

**‘New Italians’ and digital media:
An examination of intercultural media platforms**

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Abstract

This thesis presents a critical investigation of ‘intercultural digital media’ in Italy from 2000 to 2016. In this, it focuses on the diverse digital media platforms (largely web-portals and collective blogs) that have offered alternatives to mainstream media discourses of immigration and cultural diversity in Italy, and which have involved people of immigrant background as media producers. Through a focused, in-depth study of website content mainly published in 2014, including mission statements, thematic structures and discursive strategies, as well as the contextual and organisational structures, processes and roles of content producers and editors, the thesis offers a critical insight into the discourse of intercultural digital media in practice. Combining Critical Discourse and Multimodal Analysis approaches with Cultural Studies and digital citizenship theories of identity, representation and belonging, the research aims to explore the possibilities for constructing alternative, ‘intercultural’ discourse through these platforms. In investigating how intercultural discourse can be variously articulated within different modes such as journalism, self-representation and citizenship advocacy, the analysis engages closely with the strategic, organising idea of the ‘new Italians’, and raises broader questions about the cultural politics of under-represented groups seeking inclusion and recognition as ‘citizens’ in increasingly diverse societies.

Keywords: cultural diversity, immigration, Italy, identity, interculturalism, citizenship, alternative media, intercultural media, new citizens, new Italians.

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Notes on the text

Although I have tried to use wording throughout the text that is clear to the reader, it might be helpful to clarify a few terminological choices that I believe have important semantic implications for this thesis.

Throughout the text I use the expression ‘residents of immigrant background’ in Italy to refer to long-settled immigrants in Italy. Because of the restricted Italian citizenship law, non-EU nationals resident in Italy for many years may face a lengthy and bureaucratic journey before obtaining citizenship (which is discussed in detail in section 2.3). I am aware however, that the label ‘residents of immigrant background’ has some limitations. The term, by drawing attention to the ‘immigrant background’ may not suit ‘second-generation immigrants’ who were born and bred in Italy to immigrant parents and never experienced immigration directly, as will be discussed in chapter 2.

It could be argued that the term ‘ethnic minorities’ would be suitable in the context of media produced by individuals with a migratory background (whether directly or indirectly experienced) and that using this term would be in line with a body of literature which refers to ‘media produced by/for “ethnic minorities”’ (Matsaganis, et al., 2011). However, I have consciously refrained from using the term ‘ethnic minorities’ as I contend it does not suit the case of long-settled immigrants in Italy, around which this thesis largely revolves, who seek to be recognised as ‘Italian citizens’. Moreover and crucially, the term ‘ethnic’ is deemed – in the theoretical approach of postcolonial and cultural studies that this thesis embraces – as a social construct rather than an essential property with biological foundation (Hall, 1997a Balibar, 1991). Hence the use of quotation marks in the text alike for terms such as ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, and ‘class’.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Throughout the last decades many contemporary societies in Europe and across the world have become increasingly culturally diverse. An interplay of different socio-political and economic processes including increased global mobility, escalation of conflicts in certain areas of the world and consequent economic crises has led to movements of people settling in countries offering political stability or better employment opportunities. Settlement of people from migratory backgrounds has given rise in societies to what Vertovec has termed super-diversity: ‘...a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade’ (2006: 1024).

Increased cultural diversity in contemporary democracies raises questions about how to create societies that are inclusive, where everyone has equal rights and access to opportunities while differences are also recognised and valued, yet not in isolation but also through mutual knowledge and interaction. Public debates, discourses, and policy initiatives concerning immigration and cultural diversity significantly influence the reception and settlement of people from a migratory background. In particular, national media and political discourses circulating in society profoundly shape collective and personal identities as well as condition the participation opportunities of those arriving and settling into a new country.

In recent years, in the media and political discourse of most European countries, immigration has become a highly contentious and politically charged ‘issue’. Concern and alarm for allegedly rising immigration levels has traditionally served to catalyse anxieties about social and economic issues (Hall, et al., 1978). In the last few years, the arrivals of migrant and asylum seekers in Europe have received substantial attention in the media reinforcing the public perception and narrative of migration as an exceptional issue rather than a feature of contemporaneity. Especially in this moment, in Europe and in many countries worldwide, characterised by an increase in anti-immigration rhetoric in which nations are asserting national identity at certain fringes of politics and in media-public narratives, it becomes urgent and important to

explore the possibility for the construction of a discourse about cultural diversity that is inclusive, pluralistic, and grounded on the collaboration between and across ‘differences’.

Intercultural digital media in Italy represents one area where the possibilities for an alternative narration of immigration and cultural diversity in society through intercultural collaboration have been practiced. Using the term ‘intercultural digital media’, this work considers digital media platforms – including largely web-portals and collective blogs – whose content is produced by contributors mostly of immigrant background resident in Italy. As an alternative media form, Italy’s intercultural digital media seek to present a narration of immigration and cultural diversity that challenges or broadens the mainstream media coverage through enhanced participation opportunities in the media production processes.

Intercultural digital media represent a varied media landscape comprising a wide array of platforms originating from specific locally-grounded civic and media experiences such as diversity advocacy associations and groups, collectives of immigrant writers or editorial projects set up by publishers / media groups. These media are deeply situated within the multiple aspects and processes characterising the socio-political and cultural context of contemporary Italy. Immigration has traditionally been a highly politicised issue in Italy and dominant media, political and public discourses have emphasised the crisis-driven dimension of migration while failing to portray cultural diversity as a constituent of contemporary society (De Bartolo, 2007; Calvanese, 2011; Corte, 2002; 2014). Furthermore, a strict national citizenship policy hinders the full participation in society of young residents of immigrant background who have long demanded recognition as ‘Italian citizens’. With a population of long-settled foreign-born residents representing 8% of the national population (ISTAT, 2016), Italy needs to redress its self-perception from a country ‘periodically exposed’ to arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers to a society that recognises and values equal right to citizenship and opportunities to its long-settled residents of immigrant background.

The need for a more balanced, pluralistic discourse on immigration and cultural diversity as well as for enhanced access to the means of production by residents and citizens of immigrant background represent the two main catalysts for the setting up

of intercultural digital media platforms. Open to contributors of any immigrant background as well as to Italian citizens of non-immigrant background¹, these media practice the possibility of inter-cultural collaboration towards a shared civic endeavour.

While a vast body of literature has examined representations of migration in national mainstream media in democratic European and Western societies, highlighting the narrow set of representations and narratives surrounding the portrayal of members of immigrant or ‘ethnic minority’ communities, migrants, and asylum seekers in societies, less media scholarly research has been comparatively concerned with investigating the existence of alternative (or counter-) discourses or practices seeking to produce a more pluralistic, balanced and inclusive representation of immigration and diversity. Nevertheless, the emergence of media outlets produced by and/or targeted to ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘immigrant’ or ‘diasporic’ communities in Western immigrant-receiving countries started attracting significant scholarly attention in Europe and North America from the early 1990s (Cottle, eds, 2000; Matsaganis et al., 2011; Georgiou, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Karim, eds, 2003; Alonso & Oiarzabal, eds, 2010). These studies highlight a growing interest in exploring opportunities for ‘minority’ voices expressing the interests, concerns, identity and experiences of under-represented groups in mainstream national media and society.

Yet, the possibility of the existence of media with culturally diverse – or ‘intercultural’ – teams of contributors, beyond the particularistic interests of individual ‘ethnic’/ ‘immigrant’/ ‘diasporic’ community has rarely been investigated in the literature. Similarly, within the Italian context, whilst a systematic study has mapped the landscape of media by and/or for ‘immigrants’ in Italy (Maneri & Meli, 2007), no further research has been carried out to focus on the case of media produced by teams of contributors of diverse immigrant backgrounds. Although isolated initiatives have been examined in the studies by Saitta (2010; 2014; 2015) and briefly touched upon in Maneri (2011), the field has lacked an in-depth focussed scholarly examination. Furthermore, the digital media sphere has the potential to offer and experiment with

¹ Or of single national/cultural heritage.

more democratic, inclusive and alternative models of communication and information, hence the choice of focussing on web-based intercultural media outlets.

Therefore, intercultural digital media represents an original area of investigation for critically examining the possibility of constructing and promoting an alternative discourse on immigration and cultural diversity in contemporary society expressed through digital media infrastructures. By assigning importance to the principle of intercultural relations across ‘differences’, intercultural digital media represent a distinct and under-researched media form within the more widely researched field of ‘ethnic minority media’.

This work will explore a range of aspects and discourses of this novel media form, including represented motivations and intents, agenda and structural features of the platforms, discourses of self-representation and experienced practices of production. The critical examination of these entwined discursive dimensions is instrumental to understand the type of intervention – and its actualisation – pursued by this media towards more democratic, pluralistic and fairer representational media practices and discourses. The research will reveal and discuss the multiple interests, concerns and aspirations informing discourses, agenda and representations articulated in the platforms. In this regard, I will argue that emphasis on ‘national citizenship’ is a prominent discursive construction in some of the platforms and that it serves the intent to advocate for the citizenship law reform as a collective endeavour shared by the contributors across their different backgrounds. Furthermore, this thesis considers the structural and contextual factors underpinning the operation and production of these media. In particular, the analysis of interview materials will reveal a set of multiple political economy factors influencing – and to some extent hindering – the practice and the full realisation of an *inter*-cultural politics enabled by and performed through alternative digital media platforms.

1.1 Aims and structure of the thesis

The overarching aim of this study is to critically examine the case of intercultural digital media in Italy since their emergence from the early 2000s. The exploration of these media initiatives is articulated into four main analytical domains corresponding

to four Research Questions as Chapter 4 (section 4.1.) will discuss in detail. Each question critically examines a specific aspect of intercultural digital media in order to understand and explore this media form in its multiple discursive and operational dimensions. The questions are the following:

RQ1 – What are the principal characteristics of Italy’s intercultural digital media landscape?

RQ2 – How is the intent of intercultural digital media expressed and performed?

RQ3 – What alternative discourses and narratives of immigration and ‘new citizenship’ do personal stories published on intercultural digital media platforms articulate and promote?

RQ4 – What are the practitioners’ organisational and production practices and their experiences of running and maintaining an intercultural digital media platform?

A combination of methods suitable for the analysis of cultural texts is employed. The methodology of this research is largely informed by the analytical and theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis in combination with a Multimodal approach for the analysis of digital media texts. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with practitioners have been conducted and examined to explore the context of practice and production of such discourses and platforms.

