For the rest of the year, since he's working, he prays at home in the evening. However, he is still a very practicing Muslim” (M, 24, Morocco).

The words above are emblematic not only of how adults and young people live their relationship

with religion, but also of how this relationship cuts across all backgrounds. The difference in approach that accompanies the two generations of Moroccans (and Egyptians) is the same as what we can see in many Italian families (Garelli 2011): the outcomes of religious socialization can sometimes result in a younger generation that continues the tradition of behavior and religious practices of their parents, sometimes giving rise to processes of detachment, to independent paths of relationship with the sacred.

“My parents tried to pass me down their culture and their religion, but I immediately realized it was not something for me. However, I am tied to some things and I want them to stay for a lifetime, because it is something that binds me to them and that identifies me. Even if I am not a believer, I identify myself with it and I love it” (F, 18, Morocco).

“For young people, following the teachings of their parents is not easy. There are those who come here and have forgotten Islam, especially those who have married an Italian woman. Perhaps both parents are working and children hang out with their friends, so they end up not even speaking Arabic any more. Fortunately, now there are antennas that let us watch TV shows from around the world. There were none before do” (M, 50, Morocco).

The interviewee emphasizes an important aspect of the relationship between young people and religion, which is “the power of large numbers”. The increased visibility of Muslim families, the number of students at school who claim to be Muslim, the girls who wear the veil and the associative leading role linked to religion can, therefore, be a fertile ground for the emergence of latent religious identities, whose appearance was prevented by fear of stigma or discrimination. To this end, however, mosques – or rather, prayer halls, which continue to be a point of reference for the old pioneers and the new immigrants – seem to play a lesser role, carrying out functions that are typical of those religious organizations in emigration, which is not only a reference to religion but also (and especially) to identity (McKay 1982; Portes and Hao 2002).

Being Muslim in the virtual space, being lay in the real life

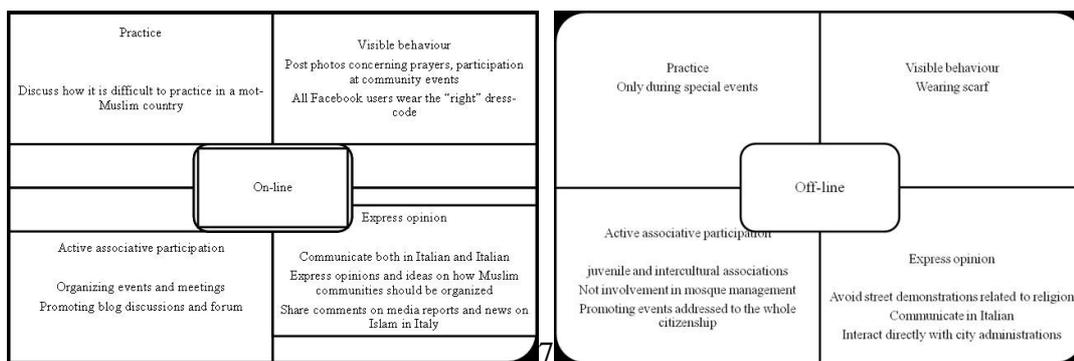
Young Muslims do not see Islam as the reproduction of the religious practices of the country of origin of their parents in a new context. As the research *Young Muslims in Italy. Parma and Verona* by Della Porta and Bosi (2010) also shows, in fact, Islam of the second generations is shaped more like a way of life due to a choice: a choice that helps to understand themselves and feel part of a

community. Very often the identification with Islam is felt more sharply than an identification with a particular ethnic or national group.

The difficulties of being a minority and Muslims, in a context that is not Muslim, also reinforces immigrant children as “true believers”, who have made a personal choice that must be renewed every day. So this is not a simple inherited trait, but daily autonomous choices that require continuous negotiations and confirmations.

For example, deciding whether or not to wear the *hijab*, for example, is an experience that the first generations have never lived in the country of origin and, consequently, also in Italy, but that the second generations instead have to face daily.

Fig. 1 – Religious second generations’ behaviour: a comparison between off- and on-line



Comparing on line and off line behaviours and practices may generate some surprises. Figures 1 and 2 show the differences between young Muslims interviewed in real life and their online profiles in their ways of managing their relationship with religion. Observing practice, visible behaviour (i.e behaviours or ways of acting or of dressing which identify a boy or girl as Muslim), associational participation in the religious area and opinions expressed, two profiles – overlapping only in some areas – come to light. One point above all should be stressed: in both cases the young people “wear” different identities depending on their interlocutors and the environments where they spend their time. Even those who are most secure in and convinced of their religious belonging, sometimes admit to being cautious because – in the words of one Moroccan boy - “Even when you are well integrated, have Italian friends, drop into their houses, one negative news item about Muslims in Egypt, Sudan or the Middle East causes even those who have always known you to begin to have doubts. And they ask themselves: ‘Will you too become like that? Can we really trust you?’ These are the questions

you think you see in your friends' faces when the newspapers report Islam on the front page". Thus if one speaks carefully about religion and keeps one's private life to oneself at work, in the university, in meeting friends, online the problem can be remedied by showing two profiles: one lay and one religious. It should be said that not everybody adopts this solution. Most have the same profile always, discussing music or how to deal with Ramadan in a non-Muslim context, commenting on political events or the controversy surrounding building mosque. What is clear is that young Muslims online seem freer in expressing their religious convictions, in commenting critically on first generations' decisions regarding interaction with the Italian community, how they lead activities designed for the Muslim faithful, and above all their lack of recognition of the young. In virtual space the young feel stronger their religious identity. Offline most of them by now participate only in some ritual moments such as Ramadan, and try to improve – through seminars, class meetings, public demonstrations – that "Italian" and "Muslim" are not two conflicting identities. There are Italian converts, who are accepted with indulgence because of their totally Italian background; but the children of immigration are guilty of the unforgivable sin of having parents born elsewhere: even fully Italian socialization, having attended school and being now a university student does not entitle them to be fully accepted. They continue to be tolerated. The call of their origins as foreigners and Muslims is just around the corner. For this reason these young people develop a "good citizen" attitude: socially active, available to institutions as volunteers, almost as if it were their day-by-day duty to earn the right to be – and believe what they desire.