The thesis unfolds in eight chapters. The first two (Chapter 2 and 3) constitute the literature review of this study. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 introduces and discusses the Italian socio-cultural and political context of emergence of intercultural digital media. This is instrumental to the understanding of the complexities of the dominant discourses on immigration in Italy and media practices contested by the practitioners of intercultural digital media and prompting the very establishment of the platforms. The chapter, largely influenced by theories, concepts and debates from postcolonial and cultural studies, also discusses the framework of interculturalism as a conceptual and political alternative to multiculturalism. Furthermore, it addresses the discursive possibilities as well as limitations for the construction of a cultural politics of ‘new identities’ (Hall, 1991) seeking to challenge or transform the dominant regime of representation.

Having set the context, Chapter 3 explores and discusses the terrain enabling possibilities for the actualisation of more inclusive, pluralist, and inter-cultural forms of communication. Therefore, the chapter situates Italy's 'intercultural media' within the field of 'alternative media' – and relevant discussion on 'digital citizenship' – including an examination of 'ethnic minority media' as a comparatively more widely acknowledged and researched field. The final section of the chapter introduces the main distinct characteristics of the media form at the centre of this study and reinstates the value of exploring the case of media with culturally diverse teams of contributors as an under-researched media domain practicing a cultural politics of inclusion, recognition and inter-cultural collaboration.

Chapter 4 outlines, motivates and discusses the research aims of this study and the methods employed to explore those aims. Through a combination of qualitative methods influenced by the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, the study aims to answer the four key research questions earlier introduced. Each section of the chapter is devoted to each analytical strand of the research and corresponding research techniques outlining methodological choices and operationalisation of the method to specific textual areas of investigation. Subsequent chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 presents and discusses the analytical findings exploring the questions outlined in the previous chapter.

Chapter 5 displays and discusses findings drawing on a systematic mapping examining some of the key characteristics of intercultural digital media identified, including timeline of emergence and territorial distribution, social actors, agenda, and political economy. Building on the mapping, Chapter 6 delves more deeply into the content of the platforms with a more focussed and detailed analysis of five selected websites. The chapter firstly presents a Critical Discourse Analysis of the mission statements of the sampled sites. Secondly it discusses how these intents and aims are expressed and demonstrated in the organisational, aesthetic, and content features of the homepages. This Multimodal Analysis of both mission and homepage 'texts' serves to identify and discuss the areas of intervention, agenda, and values of intercultural digital media. Having examined the frequent featuring of sections devoted to personal stories of residents and citizens of immigrant background (the 'new citizens'), Chapter 7 offers

a Critical Discourse and Narrative Analysis of a selection of stories of personal narrative proposing a re-representation of the ‘immigrant subject’. The chapter critically explore the discursive possibilities for challenging dominant representations about immigration and cultural diversity in Italy by proposing more positive and introspective self-representational narratives recounting individual life stories.

Chapter 8 bridges the previous analytical findings and provides an insight into the context of practice of intercultural digital media. Drawing on a set of interviews with practitioners, largely editors-in-chief of the platforms, the analysis of interview materials discusses experienced practices concerning the operation of these platforms, including aspects of organisation and production, sustainability, motivations and intercultural collaboration. Building on these findings, chapter 9 draws conclusions about the media at the centre of this study. In addition to outlining and discussing the main findings of this research, the final chapter presents conclusive reflections concerning the potential and possibilities as well as limitations for the construction and promotion of alternative discourses about cultural diversity through digital media platforms alongside proposing areas of further research.

Chapter 2 Immigration in Italy: Discourses, Politics and Practices

This chapter explores some of the main socio-cultural and political contextual factors creating the conditions for the emergence of Italy's intercultural digital media.

As a media form grown out of a contestation of dominant media and public discourses and practices influencing dominant views on immigration and cultural diversity in contemporary Italy, the emergence of intercultural digital media must be understood as situated in a specific socio-cultural and political context. Indeed, this chapter is grounded on the theoretical assumption that texts and media practices takes place within a specific historical context and are shaped by certain set of discourses, values and socio-political processes (Hall, 1997a; van Dijk, 2008). Moreover, media texts and practices emerging online – such as those at the centre of this study – are most often built on the re-articulation of offline discourses and pre-existing cultural forms, discourses and conditions (Diamandaki, 2003).

The discussions in this chapter are influenced by theories, concepts and debates in the realm of Postcolonial and Cultural Studies. The discussions and analyses that cultural study theorists have articulated surrounding questions of cultural and national identity, race and ethnicity, multiculturalism, citizenship and belonging informs the discussions and literature choice of this chapter and are applied to the specificities of the Italian context. In particular, Stuart Hall's reflections on the working of representation and struggles to challenge regimes of representation are useful to understand the cultural politics of Italy's intercultural digital media.

The chapter is articulated into three sub-sections, each outlining and discussing a critical aspect in relation to immigration and cultural diversity in Italy. Firstly, it introduces and discusses the media discourse on immigration and cultural diversity in relation to the way Italy's mainstream media has constructed 'immigration' in its symbiotic relation with political debates and dominant ideologies. It then provides an overview of Italy's political approach to 'integration policy' to introduce the concept of interculturalism as a conceptual paradigm instrumental to define and understand intercultural media as a practice-based media form with a vocation for inter-cultural exchange and collaboration. Lastly, a third sub-section discusses the situation of

political-institutional exclusion faced by residents of immigrant background as a crucial catalyst for the articulation of a cultural politics seeking to restore centrality to residents of immigrant background into the national political and representational sphere.

2.1 The media construction of immigration in Italy

National mainstream media in Europe and worldwide face the challenge to capture the multifaceted complexities of increasingly culturally diverse societies. The media coverage of immigration and diversity in democratic societies has often been criticised by media researchers, migration advocacy groups, and active members of the public for offering narrow, inaccurate and unbalanced representations of immigrants and 'ethnic minorities'. The scholarly work in postcolonial and Cultural Studies, influenced by Foucauldian theory illustrates how the representation of 'difference' in modern Western societies is intimately entangled with questions of power and knowledge. The representation of 'the others' is a process inscribed within unbalanced relations of power whereby 'dominant' elites hold the power to define, institutionalise and legitimise a certain set of representations, beliefs and identities (Foucault, 1975). Stuart Hall's notion of 'positionality' further illustrates that all discourse and knowledge about 'the others' is always contextual as produced within a particular culture, history and experience (Hall, 1988: 446). At any particular historical moment, the hegemonic practices of representing 'difference' produce a narrow or stigmatised discourse about 'the others' (Hall, 1997b).

Mass media is a crucial arena where the work of hegemony is exercised and a key platform for ideological dissemination (Hall, 1981; 1988). Shaped by the symbiotic relationship between media and politics, the media coverage of immigration is highly politicised as its narration is strongly defined by political debates and policy implementation. In Italy, the discourse of immigration has traditionally represented a highly contentious and polarised field, heavily defined by strong political, media and socio-economic interests as it will be further discussed in subsequent sub-sections.

Broadly influenced by the theoretical assumptions outlined above, this section discusses the mainstream media coverage of immigration and diversity in Italy. In particular, it will highlight the principal issues surrounding the construction of immigration in relation to media rhetoric as well as production practices. The section seeks to provide a framework of understanding for situating the case of intercultural digital media as an alternative media form grown out of a contestation of the portrayal of immigration and diversity in hegemonic media discourses and practices.

2.1.1 Immigration to Italy: an overview

Italy is often described in the literature as ‘a latecomer country of immigration’ (Cetin, 2015). It was only in the early 1970s that Italy first registered positive net migration when migrant arrivals overtook by number the departures of Italian emigrants to America and Central-Northern Europe.² Precisely, literature indicates the oil crisis of 1973 as the factor causing migration flows to be diverted from traditionally migrant-receiving countries of post-colonial heritage (notably the United Kingdom, Germany and France) to Southern Europe.³ By the mid-1980s, Italy was one of the ‘new’ migrant destination countries (Bonifazi, et al., 2009) or, as others prefer to define it, ‘a fall-back choice’ (Colombo & Sciortino, 2004) for people migrating to Europe.

By the late 1980s, Italy had gradually become the destination of a diverse population of largely economic migrants coming from a wide range of world regions including North and Central West Africa, South America, South and East Asia (Colombo & Sciortino, 2004). Early migratory inflows to Italy were largely driven by socio-economic and political factors within the context of contemporary global migration

² It may be worth adding that the first migratory arrivals of numerical relevance are to be ascribed to the Italian colonial legacy. Following the loss of Italy’s African colonies (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Libya), in November 1949 it was estimated that 206.000 people from former colonies arrived in Italy (Del Boca 1984), some of which were domestic women workers accompanying the returning of Italian families who had settled in the colonies (Amato, 2008). However, Italy’s relatively small-scale colonial legacy did not play a role as significant as in other post-colonial societies in defining and influencing modern migrations.

³ The global recession following the first oil shock in 1973 led to the adoption of restrictive policies on migration and to a drop in the recruiting of international labour. Some European countries that had hitherto attracted economic migrants even introduced repatriation plans. In this context of global economic changes, migratory movements changed their route to Southern Europe with Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece becoming new destinations for economic migrants (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004).

such as the impoverishment of Southern and Eastern areas of the world and political unrest in neighbouring countries such as North African states. Some scholars further indicate as ‘pull factors’ the economic growth of the industrialised Northern regions in the 1980s and 1990s (Colombo & Sciortino, 2004) as well as Italy’s large shadow economy offering accessible employment prospects for undocumented migrants.

From the early 1990s, the demographics of migration to Italy changed significantly with intra-European migration coming into play. The collapse of communist regimes in Eastern European states led to arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants from Albania, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia states. After 1991, Albanian nationals represented the largest group of foreign nationals in Italy, outnumbering Moroccan nationals. Yet, with Romania joining the European Union in 2007, Romanian nationals have, to date, become the largest group of foreign nationals in Italy. At 1st January 2016 Italy’s resident foreign nationals represent 8.3% of the national population. The non-naturalised resident population of foreign nationals is the third largest in the EU, after Germany and the United Kingdom (ISTAT, 2016). Most of this population is European with Romanian and Albanian nationals together already accounting for 30% of the people resident in Italy of non-Italian citizenship (*ibidem*).

In recent years, Italy has increasingly become the first entry point for asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle-East seeking shelter in Europe. Arrivals to the Italian Southern coasts – particularly to Italy’s southernmost island of Lampedusa – have been fluctuating since the mid-2000s with major arrivals in 2011 in the wake of Arab Spring uprisings and in 2014 with the escalation of the Syrian conflict. However, it is important to note that only a small proportion of people rescued by Italian authorities in the Mediterranean Sea entitled to humanitarian protection have applied for asylum in Italy in recent years (EUROSTAT, 2016). The large majority of them seek to cross the Northern Italian borders circumventing the Dublin Regulation in an attempt to reach Northern Europe ⁴. Whilst the recent sea-arrivals of asylum-seekers are playing a crucial part in defining the current media and political agenda of immigration, it is

⁴ The Dublin Regulation (Regulation No. 604/2013) is a European Union Law establishing the criteria for determining the European member state responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the EU member states by a third-country national.

important to note that the media with which this thesis is concerned are primarily focussed on the long-settled immigrant population – and their children – who arrived in Italy largely from the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. They of course, will have relevance to those who continue to settle, but the intercultural digital media platforms which constitute the focus of this thesis are not a product of the recent so-called ‘refugee crisis’ nor do they address themselves to this issue specifically.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress that Italy has shifted from being a country attracting economic migrants from the mid-1980s, throughout the 1990s to increasingly representing a ‘transit point’ for asylum seekers attempting to reach, and settle in, countries offering stronger socio-economic prospects. Furthermore, outflows of Italian citizens to Central and Northern Europe (Germany, United Kingdom and Switzerland) are increasing more substantially compared to inflows of migrants to Italy (ISTAT, 2015), suggesting Italy’s slow economy – or at least perception of that – can constitute a deterrent to people seeking to improve their employment prospects.

Despite a slowdown in economic migration to Italy in recent years, citizenship acquisition requests by the long-settled immigrant population and their children have been steadily increasing since the early 1990s (ISTAT, 2015).⁵ Furthermore, the coming into force of a reform bill that would relax eligibility criteria of citizenship acquisition through naturalisation, would allow almost one million young residents of immigrant background, namely children of non-EU nationals, to become ‘Italian’ by law. Therefore, for the long-term resident population there are issues at stake concerning citizenship status and rights driving demands for inclusion into the national society and expressions of belonging to a national community.

With an increasing resident population of immigrant background that demands to be recognised as ‘Italian citizens’ by law, Italy faces the challenge to redress its self-perception from a country periodically ‘exposed’ to large numbers of migratory arrivals to an increasingly culturally diverse European democratic society granting equal rights and participation opportunities to its increasing long-settled population of immigrant background.

⁵ In 2015, naturalisations were around 178,000 a substantial increase compared to 2014 (+ 37%). (ISTAT, 2015)

2.1.2 *Boat-landings, 'clandestini', and security: constructing immigration in Italy*

Although Italy started to become a destination for migrants and asylum seekers from the early 1970s, it was not until a decade later that immigration entered the national political and media agenda. In the late 1980s, a series of racist attacks against African seasonal workers drew, for the first time, political and media attention to the conditions of immigrant workers, often undocumented and vulnerable to exploitation and violent intimidation. Throughout the 1980s, the media discourse of immigration was mainly concerned with the presence in the Italian territory and working conditions of *lavoratori stranieri* ('foreign workers') whose largely under-reported stories of precarious existence and marginality hit the headlines when immigrants were protagonists of crime, as either victims or perpetrators (Mansoubi, 1990).

In the Spring of 1991, the arrival at the port of Bari (Southern Italy) of large numbers of Albanian nationals fleeing the economic crisis after the collapse of the communist regime, caused a significant shift in the Italian public perception and media construction of migration into the peninsula. Images of overcrowded ships disembarking crowds of people on Italian soil were to become the media 'iconic image' of 'mass-migration' into Italy throughout the 1990s and increasingly in the 2000s (Corte, 2014; Bruno, 2015).⁶ Televised images and deployment of sensationalist headlines in the press describing arrivals at sea of 'vast proportions', fed into the political discourse presenting immigration as an exceptional episodic phenomenon 'to be managed' with the adoption of 'extraordinary measures' (Buonfino, 2004).

This media over-reporting of sea-landings of migrants arriving on the Southern shores of Italy disregards the fact that arrivals by sea has always been only a small proportion of the migratory arrivals into Italy, with most immigrants 'legally' and normally entering the country with a work or tourist visa and overstaying (Ambrosini, 2010). Furthermore, research shows that whilst little is generally reported about reasons for migration (UNHCR, 2016), strong emphasis has been traditionally placed on the 'juridical status' of people arriving in Italy. The undocumented status – or non-

⁶ There are, of course, variations across types of media. Cospe (2003) found that whilst broadcast national media tend to focus on news concerning sea-arrivals, local news tends to concentrate on settled immigrant communities or individuals.

compliance with immigration law – of migrants has often been re-framed in the Italian national press as ‘illegal’. The term *clandestino*, used to indicate someone who secretly – and hence ‘illegally’ – enters the country, has often been used in media discourse as a default term for ‘undocumented migrant’ or even ‘migrant’ at large. This use of the term which makes prominent the semantic trait of illegality (Faloppa, 2011) disregards the case of people entitled to legal protection under international law or in the process of waiting for their refugee status, namely asylum seekers (Cospe, 2003; Bruno, 2015).

The discursive frame of ‘illegality’ has also been extended to settled immigrant communities or individuals. In line with a body of a scholarly work finding that increases in coverage of immigration are often associated to deviancy, criminality, and social unrest (Hall et al., 1978; Maneri & ter Wal, 2005; Larson, 2006), research has found that immigrant subjects in Italy have largely been presented, over the years, as either author or victims of criminal actions (Corte, 2002; 2006; Calvanese, 2011) with immigrants more likely to appear as perpetrators of crime than Italians (Morcellini, 2009) despite only a minority of crime being carried out by immigrants. Typically, in the Italian collective imaginary ‘the immigrant’ has long been a male national from a North African state, most often low-educated and with a precarious or ‘irregular’ employment situation. With nationality of immigrant perpetrators emphasised in the headlines of crime news stories, the constructed link between nationality and inclination to criminal behaviour has led to stigmatisation of specific nationalities or ‘ethnic’ communities – such as, notoriously the Roma gypsies – throughout the years (Carta di Roma, 2013; Corte, 2014).

The constructed narrative of immigrant criminality and the overall framing of immigration within a problem-oriented narrative have traditionally served to legitimise coercive tactics and political action (Hall, et al., 1978). As in other European countries experiencing a similar politicisation of immigration, in Italy, the semantic linkage between ‘immigration’, ‘illegality’ and ‘crime’ has been a powerful tool of the anti-immigration rhetoric of right-wing political parties for decades (Dal Lago, 1999; Sibhatu, 2004; Corte, 2002; 2014). Since the early years of the 2000s in Italy, immigration prominently entered the political discourse and the national media agenda. Policies concerned with control of ‘illegal flows’ into the country have been implemented by both left- and right-wing coalition governments. Yet, it was during

the Silvio Berlusconi governments that immigration became a highly politicised and hotly debated issue, gaining, for the first time, substantial coverage in the media and political agenda (Cesareo, 2007; Gattinara, 2016).

The centre-right coalition led by Berlusconi built its election campaigns, and overall political agenda around a strong focus on ‘legality’, public order, and security.⁷ Indeed, one of the first measures of the fourth Berlusconi government (2008–2011) was to issue an immigration law – known as *Pacchetto Sicurezza* (Security Package) aimed at curbing the numbers of undocumented migrants on the Italian territory. Framed as ‘a fight against illegal immigration’, the government passed questionable and unlawful measures such as forced repatriations, sanctions and longer detention periods for undocumented migrants, with often little regard for asylum rights.⁸ Under the much-criticised Bossi-Fini Law, ‘illegal immigration’ even became a crime punishable by law and the semantic chain connecting immigration with illegality and crime (Bond et al., 2015) was now enshrined in law. It is however important to note that although emphasis on security measures aimed at tackling issues allegedly associated with immigration has traditionally been an ideological battleground embraced by the right and the far-right parties, emphasis on security has also characterised the rhetoric of left-wing parties.

Media research has shown that the mediated discourse of migration – as that of many other aspects of society – is strongly defined by views and policy responses expressed by institutional and political sources, the so-called ‘primary definers’ (UNHCR, 2016). The Italian coverage of immigration does not represent an exception. Particularly, during the years of the Berlusconi governments, notoriously characterised by a highly problematic conflict of interest between Berlusconi’s ownership of multiple media businesses and his prime ministerial office, the media seemed ‘to uncritically endorse, rather than challenge the political agenda’ (Bond et al., 2015:7). Morcellini (2009)

⁷ Strongly centred around issues of immigration and security was particularly the election campaign for the 2008 parliamentary election which led to the fourth Berlusconi government (from 2008 to 2011).

⁸ These measures have been deemed unlawful by the European Court of Human Rights as they violate asylum right under article 10, comma 3 of Italian constitution and European law. With regards to asylum rights, it has been observed that, for years, confusion and negligence has characterised the approach towards the processing of asylum requests in Italy leading to asylum seekers often been treated as economic migrants disregarding their asylum rights (Cuttitta, 2015).

observes the existence of a disproportion between political and institutional authorities and the members of immigrant communities. According to a study on the representation of immigration in the Italian press, the voice of immigrants in 2010 is largely under-represented in print media, regardless of the political orientation of the newspaper (Jacomella, 2015). Overall, news reports lack background information on the migrants' countries of origins and even in news reporting episodes of xenophobia, the migrants' voice remains unheard. Furthermore, background context such as the reasons for migrating to and settling in Italy is either limited or not provided (*ibidem*).

To conclude, this section has sought to illustrate a set of problematics surrounding the media coverage of immigration in Italy. Firstly, a disproportionate focus on sea-arrivals and the employment of alarmist rhetoric has contributed to Italy's self-perception as a country regularly 'exposed' to episodic arrivals of 'vast proportion' of migrants. Secondly, the constructed association between undocumented migration and illegality has been utilised in anti-immigration rhetoric, prominently covered by the media, to foster feelings of insecurity and justify the adoption of security measures and questionable policies aimed at tackling what has been long defined as 'illegal immigration'. Thirdly, in line with global trends on journalistic practices, the voices of immigrants in the media remain largely unheard with primary definers driving the news agenda.

The Italian national mainstream media's failure to comprehend and narrate contemporary immigration as a long-term process of social changes and increased cultural diversity in the national territory, has been the main catalyst for the perceived need, by some of the long-settled immigrant population of seeking alternative narratives on immigration and cultural diversity in Italy leading to the establishment of media initiatives such as those at the centre of this study. Processes and efforts seeking to change the dominant regimes of representation (Hall, 1997b) would entail a critical reflection upon the notion of 'otherness' and the way it has been utilised to construct nation-centric ideologies and an essentialist view of cultural identity.

2.1.3 *Constructing 'Italian-ness' through 'other-ness'*

As well as a threat to national and community security, immigration has been viewed as representing a threat to national identity in public and political discourse. This view

is premised upon an essentialist and homogeneous conception of identity feeding into nation-centric ideologies. According to Cultural Studies scholars, national identity is a cultural construct akin to ‘ethnicity’, ‘gender’, ‘race’, and ‘class’ (Hall, 1996a; 2000; Anderson, 1991). The internal homogeneity of identities is not an essential property but rather a ‘constructed form of closure’ that must incorporate its negation, an ‘outside Other’ (Hall, 1996a: 5).