Something is changing...at least on-line

Internet can also link young people born in Italy with religious practices away/distant from their experiences outside the family (in secondary socialization) and encourage the spread of visions which are radical and irreconcilable with the context in which they live, producing situations of isolation and estrangement and bringing them more and more to seek refuge in "protected" environments online and offline with the risk of being recruited to fight for as members of an imagined global community. Internet in fact can be a channel of propaganda for radical Islamist groups and Western fighters (Hegghammer 2010).

The groups and their presence on the social networks, on the other hand, also serve to define and redefine positive differences (such as how the group perceives itself) and to combat stereotypes and negative representations (Premazzi 2010; Leurs and Ponzanesi 2012). Moreover the spread of satellite TV and internet sites, blogs and social networks where one can follow channels and

religious programs, prayers directly from Mecca or sermons of imams and other types of lessons 24 hours a day (Rinnawi 2012) is positively evaluated by Muslim families, as new and useful tools for cultural and religious education of their children.

Internet is also being utilized to encourage Muslims to advocate gender equality, citizenship and human rights within an Islamic framework and it is used to interact with institutions at local and national levels.

The increasing growth of the Internet is reshaping Islamic communities worldwide. Non-conventional media and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are becoming more popular among Muslim youth and society as a whole. The profile of the people using these networks ranges from college students to Islamic intellectual authorities. Such an easy and speedy way of connecting to millions of people across the globe also attracts the attention of social movements, which utilize these networks to spread their message to a wider public. Discussion groups, Facebook communities and all other cyber activism are interlinked with the debates on the public sphere and citizenship. The way that this transformation comes out is that young Muslims who are familiar with online platforms use these spaces to enter debates and get their own informal space to present and represent their identities, ideologies, aspirations and even solutions. These platforms can offer the periphery voices to express their experiences of stereotypes and marginalization (Midden and Ponzanesi 2013).

Cultural and religious groups and associations have pages on the main social networking sites like the Facebook group *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia* (Young Muslims of Italy) and the different pages of the local groups. Internet is the virtual place where one can share photos, videos or phrases of the Prophet and become an active member of the groups. These groups become important markers of identity, signals from one side of their religious affiliation and their ethnic pride and, on the other, tools by which to receive recognition and confirmation of being part of a community by the peer group (Leurs and Ponzanesi 2012). They are also places and tools, however, through which the group can exert social control over its members (Premazzi and Scali 2013).

The above-mentioned association Young Muslims of Italy was founded in 2001 after the attacks on the Twin Towers (Frisina 2008) with the intent to counter the growing "Islamophobic" discourse in the media and now has sections in several Italian cities. The Turin section of the association, however, not only has reflected on their own identity and aimed at the creation of a cohesive group, but has been acting on a larger scale involving and developing activities not only for Muslims, but for and with the whole of society: commitment from inside the Muslim community and claims regarding their rights have become more proactive and collaborative in the construction of a "new Italian society". After having defined "who we are", now the association tries to answer the

question “what can we do” in and for the society where they live. For this reason, in Turin, they propose and participate in activities organized at local level, as is the case of the Muslim Youth Festival (Festival Giovani Musulmani), and in projects of education towards interreligious dialogue. There are, however, some critical aspects which the Young Muslims in Turin seem well aware of: the risk of the group supporting and also becoming a sort of ghetto, confrontation with the first generation in respect of more individual and aware choices, the transition from an inherited religion (and practices) to a religion (and practices) chosen independently, leadership roles inside the association and the Muslim communities in Italy.

The issue of the lack of a unique representation universally recognized and accepted in Islam, with migrations and the use of new technologies is now becoming more and more problematic and leads in Italy to the absence of an agreement with the state. The issues of authority and representation within Italian Islam have a lot to do with future intergenerational dynamics: if the first generations decide to confine their children in youth organizations of the “eternally young”, if they use the strategy of co-optation to influence the orientations of the children according to their own ideas or if they recognize in the Islam of their children “a third way” and attribute to them a role of authority and representation because of their skills and their extensive experience and knowledge of the Italian context and that of the country of origin. In either case the challenge is still open and to be played.

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ⁱ On attitudes towards immigrants and perceptions of their condition and life projects see Allasino et al. (1992); Allasino, Reyneri, Venturini, Zincone (2004).

ⁱⁱ In Italy, reports carried out by UNAR (National Office against Racial Discrimination) outline this aspect.

ⁱⁱⁱ Taken from an interview with Joyce, a 19-year-old Filipina.

^{iv} It is a phenomenon that has started in the city of Genoa and characteristic of distinctive groups of South American adolescents. Recently, traces of gangs made up of young Latinos are found in other Italian cities (e.g. Milan, Turin). On this theme see Queirolo Palmas 2009; Queirolo Palmas and Torre 2005.

^v Taken from an interview with a 21-year-old Peruvian boy.