A nation-centric ideology grounded on exclusion and demarcation of borders between ‘the Italians’ and ‘the Others’ is embedded and evident in the labels used to define those who do not belong to the national community. For instance, the term *straniero* (‘foreigner’) has the prefix -extra and derives from the Latin *extraneus*, meaning a stranger, outsider. Similarly, *extracomunitario* (‘extra-communitarian’) a label that was commonly used throughout the 1990s to indicate settled immigrants from non-EU countries and was then semantically extended to all immigrants at large acquiring a negative connotation, emphasising exclusion from the national or European community (Faloppa, 2011).

The socially constructed notions of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ have traditionally provided the ground for racist ideologies legitimising exclusion based on ‘biological difference’ (Hall, 1996a; 2000). Whilst racism is, in theory, unacceptable in Italy as in the rest of Europe, racist remarks have long been circulated in the political arena to the point of becoming routine language in some fringes of politics, particularly in the *Lega Nord* (‘Northern League’) political arguments and rhetoric⁹. As the principal ally of Berlusconi’s coalition governments, the *Lega Nord* has been a strong voice in political debates about immigration and its xenophobic ideologies had a crucial impact on public attitudes towards increasing cultural diversity in Italian society throughout the 2000s. The identity politics of the *Lega Nord* is grounded in the demarcation of differences between ‘immigrants’ and Italians, replacing the former demarcation between Northern and Southern Italians throughout the 1980s. By providing a model of identification built upon difference, this party has long catalysed public anxieties and concerns over economic insecurity and social issues into the fight with

⁹ *Lega Nord* is a regionalist political party in Italy advocating greater regional autonomy for Northern Italian regions and whose political language and ideology has been characterised by xenophobic and anti-immigration attitudes.

immigration and diversity as a collective enemy exhibiting values supposedly irreconcilable to those of Italians (Geddes, 2008).

With the election of Cécile Kyenge, Italy's first black cabinet minister, in April 2013, as Minister of Integration of a centre-left coalition government, xenophobic and racist comments made by *Lega Nord* peers gained prominence in the political arena and were amplified by the media. As Faloppa observes, the 'blackness' of the minister became, at that time, more newsworthy than the institution of a new ministry concerned with the social and political integration of immigrants and resident of immigrant background in Italy (2015: 105).

Racism is also institutionalised in the legislative system by a nationality law grounded on the principle of *ius sanguinis*. A citizenship law based on the 'right of blood' favours citizenship inherited by a relative of Italian nationality over citizenship acquired by 'right of the soil', the right of anyone born in the national territory (Thomassen, 2010). Some scholars have defined the legislation as an 'ethnic law' (Gallo & Tintori, 2006) as while it makes the acquisition of citizenship by those who had even distant Italian origins relatively easy, for non-EU nationals resident in Italy who cannot claim any 'bond' with an Italian national – either through ancestry or marriage – the naturalization process is lengthy, difficult and often its successful outcome uncertain. In this regard, Zincone (2006) talks about the existence of a 'legal familism' inscribed within the national citizenship legislation that needs to be understood as a legacy from Italy's past as a country of emigrants by privileging inheritance of Italian origins over long-term residence.

Whilst racism grounded on race legitimates exclusion by genetic and biological difference, racism grounded on ethnicity legitimates difference in cultural and religious features (Hall, 2000). Faith and religious identity are often presented as discrete and essentialised categories 'being no more than a continuation of the racial vilification, by using faith as a proxy for race' (Cantle, 2012: 49-50). During early 2000s, islamophobia emerged in the Italian public discourse and political arena. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack, the linkage between religious faith and terrorism was suggested by political sources and fuelled by the media (Corte, 2002; Panarese, 2005). Long before residents of Islamic faith had a significant presence in Italy,

islamophobia discourse was already ‘championed’ by members of far-right parties suggesting incompatibility of values between Italy’s Christian Catholic roots and Islam. As Caponio observes, ‘Islam has served as the catalyst for the redefinition of Italian Identity as Roman-Greek and Christian-Judaic’ (2012: 228).

According to Benedict Anderson, the construction of otherness has traditionally served to perpetuate the myth of an imaginary political and national collectivity (1991).

As with all national identities, Italian national identity (or Italian-ness) is a problematic concept as it represents a fictional model of national identification. The idea of the existence of a homogenous Italian identity, ethnicity or race draws on nationalist ideologies. Although it is important to bear in mind that nationalism has been instrumental to political projects across the political spectrum, in Italy the heritage of fascism has fed into the construction of an essentialist Italian identity grounded on the fictional notion claiming the existence of a ‘pure Italian race’ (Sorgoni, 2002; Marinaro & Waltson, 2010: 10).

Scholars have argued that Italy’s profound North–South divide has provided a template for the representation of immigrants as Others. That is, the view of ‘the [Italian] Southerner’ as Italy’s internal Other (Gramsci, 1926) [2005]; Pratt, 2002) – has provided a model for the construction of immigrants as others. Internal North–South divide, the heritage of fascist ideologies and colonialism, and a strong Catholic identity have been identified as the principal templates for the construction of otherness and attitudes towards immigrants in Italy (Grillo & Pratt, 2002; Marinaro & Waltson, 2010). Furthermore, the construction of a homogenous national identity and national values seems to obscure the historical memory of the Italian state as a relatively recent ‘invention’ in which today there still coexist multiple cultural influences and a plethora of strong regional and local cultures and identities.¹⁰

Understanding the working of hegemonic forces and discourses underpinning the construction of national identity is instrumental to understand the possibility of ‘imagining’ national identity differently, in a way that is inclusive – and not exclusive

¹⁰ It was only in the 1860s that independent kingdoms were unified under one single Kingdom of Italy.

– of ‘difference’. This possibility will be investigated in relation to the identity politics embraced by some of the intercultural digital media platforms at the centre of this study, and, in particular, in relation to the proposition and construction of a ‘new Italian’ identity which will be introduced and discussed in the last section of this chapter (section 2.3.).

2.1.4 ‘Good-for-the-economy’ and ‘solidarity’: pro-immigration rhetoric

Immigration discourse in Italy is highly polarised both at the national and local level. Whilst arguments championing anti-immigration solutions are typically voiced by right-wing politicians, the centre-left and the radical left traditionally place emphasis on social justice and integration (Caponio, 2005; Thomasson 2010). Nevertheless, concerns over border control and security have also been endorsed by the mainstream left on several occasions (Masseti, 2015).¹¹

With research tending to focus on the problematic areas of media coverage and discourse, less attention has been paid to discourse welcoming and championing the value of cultural diversity in society. The spectrum of advocates of immigration in Italy is rather broad and spans beyond the political left. It includes trade unions, immigrant-advocacy groups, local charities, religious – largely Catholic – associations, social service providers, and so forth. (Lara et al., 2009; Calavita, 2004).

The economic benefit of immigrant workers to the national economy has been frequently used as an argument to promote the acceptance of immigrants into Italian society and has featured relatively frequently in the news (Corte, 2002). Regional and local policies for securing employment of immigrant workforce have been championed and implemented by both sides of the political spectrum, recognising the economic value of immigrant workers to the Italian economy, particularly in times of a ‘tight labour market’ (Calavita, 2004). This view valuing the economic benefits of immigration is also enshrined in periodic policy schemes (*sanatorie*) granting resident permits to undocumented or irregular immigrant workers and the establishment of ‘entry quotas’ tailored to the current needs for an immigrant workforce in the labour

¹¹ Indeed, it was a centre-left coalition government which in 1998 instituted the highly criticised centres of temporary detentions for migrants awaiting repatriations.

market. A clear example is the Berlusconi government's ambivalent approach to immigration policies: while on the one hand it championed tough measures to tackle so-called 'illegal immigration', on the other the government issued the largest-ever 'regularisation scheme' – granting resident permits to undocumented non-EU workers – to 'please' a large political lobby of industrialists and business owners.

A second pro-immigration discourse is part of the 'rhetoric of solidarity' that portrays 'the immigrant' as a vulnerable subject in need of material support or 'victim' of unjust legislation, hardship, or exploitation (Berrocal, 2010). This 'victim-centric' discourse is typically articulated by the left-wing political actors, immigrant-advocacy groups, religious associations and broadly social service organisations. In particular, Catholic charities and organisations have played, and still play, a crucial role in the reception and integration processes of newly arrived or settled immigrants. As Barrocal observes, the Christian-Catholic virtue of 'solidarity' is embedded in humanitarian welcoming attitudes towards immigrants in Italy (2010) and has more recently driven the humanitarian discourse advocating a welcoming reception of asylum seekers (UNCHR, 2016).

Berrocal observes that both pro-immigration arguments place the subject in a subaltern position (2010). In the rhetoric valuing the economic benefits of immigration, immigrants remain 'subaltern' subjects discursively incorporated in the 'nation' as functional to its economy (*ibidem*). Whereas in the rhetoric of immigrant vulnerability, the subject is reliant on the assistance of associations – or of the dominant society at large – as lacking skills and incapable of self-determination. Individuals' own motivations, desires and aspirations are not made relevant in either pro-immigration arguments and 'othering' mechanisms are retained in discourse (*ibidem*).

Reflecting upon the construction and circulation of discourses that advocate immigration in society is instrumental to understand the possibilities for articulating a different discourse on immigration and diversity, one that aspires to be devoid of mechanisms re-proposing old 'othering' ideologies and an overall subaltern position of the 'immigrant subject'. This is a challenge embraced by those cultural-political projects seeking to challenge or broaden the spectrum of dominant representations about 'difference' in society by proposing positive or more balanced coverage of

cultural diversity. The case of Italy's intercultural digital media enables the exploration of the production of discourses that seek to provide an alternative and often positive representation of cultural diversity in Italy. The extent to which these platforms succeed in producing and offering 'new' and 'alternative' representations of cultural diversity through inter-cultural collaboration is investigated through the analysis of the contents of the websites discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis.

2.1.5 *'Overwhelmingly white' Italian media*

A complex set of cultural, commercial and economic constraints influence the media output (Atton, 2008). Hence, also the representation of immigration and 'ethnic minorities' in the media is profoundly influenced by the 'institutional structures of broadcasting' (Hall, 1980) and daily news-making routines (van Dijk, 1995; 2008). Studies exploring media coverage of immigration have occasionally underscored the lack of cultural diversity in the newsrooms as a crucial factor influencing the media coverage of immigration and 'ethnic minorities' (van Dijk, 1995; 2008; Ainley, 1998; Bleich, et al., 2015).

Under-representation of journalists of immigrant background in media organisations has significant consequences with regards to the media output and precisely for 'news production, writing style, source access and general perspective of news discourse or television programmes' (van Dijk, 2008: 74). In fact, social power is often institutionalised in the unequal distribution of access to media organisations and discourses (van Dijk, 2008). In evidence of this, research has shown, as I discussed in sub-section 2.1.2, that newspapers tend to rely on a limited range of sources – most often political and institutional sources – and heavily rely on material released from public relations and news agencies (Lewis, et al., 2008; Franklin, et al. 2010). Subsequently, as van Dijk observes, 'ethnic minorities' tend to feature infrequently as sources of information. Their opinions are less asked or found less credible or newsworthy, also because most journalists (and virtually all editors) are 'white' (van Dijk, 2000: 37). Barriers of access to media production coupled with stereotypical portrayals of the immigrant population are two entwined factors contested by diversity advocacy groups, citizen or professional journalists and members of the public advocating pluralism and progressive politics.

Even though, overall, significant progress and efforts have been made across European news organisations in the direction of more pluralistic and diverse newsrooms, research has shown that journalists from ethnic minority communities still rarely hold senior positions in news organisations in Europe and North America (Johnston & Flamiano, 2007; Cushion, 2012; Meli, 2015).

In Italy, journalists or media practitioners from an immigrant background are still largely under-represented in major national news organisations. News anchors presenting the national and local TV news programs are overwhelmingly ‘white Italians’ with only a handful of exceptions occurring over the last decades. Such an under-representation of journalists of immigrant background produces a distortion of contemporary society characterised, on the contrary, by increasing cultural diversity. Initiatives and policy strategies for increasing newsroom diversity to achieve informative and balanced reporting have been implemented in news organisations across Europe over the last decade (Kretschmar, 2007; Meli, 2015).

A comparative study by Meli (2015) has examined policies on diversity implemented by fifteen major news organisations across different European countries. Through interviews with journalists, the study finds that Italian both public and private broadcast media organisations are characterised by scarce awareness of current European debates on diversity and by a limited understanding of diversity beyond the logic of ‘assistentialism’ or solidarity and ‘equal opportunities’. What is missing, Meli argues, is a view on diversity that recognises and values differences as useful opportunities for the media to be innovative, experimental, and distinctive in line with strategies put forward by media organisations in the UK, France and the Netherlands (2015). Because of the high politicisation of ‘immigration’, immigration/cultural diversity matters are often considered ‘sensitive’ topics and struggle to receive programming attention outside the news agenda (Meli, 2015). Although experimentation with innovative broadcast programs has occurred over the years – which I will discuss in the next sub-section – on the whole both public or private news organisations are yet to conceive and establish ‘diversity departments’ with specific policies and strategies on diversity devoted to the recruiting of journalists and practitioners of immigration background as well as to training and education (*ibidem*).

Major publishing groups in Italy have also failed to conceive diversity as part of their editorial and business strategies and this is also reflected in the fact that only a handful of journalists of immigrant background work for major national newspapers. Nevertheless, in the last few years, national dailies such as *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* have invested in citizen-contributed editorial initiatives aimed at addressing issues, interests and concerns of first and second generation ‘immigrants’ in Italy. However, these tend to remain isolated initiatives and disjointed from the overall editorial politics of the newspaper (Meli, 2015).

In Italy, a form of ‘new’ or ‘symbolic’ racism is institutionalised in the restricted access to senior roles in news organisations. Until 2014, according to a law dating back to the late 1940s (Law 47/ 1948) the possession of Italian citizenship or EU status was a necessary requirement for taking up the role of chief executive in a national news media outlet. Non-EU residents in Italy, even if settled in Italy for many years and holding a valid residence permit, were thus prevented from aspiring to take up the most senior role in a national newspaper they may have been working at for many years. Since 2014, however, the Ministry of Justice has issued a reform of the regulation that dropped the requirement for Italian citizenship for editors-in-chief (Meli, 2015).

A further barrier of access to the journalistic profession is represented in Italy by the prerequisite of membership to the *Ordine dei Giornalisti* (‘The Journalists’ Guild’) obtained after attending a period of training and passing a professional exam. The *Ordine* is a state-regulated body, run by a committee seated at the Ministry of Justice. Because of this high level of bureaucratic formalism as well as the existence of strong ties between professional journalism and the government (Mancini, 2013), the *Ordine dei Giornalisti* institution has long been criticised for representing a barrier of access to the journalistic activity as well as limiting freedom of expression.

Finally, it is important to recall that ‘newsroom culture’ profoundly influences the organisational structure and subsequently production routines. Meli notes that:

The journalistic working environment in Italy is strongly affected by the lax regulation of internal and external interaction practices, in a very similar fashion to those affecting the political world as many as other

Italian working environments, and according to which friendships and relations prevail over formal roles, and thus also the corresponding obligations and responsibilities towards interlocutors and consumers. Openness of service and social responsibility of editorial groups, as much as of each of their workers, seems to be often totally lacking even in the case of the public radio and television service.¹² (2015: 177)

As Meli (2015) notes, access to the journalistic profession in Italy has in many cases lacked openness and formality of roles and responsibilities. This may have prevented aspiring journalists that could not rely on connections, socio-financial capital for affording unpaid internships and, even more crucially not in possession of Italian citizenship, to be offered the chance of a career in journalism.

For all the above discussed complex and entangled factors, major Italian news organisations have hitherto failed to become more inclusive of diversity as pluralistic democratic institutions and are lagging behind compared to the progress made by some of their European counter-parts (Meli, 2015). Restricted access to mainstream media has been a crucial catalyst for the setting up of media initiatives founded and/or contributed by residents or citizens of immigrant background in Italy, aimed at enhancing participation opportunities in media production practices for residents of immigrant background.

2.1.6 Progress towards diversity and balance

Whilst Italy still struggles with representation of an increasingly diverse society and access to the means of production for residents of immigrant background remains limited, efforts and some progress towards more balanced coverage of diversity have been made in recent years. Research in the last few years has shown an increase in news stories related to aspects of ‘integration’ of the long-settled immigrant population – broadening the spectrum of ‘immigration news’ largely concerned with sea-arrivals – after a reform of the citizenship law was announced by the centre-left coalition government in 2013 (Associazione Carta di Roma, 2013). Overall, there seems to be more awareness of the citizenship rights demands of young residents of immigrant background and new labels devoided of the ‘immigrant status’ have been sought and

¹² Translation mine from original text in Italian

employed to indicate Italian born youth of non-EU parents, such as ‘new Italians’ as I will further illustrate in the next sections. Nevertheless, Faloppa notes that the voices of young residents of immigrant parents as the ‘beneficiaries of the reform’ remain largely silent in news reports (2015: 123).

More attention to language used in defining migrants has been paid by the national press and broadcast news programmes. The unfolding of the refugee crisis in recent years, has brought more awareness of the status of asylum seekers, previously routinely inserted in the undifferentiated category of *immigrati* (‘immigrants’). However, despite an increase in news coverage focussing on refugee and migrant arrivals in recent years¹³, research has shown that voices of immigrants are still under-represented in the Italian coverage (UNHCR, 2016; Carta di Roma, 2016).

Several initiatives have been pivotal in raising awareness of the need for more balanced, pluralist and fairer information. In particular, the monitoring and awareness-raising work of the non-profit association *Associazione Carta di Roma* (‘Charter of Rome Association’) in the last few years has been instrumental in achieving progress towards fairer and more accurate media coverage of immigration and diversity.¹⁴ *Associazione Carta di Roma* was set up in December 2011 with the purpose of implementing an ethical protocol for the media coverage of immigration issues. The *Carta di Roma*’s deontological code invites journalists to adopt an appropriate terminology which reflects national and international law and avoids distorted or simplified information. The code also draws attention to the importance of safeguarding the identity of vulnerable subjects who choose to speak to the media such as asylum seekers victims of trafficking and of, whenever possible, consulting experts or organisations with an expertise in the area around which the report revolves (Carta di Roma, 2008).¹⁵ Furthermore, the Association regularly organises and promotes

¹³ The 2016 Report of *Associazione Carta di Roma* finds that the frequency of articles and titles on the subject, in 2016, has increased by over 10%, compared to 2015. In the last year, the news items devoted to the subject of (im)migration on TV news was 2954, with an average of nearly 10 news items a day (Carta di Roma, 2016).

¹⁴ The protocol was signed by the National Council of Journalists (CNOG) and the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) in June 2008.

¹⁵ However, the association *Carta di Roma* does not hold sanctioning power.

training courses for media professionals, awareness-raising events and study seminars on ethical journalistic practices with the goal to promote responsible and accurate information that guarantee the rights of asylum seekers, refugees, minorities and migrants (*ibidem*).

Alongside non-profit organisations committed to bringing positive change to mainstream media content and production, mainstream media have also produced and broadcast, over the years, programs discussing issues of interests to residents of immigrant background or newly arrived immigrants and also to the general resident population with the aim to raise awareness on cultural diversity. *Non solo nero*, a weekly TV program broadcast from 1988 to 1994 was the first program on national television broadcast by the Italian public broadcaster RAI focusing on the themes of cultural diversity in Italy and racism and the first program to propose a television host of immigrant background¹⁶. Many other media and radio initiatives were launched in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s aimed at redressing lack of content engaging residents of immigrant background as audience, and in many cases, as producers (Maneri & Meli, 2007).

Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous section, the lack of structural policies and strategies on diversity in Italian media organisations led to the creation of isolated initiatives often conceived as a necessity for addressing ‘equal opportunity’ requirements rather than as the result of a view of cultural diversity as an opportunity for innovation and experimentation with formats, topics, issues, and audiences that reflect Italy’s increasingly culturally diverse population. As a response to the shortcomings of mainstream media failing to be inclusive of cultural diversity – both at the content level and within production teams – many citizen-contributed initiatives have emerged throughout the last decade, including digital platforms around which this study revolves.

To conclude this first section of Chapter 2, I argue that despite efforts and progress towards more pluralistic, accurate and balanced information, the media portrayal of immigration and cultural diversity remains in Italy, as well as in many other countries

¹⁶ Maria De Lourdes Jesus, a journalist of Cape Verdean origins was the TV host of *Non solo nero*.

in Europe a field heavily defined by the political arena. In general, a limited range of repertoires for the portrayal of cultural diversity in society are offered by the media. In Italy, an over-focus on ‘the management’ of sea-arrivals has dominated the Italian national media agenda for decades. This has obscured the complexity and diversity of experiences, narratives, stories and perspectives of the long-settled immigrant population whose demands for equal rights and participation opportunities in society have only recently entered the media (and political) agenda. Although progress has been made towards more balanced media coverage and awareness of cultural diversity has increased in the media and public arena, newsrooms of major news organisations have not yet fully recognised cultural diversity as a feature of Italian contemporary society and an opportunity for the experimentation of innovative and inclusive content. Under-representation of residents and citizens of immigrant background within the media production processes and media coverage that struggles to be inclusive of ‘new identities’ and of interests and concerns of Italy’s increasingly cultural diverse resident population are the two main catalysts for the emergence of intercultural websites as alternative media platforms seeking to redress the limitations of mainstream media.

2.2 The politics of diversity: from multiculturalism to interculturalism

Political discourses around cultural diversity can influence inclusion and participation of minorities in the civic structures of society. The enactment of policies plays a crucial role in defining participation opportunities in society for residents of immigrant background. Nevertheless, minorities can exercise their agency to actively respond to real or perceived non-recognition and exclusion from the representational and political sphere. To explore the case of intercultural digital media in Italy, I believe it is important to understand the framework of ‘diversity politics’ in Italy and the way it has influenced the cultural politics of residents of immigrant background. In doing so, this section is informed by scholarly debates on the politics of diversity and, in particular, the framework of ‘interculturalism’, as an alternative to multiculturalism will be introduced and critically discussed.

2.2.1 Multicultural politics, intercultural practices

Culturally diverse democratic societies face the challenge to build communities capable of responding to people's different interests, needs and demands whilst granting universal rights of equality. Barnor Hesse's multicultural question illustrates how 'multicultural politics' is theoretically grounded in the struggle for a reconciliation between 'universal' claims of equality and the recognition of 'particularisms' relating to cultural and 'ethnic' backgrounds.

How then can the particular and the universal, the claims of both difference and equality, be recognised? This is the dilemma, the conundrum – the multi-cultural question – at the heart of the multi-cultural's transruptive and reconfigurative impact. (Hesse, 2000: 235)

In the last few decades, European societies have experimented with different models of 'dealing with' increasing cultural diversity in communities and responded through the implementation of different policies grounded in specific ideological views. In particular, the 'multicultural model' has been discussed, proposed, and criticised widely in a vast number of debates, studies and political interventions. (Hall, 2000; Perekh, 2000; Modood, 2005, 2007; Pitcher, 2006; Rattansi, 2010).

Multiculturalism has been for many years at the centre of public, political and philosophical debates as a framework for responding to cultural diversity in Western societies. However, as Hall notes, multiculturalism is not a single doctrine and does not characterise one particular political strategy. It instead describes a variety of political strategies and processes as many and diverse as the multicultural policies in different societies (Hall, 2000). Since the mid-2010s, multiculturalism has been subject to criticism by scholars and some European leaders who announced its failure as a political project. In February 2011, in his first speech as newly-elected Prime Minister, David Cameron criticised multiculturalism as a failed state project identifying segregation and separatism as the issues responsible for radicalisation and even the rise of terrorism. At the scholarly level, multiculturalism both as a political project and as a theoretical paradigm has been deemed responsible for the reification of cultural group difference and for creating suspicion that 'celebrating cultures' represents at best a shallow or ornamental approach to cultural diversity and at worst a relativistic abdication of civic responsibility to promote community cohesion or

‘shared values’ (Rattansi, 2012). Nevertheless, some scholars have claimed that, in the context of the United Kingdom, such critique may suit early ‘defensive’ forms of multiculturalism in the 1960s and 1970s against the racism and multiculturalism leading to separatism rather than to later more progressive forms of multiculturalism (Cantle, 2012).

Criticism surrounding multiculturalism, both as a theoretical framework and a political strategy for the promotion of pluralism and community cohesion has prompted an interest, in scholarly work for the concept of ‘interculturalism’ as a possible paradigm enabling a discourse about diversity politics disjoined by the negatively connoted multicultural policy framework. Furthermore, for what the Italian context is concerned, given Italy’s absent experience of ‘state multiculturalism’ as discussed below, interculturalism offers a flexible paradigm for understanding the sociocultural and policy context leading to the thriving of a wide array of locally-grounded practice-based initiatives such as intercultural digital media.

2.2.1.1 Interculturalism

The concept and paradigm of interculturalism informs the understanding and examination of the media form at the centre of this study which I have defined as ‘intercultural digital media’. The term ‘*intercultural* media’ brings attention to the intercultural vocation of these media seeking to produce media content through intercultural collaboration: residents and citizens of various immigrant backgrounds in Italy as well as citizens of single Italian heritage contribute to the production of the media content. Whilst the motivations behind the choice of this label for the media in question is further discussed in the following chapter, it is important here to discuss the scholarly framework of interculturalism informing the use of this term and the theoretical principles underpinning it.

Although the examination of the term ‘interculturalism’ started only recently in the British scholarly and policy-making debate (Cantle, 2012), the concept of ‘interculturalism’ (or ‘interculturality’) is not new in the European context. References to ‘intercultural dialogue’ or ‘intercultural education’ were introduced in the policy documents of European Union institutions and of the UN agencies (such as UNESCO) from the 2000s. The concept of ‘intercultural dialogue’ has been appearing in many

documents and reports of the Council of Europe with an educational-pedagogical focus. In the programs of the Council of Europe, references to interculturalism are made in relation to educational programs, and arts-based practices for local approaches to cultural diversity. According to a 2003 report of the Council of Europe as a conceptual toolkit for ‘school development, teacher training and practice’, intercultural education ‘creates situations of exchange, mutual influence and cultural cross-fertilisation. Its purpose is to enhance diversity and complexity through a constant cultural dynamism’ (Council of Europe, 2003: 28).

At the scholarly level, interculturalism is a paradigm that started emerging in the aftermath of the declared failure of state-multiculturalism. Indeed, various scholars have engaged with the concept of interculturalism and advocated it as a preferable theoretical and political approach to diversity in contemporary societies (Cantle, 2011; 2012; Rattansi, 2012; Barrett, 2013 Kimlicka, 2003 Meer & Modood, 2011).

In the British scholarly context, Professor Ted Cantle has been an advocate of an intercultural policy framework based on the entwined principles of community cohesion and intercultural relations. Among the features of interculturalism Cantle identifies and champions: the promotion of equal opportunities and positive actions across all differences; promotion of interaction, cross-cultural contact and understanding; contestation of stereotypes; and promotion of fluid and dynamic identities (2012). He also stresses the importance of the development of policies and intercultural programmes that promote all of these features (Idid: 89). Similarly, Ali Rattansi (2012) stresses the importance of the idea of encounters between difference cultures and the setting up of joint activities which versions of multiculturalism failed to emphasise:

The key point here is that instead of a mere celebration of diversity and different cultures as in versions of classic multiculturalism, what is involved here is the positive encouragement of encounters between different ethnic and faith groups and the setting up of dialogues and joint activities. (Rattansi, 2012: 152)

The idea of promoting ‘positive interactions with the members of other cultures’ is also essential feature in Canadian political philosopher Will Kymlicka’s conceptualization and view of interculturalism that he defines as ‘more than a simple

set of policies'. For Kymlicka, interculturalism rather refers to a *set of practices* that 'expands our horizons, provides new perspectives, and teaches us to reflect more critically on our own inherited traditions' (2003: 158). Therefore, interculturalism is envisaged by these scholars not just as an ideal driven by theoretical principles of equality and interaction among cultures, but as a practice that emphasises the pedagogical nature of these interactions. Such practices produce mutual learning and experiences that are not just for 'ethnic minority' communities, as to 'integrate', but for all cultural identities who engage across their 'differences'. In this perspective, an intercultural approach involves how to see and live in the society differently according to the idea of a 'two-way exchange' or learning process reworking the relationships between 'dominant' cultural identities and 'minority' groups.

However, it can be argued that interculturalism is based on very similar principles to those informing progressive views of multiculturalism. As Meer & Modood observe, 'dialogue', 'reciprocity' and 'interaction' are also foundational to most accounts of multiculturalism (2011: 8). This raises the question of whether interculturalism is an 'updated version' of multiculturalism and, if so, what has been updated, what is different between these two frameworks for understanding diversity and consequently elaborating policies in contemporary societies?

Interculturalism as a conceptual framework for thinking about diversity (politics) allows, I argue, a move away from the negatively charged terrain of multiculturalism and multicultural politics. Firstly, the fact that 'interculturalism' is a paradigm seemingly unconnected or not yet associated with any political project, enables a more flexible use of the term and potentially less charged application to different contexts and practices. Secondly, a primary emphasis in the paradigm of interculturalism is the dimension of cultural relations, exchange, and dialogue. It is this renewed focus on the 'how' of cultural difference encounters, the practicalities and interactions between individuals, that sets it apart and seems to make it a more useful concept sidestepping the problematic narratives surrounding multiculturalism.

The conceptual framework of interculturalism offers, in this sense, a useful paradigm for thinking about diversity in a more *inter*-relational way (Corte 2011; 2014), moving away from the focus on (ethnic) 'communities' and emphasising practice-based and

locally-grounded interventions seeking to engage ‘residents’ of various ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds including ‘autochthonous’ citizens (or citizens of single national heritage). Intercultural digital media at the centre of this study, as it will be further discussed in the following section and even more extensively in chapter 3, precisely aspire to perform an intercultural politics aimed at the engagement of residents of immigrant background in a media inclusive and pluralistic project.

2.2.2 Diversity politics Italian-style: between national assimilation and local interculturalisms

Multiculturalism has been heavily debated, at the political level, from the early 1990s until few years ago in many European states. Yet, the debate on multiculturalism has been almost absent from the Italian political agenda and public discourse. For many years, in Italy, the question of the ‘integration’ of immigrants resident in Italy has not been at the centre of the governments agenda. Policy debates have been primarily concerned with the control of ‘irregular migratory inflows’, establishment of ‘entry quotas’, and ‘regularisation’ schemes granting residence permits to undocumented or ‘irregular’ workers. With a strong focus on the ‘management of the arrivals’, Italy has failed to concentrate, until relatively recently, on the ‘social integration’ of the immigrant resident population in line with the approach of other Southern European countries (Campomori, 2008; Thomasson, 2010).

According to some authors, the fact that immigration in Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon may explain the weakness of politics and planning due to initial lack of experience (Allievi, 2010). Moreover, and perhaps more crucially, rhetorical political arguments – as illustrated in the previous section – have traditionally focussed on issues concerning the management of sea-arrivals, immigration control and the ‘regularisation’ of immigrant workers’ documentation in accordance with the demands of the labour market. As less profitable political arguments, questions of cultural and social ‘integration’ have not featured prominently in the political agenda for decades. Social policies of integration throughout the 1980s and 1990s largely concentrated on the employment status of ‘foreign’ workers through gradual recognition of equal access to social services. Social integration occurred as a ‘*de facto*’ process through employment, as a consequence of the economic insertion of immigrants into the labour market (Ambrosini, 2013; Caponio 2013; Caneva, 2014).

It was only in 1998 that a centre-left coalition government issued the first comprehensive immigration law (Turco-Napolitano Law 40/98). Beyond the intention of combatting illegal immigration and regulation of 'legal entries', the law established dispositions for the 'social integration of foreign (non-EU) residents'. Integration policy of 'foreign residents' was conceived as granting equal rights of access to welfare services and residence permits. An attempt to theorise and implement a national 'integration model' (see Zincone, 2000) – Italy's own version of multiculturalism, based on the principle of 'reasonable integration' – was made during an alternation of short-lived centre-left coalition governments (1998–2001). However, the 'reasonable integration model' – that also proposed a reform of the citizenship law – remained a theoretical experiment. The appointed Commission was dissolved immediately after the new Berlusconi government was voted into power in 2001.

From the years after 2000, integration policies put forward by Berlusconi's centre-right coalition government took an 'assimilationist' turn. The *Patto Integrazione* (Integration Agreement) was a set of 'integration' policies based on a credit-system: immigrants had to attend a 'civic culture' course, pass an Italian language exam or attend professional training to obtain a resident permit (Caneva, 2014: 8). The *Mozione Cota*, a motion put forward by *Lega Nord* peer Roberto Cota established the institution of temporary separate classes for newly-arrived primary school 'foreign pupils' as well as compulsory attendance of 'civic education' classes aimed at teaching 'respect' for Italian culture (Bettinelli, 2009). Yet, the attempt to implement a national centralised approach to integration policies, which was arguably the intention of the coalition government was ineffective and overall unsuccessful due to three main factors: the long time period of policy implementation; the scarcity of resources set aside for policy implementation and the scarce cooperation between national government and regional authorities (Campomori, 2015).

Overshadowed by more 'pressing' issues concerning management of arrivals and rights equality in employment and welfare services, the debate on granting equal citizenship rights to settled immigrants has not been a priority in the governments agenda until relatively recently. Reforms of the Italian nationality law were discussed

in Parliament on several occasions from the first decade of the 2000s.¹⁷ In 2009 a bipartisan proposal for reform was finally put on the agenda by the centre-left PD and the centre-right PdL.¹⁸ The Sarubbi-Granata bill, aimed to reduce residency requirements for citizenship application, facilitate naturalisation of children born and/or bred in Italy and overall strengthening the principles of *ius soli* (Zincone & Basili, 2013). However, the bill underwent such a drastic amendment resulting in a more restrictive version and never came into force.

It was only in 2013, that the newly appointed Minister of Integration, Cécile Kyenge, in a centre-left coalition government announced a reform of the Nationality Law aimed at relaxing the criteria for citizenship granting through naturalisation to long-settled non-EU nationals. However, as will be further discussed in the next sub-section, the reform bill, facing hostility from various sides of the political spectrum is, as of January 2017, yet to be approved by the Senate.

A lack of a comprehensive ‘multicultural’ programme at the national level, the attempts of which have been characterised by discontinuity of governments and an overall approach to immigration and cultural diversity primarily concerned with the most ‘pressing issues’ of immigration control and labour market insertion has meant that most integration policies had been devolved to regional and local institutions. In general, Italian regional institutions traditionally retain a certain autonomy in matter of social policies. Whilst education, housing and welfare access to the immigrant population are largely devolved to regional institutions¹⁹, the national government retains power over residency and citizenship policy.

Regional and local governments have always played a pivotal role in the reception and integration of immigrants (Campomori & Caponio, 2016). The concept of ‘local citizenship’ has been used to describe the situation in which residents’ access to services and opportunities varies according to their location of residency in Italy (Caponio, 2008). This results in the great variety of immigrant reception and

¹⁷ Particularly under the Prodi II cabinet, a centre-left coalition government (2006-2008).

¹⁸ The Democratic Party (PD) and the People of Freedom party (PdL).

¹⁹ After the institution in 1998 of the *Fondo Nazionale per l’Integrazione* (National Fund for Integration) devolving funds for ‘integration’ to regional governments.

integration approaches, policies and opportunities across Italy's highly regionalised and localised administration.²⁰ Third-sector initiatives such as immigrant networks, groups and associations have also been active the shortcomings of the national approach to integration (Caponio, 2005; Riccio & Russo, 2011). According to research there are over a thousand associations for immigrants in Italy, largely founded in the 1990s (Caponio, 2005). Immigrant associations in Italy represent a fragmented and complex landscape reflecting Italy's welfare system traditionally characterised by a high degree of delegation to third-sector organisations (Caponio, 2005: 947).

In the absence of a coherent, comprehensive and state-led approach to policies of social integration replaced by devolution to regional governments and the third-sector, Italy has arguably seemingly avoided some of the 'negative effects' for which 'multiculturalism' has been criticised. Theorists have often pointed out how multiculturalism, where it has been adopted as a state-project, has struggled to translate from abstract national rhetoric to concrete local realities (Schain, 1999). In the case of France and arguably of the United Kingdom, for instance, the adoption of multicultural policies has led – according to its critics – to an emphasis on 'ethnic communities' favouring segregation and ghettoization. Whilst immigrant 'communities' do exist in Italy's large metropolitan areas, overall the immigrant population is more evenly distributed across urban areas with considerably fewer issues related to 'ghettoization' than in post-multicultural nations (Ambrosini, 2004).

To summarise, Italy's weak and inconsistent approach to national policies of integration and the absence of a state-led project has, on the one hand hindered the process of institutional inclusion of residents of immigrant background as a prerogative of the central government. On the other, however, the 'missing multiculturalism' experience (Allievi, 2010), has led to a more de-centralised and locally-grounded approach to integration played out by regional and council institutions and third-sector organisations. This has resulted, I argue, in the existence of multiple 'intercultural' dimensions and approaches – or *interculturalisms* – to the provision of services and participation opportunities for the settled immigrant

²⁰ In the UK a similar concept is that of a 'postcode lottery', mostly used in relation to available NHS services i.e. that citizens are lucky or unlucky that in their local area the NHS offers or does not a particular service/drug, as these matters are not fully controlled by central government.

population pursued and offered by local third-sector or local (such as municipal) institutional actors.

It is within this context that immigrant and cultural diversity advocacy groups as well as local institutions have played a major role in redressing the shortcomings of the national politics through initiatives geared not only to the provision of services or material support but also to the enhancement of participation opportunities, inclusion, and inter-cultural relations. Among many initiatives, the setting up of intercultural centres by immigrant or diversity advocacy associations, or the organisation of intercultural events points to the existence of locally-grounded civic efforts throughout Italy placing an emphasis on the element of cultural exchange and dialogic relationship between 'residents' rather than between 'ethnic communities'. It is within this context that Italy's intercultural media have been conceived and established, growing out of an existing network of localised practices and endeavours committed to the promotion of participation and inclusion opportunities for the resident population of immigrant background through an inter-relational and collaborative approach between resident members.

2.3 Changing the regime of representation: from ‘immigrants’ to ‘new citizens’

The purpose of this section is to discuss the theoretical premises and Italy’s socio-cultural contextual factors underpinning strategies, practices and discourses seeking to challenge, transform or broaden the dominant regime of representation in relation to immigration and cultural diversity in increasingly diverse societies. The discussion principally draws on concepts, theories and debates from Cultural and Postcolonial Studies. Whilst Postcolonial and Cultural Studies theorists have largely focused on questions of representation and identity construction in post-colonial hegemonic discourses and practices, the examination of counter-hegemonic strategies contesting such dominant narratives and ideologies in relation to cultural ‘difference’ has received comparatively little consideration. Nevertheless, Stuart Hall’s critical insights into the counter-hegemonic ‘identity politics’ of black diasporic identities in the context of post-war Britain (Hall, 1987; 1988, 1991; 1997b) provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding and examining the struggles and counter-hegemonic initiatives of marginalised groups in society seeking to ‘come to representation’ and challenge, resist or broaden the dominant discourses on cultural ‘difference’.

Inserted in a discursive framework of ‘other-ness’ both at the media and political-institutional level – as I illustrated in section 2.1. – residents of immigrant background in Italy have in recent years articulated ongoing calls for recognition as ‘citizens’, seeking to change the dominant regime of representation that struggles to view cultural diversity as an integral component of the contemporary national (and local) society. Influenced by Stuart Hall’s reflections, this final section of Chapter 2 examines the cultural politics of residents whose ‘foreign’ or ‘immigrant’ status hinders full access to the institutional structures of society as ‘citizens’.

Issues and debates discussed in this section are foundational to critically examine the content of intercultural websites in the analytical chapters of this thesis and investigate to what extent these platforms successfully perform an intervention that counter, challenge or transform the hegemonic regime of representation of immigration in Italy and cultural diversity.

2.3.1 *The cultural politics of 'new identities'*

Can a dominant regime of representation be challenged, contested or changed? What are the counter-strategies which can begin to subvert the representation process? Can 'negative' ways of representing racial difference, which abound in our examples, be reversed by a 'positive' strategy? What effective strategies are there? And what are their theoretical underpinnings? (Hall, 1997b: 269–270)

'Cultural politics' is a domain that provides a conceptual framework for understanding and examining the construction of an alternative discourse on immigration and cultural diversity expressed through and enabled by digital media platforms. It is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of cultural interventions, political strategies and theoretical approaches to civic struggles towards progressive endeavours and social change. Cultural politics can be broadly defined as 'the domain in which meanings are constructed and negotiated, where relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested' (Jackson, 1991: 200).²¹ Perceived lack of recognition as 'citizens' with equal rights by marginalised groups is often the catalyst for collective mobilisations seeking to challenge or transform the dominant politics of representation.

From the perspective of Cultural Studies theorists, the examination of discursive counter-strategies seeking to challenge or transform dominant discourses and practices is based upon the assumption that meaning can never be finally fixed by representation (Hall, 1997b). There are two core theoretical assumptions underpinning the theory of representation at the centre of Stuart Hall's works. Firstly, meaning is not fixed by representation but open to constant fluctuation, redefinition and transformation (Hall, 1980; 1997a; 1997b). Secondly, meaning is constructed positionally: the practice of representation always implicates the position from which one speaks or writes (Hall, 1997b; 1988). This means that all discourse and knowledge is contextual as always produced within a particular culture, history and experience, and meaning is subject to constant redefinition, renegotiation and change (Hall, 1988: 446). From this follows

²¹ Sometimes the more focussed term 'identity politics' is used and often interchangeably with 'cultural politics'. Identity politics broadly seeks to advocate 'the cultural rights of those making identity claims within society' (Baker, 2004: 95) and it has been traditionally identified with the demands of subordinate groups in liberal societies.

that the unfixed nature of representation allows the dominant representations of (national) identities to be challenged, transformed or resisted through counter- or alternative discursive strategies.

Stuart Hall has extensively examined the working of representation in post-colonial Britain. His works on cultural identity and representation have also included reflections and analyses on the cultural politics of 'new identities' (Hall, 1987; 1988, 1991; 1997b). In particular, Hall explored the counter-strategies of 'Black cultural politics' designed to challenge the racialized regime of representation experienced by members of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora in post-war Britain. As Hall recounts, individuals from a variety of backgrounds who had experienced the marginalising conditions of 'racist society' began to mobilise socially, culturally and politically (Hall, 1991: 53). Collective mobilisation was facilitated by the creation of a collective 'Black' identity that enabled them to find some ground from where to speak:

I do not know an example of any group or category of the people of the margins, of the locals, who have been able to mobilize themselves, socially, culturally, economically, politically in the last twenty or twenty-five years who have not gone through some such series of moments in order to resist their exclusion, their marginalization. That is how and where the margins begin to speak. The margins begin to contest, the locals begin to come to representation. (Hall, 1991: 53)

According to Stuart Hall, the constitution of the 'black' subjectivity was a 'strategic move' for the organisation of a resistance 'Black' movement. Individuals from a heterogeneity of backgrounds started to identify themselves politically as 'Black' in order to pursue a collective struggle against the politics of the 'racist majority'. According to Hall, 'black' is a cultural and political category constructed in a certain historical moment in an attempt to pursue resistance and social equality in society. The constitution of a new collective homogeneous identity is a defining characteristics of all social movements of minority groups in society:

All the social movements which have tried to transform society and have required the constitution of new subjectivities have had to accept the necessarily fictional but also the fictional necessity of the arbitrary closure

which is not the end which makes both politics and identity possible. (Hall, 1987: 45)

Hall's notion of an essentialised identity as a political strategic category constituted for resisting and challenging anti-racist ideologies and practices in mainstream society resonates with the notion of 'strategic essentialism' coined by postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak. The term was introduced by Spivak in relation to the scholarly works of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collective of South Asian writers whose aim was to adopt a 'subaltern perspective' in re-writing India's history and the imperial domination (1985). Spivak views the work of the Subaltern Studies Group as 'a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest' (Spivak, 1985: 214). While Spivak has an ambivalent relation to the concept, strategic essentialism remains a useful conceptual tool for understanding and examining empowerment tactics of 'subaltern' groups in society. Marginalised groups such as ethnic minority groups may choose to develop and embrace a 'new' collective identity that temporarily and strategically homogenises the heterogeneity of cultural, 'ethnic' and political backgrounds and experiences in order to pursue the group's social and political agenda.

The strategic construction of collectivised identity signifies re-assignment of minority groups' agentic power over self-representation and the re-appropriation of a discursive space from where to begin to articulate a counter-discourse.

The notion of strategic essentialism retains a positive connotation whenever the strategy results from a deliberate choice. However, a tactic based on the constitution of a more essentialised version of a collective identity may become 'problematic' whenever the embraced essentialist identity is not the result of a deliberate choice but to some extent superimposed (Eide, 2010: 76). For instance, factors such as media conventions or the socio-political situation may impose an essentialised identity to minority groups in society that serves the discourses and political agenda of the hegemonic society. More often however, the process is a hybrid one: self-representation strategies created by minority groups can be incorporated in mainstream processes. Conversely, narrations of identities produced in mainstream discourses can be embraced for empowerment purposes by marginalised groups.

Stuart Hall has extensively examined the working of representation with particular reference to the cinema and popular culture context. In examining the counter-strategies of representation, Hall (1997b) discusses two main strategies deployed for subverting stereotypical representation of 'Black subjects' in films and popular culture. The first 'trans-coding' strategy is defined by Hall *integrationist strategy*. This discursive tactics entails that the racialized subject 'could gain entry to the mainstream but only at the cost of adapting to the white image of them and assimilating white norms of style, looks and behaviour' (Hall, 1997b: 270). The new positive identity of the previously stigmatised 'black subject' is constructed by borrowing on the repertoire of the portrayal of the 'white subject'.

Another trans-coding strategy re-framing positively the stereotypical representations of racialized subjects is defined by Hall as the *celebration of difference* (Hall, 1997b: 272). This strategy works by replacing negative images with positive and celebratory portrayals of the 'black' subject. It is the discourse of 'black is beautiful' serving as a political 'act of defiance' (Heywood, 2011) against the racist society and the dominant representational regime:

...subordination can be challenged by reshaping identity to give the group concerned a sense of (usually publicly proclaimed) pride and self-respect, for example 'black is beautiful', 'gay pride', and so on. Embracing and proclaiming a positive social identity thus serves as an act of defiance (liberating people from others' power to determine their identity) and as an assertion of group solidarity (encouraging people to identify with those who share the same identity as themselves). (Heywood, 2011: 190)

Trans-coding strategies have the merit to increase the diversity of representations of marginalised groups in society. However, many of these re-definitions of collective identities draw on fixed categories grounded on 'difference' and oppositions re-establishing boundaries between the centre and the margins. A (counter-)politics of representation grounded in the complexity and heterogeneity of identities, backgrounds and experiences has been practiced less frequently.²² Most often

²² Stuart Hall talks about the film *My Beautiful Laundrette* as a "is one of the most riveting and important films produced by a black writer in recent years and precisely for the reason that made it so controversial: its refusal to represent the black experience in Britain as monolithic, self-contained, sexually stabilized and always 'right-on'—in a word, always and only 'positive', or what Hanif Kureishi has called, 'cheering fictions'" (1988: 30).

‘subaltern groups’ seeking to transform the dominant regime of representation find it most effective to create and embrace a positive essentialised identity of themselves built in oppositional relation to the stereotypical portrayal imposed by the ‘majority society’. It is within this kind of identity politics that the construction of a ‘new Italian’ identity, I argue, should be positioned as it will be examined in the later sections.

The traditional paradigm of identity politics has been criticised for many reasons in both the political and scholarly domain. Some scholars have pointed out that identity-based social struggles are based on a notion of identity that is grounded on difference: identity is defined as single and fixed category (Hall, 1997b; Hobsbawm, 1996) rather than as a cultural construct crossed by multiple and hybridised identities and experiences such as ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and so forth (Balibar, 1991). The maintenance of a notion of identity that essentialises subjects and collectivities would homogenise the heterogeneity of identities and experiences as well as foster division among groups.

Theoretical debates on the question of identity and subsequent strategies for re-thinking the notion of cultural or national identity should be understood and examined as situated within particular historical and socio-political contexts. In increasing culturally diverse societies, the notion of identity requires a ‘more diversified approach towards the politics of representation’ (Cottle, 2000:12). Alongside the notion of ‘difference’, several other concepts have been coined and explored in works within cultural studies since the end of the 1990s. In the late 1990s Rey Chow acknowledged the emergence of new semantic registers employing a more nuanced perspective and a more fluid vocabulary for describing ‘difference’ in multi-cultural societies. Since then, cultural studies theorists have enriched the conceptualization of identity with conceptual tools pointing to the ‘liminality, instability, impurity, movement and fluidity that inform the formation of identities’ (Rey Chow, 1998: 26):

The emerging interest within cultural studies for diasporic and mixed cultures has re-framed the question of identity: employing a wide range of more nuanced, open, fluid concepts. In this regards many of the notions that have acquired great currency in the realms of cultural studies and postcolonial studies, such as “hybridity”, “performativity”, “migrancy”, “diaspora”, and their affiliates, can all be seen to have taken off from a certain kind of identity politics. (1998: 26)

Homi K. Bhabha has placed the concept of hybridity at the centre of his cultural investigations (1994; 1996). For Bhabha the term hybridity does not (merely) refer to the mixed racial composition of the individuals but it rather stands for a process of 'cultural translation' (1996). The complex act of cultural translation consists in a novel combination of heterogeneous cultural elements conflating into a new synthesis or re-combination. It's within an in-between space or 'third space' that hybrid identities emerge thanks to the partial nature of culture (Bhabha, 1996: 54). The process of creating culture from the perspective of the in-between spaces offers some interesting theoretical and terminological insights for re-framing the problematic binarism of the logic of difference operating in the process of 'othering':

In postcolonial conditions, the presumption of a citizen's multiple affiliations unsettles both the majority and the minority's preconceived distinctions between 'identity' and 'difference', and between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The recognition that the condition of hybridity is central to all identities should motivate each and every citizen to take responsibility for transforming unequal group relations. The aim should be to re-establish them as bonds of trust and mutuality. (Mookherjee, 2005: 37)

The interest in more nuanced terms and conceptual tools for describing and exploring the complexity of identities in increasingly culturally diverse societies broaden the spectrum of possible tactics for pursuing struggles of identity politics by marginalised groups in society. Whether these struggles are premised upon an emphasis on the multiplicity and fluidity of different cultural belongings or upon the strategic adoption of an essentialised version of a collective identity, processes and collective endeavours seeking to change the regimes of representation are to be understood as situated in the specificities of socio-cultural realities.

The examination of concepts and debates relating to a counter-politics of representation that this sub-section discussed is crucial for understanding the issues, concerns, and interests of residents of immigrant background in Italy and for critically examining their representational and socio-political struggles towards recognition as 'citizens' of an increasingly cultural diverse European society.

2.3.2 *The long and winding road: from ‘immigrati’ to ‘Italiani’*

Long-settled immigrants in Italy – or rather ‘residents of immigrant background’ – have long experienced a double regime of non-recognition and representational exclusion. Firstly, at the media-political discursive level, residents of immigrant background have long been inserted into the undifferentiated category of ‘immigrants’, a term that has been increasingly charged with negative connotations focussing on all the ‘problematic aspects’ associated to immigration in Italy that I have illustrated in the first section of this chapter. Furthermore, for all the factors outlined and discussed in sub-section 2.1.5. in this chapter, restricted media access has meant that the means of news production are largely not inclusive of diversity. Secondly, at the institutional level, residents of immigrant background, and in particular resident youth of non-EU nationality, have long experienced a restricted access to citizenship rights hindering their full participation and juridical recognition as ‘citizens’ of the national society.

To date (February 2017), Italy is home to young residents whose parents arrived in the country from the mid-1980s – when Italy started becoming a crucial destination in the context of global migrations as outlined in the contextual section at the beginning of this chapter – and then throughout the 1990s and 2000s. As mentioned throughout the chapter, even if born and bred in Italy, children of non-EU ‘immigrants’ face a set of strict eligibility requirements to obtain Italian citizenship through naturalisation as a result of Italy’s strict citizenship policy, largely based on *ius sanguinis* (‘right of blood’). Those children born in Italy to non-EU immigrant parents are eligible for citizenship application only after the coming of age at 18 and must demonstrate uninterrupted legal residency until the time of application.²³ In addition to this and other requirements, the path to citizenship tends to be lengthy, highly bureaucratic and the outcome is often uncertain, as the fulfilment of the eligibility requirements does not ensure automatic granting.²⁴ Until the acquisition of an Italian-EU passport, residents of immigrant background are reliant on a temporary residency card or

²³ Residents born in a non-EU country – such as their parents – must instead demonstrate, amongst other requirements, ten years of legal and uninterrupted residency in Italy for ten years. Things obviously differ for those who obtain through marriage with an Italian national.

²⁴ The granting of citizenship is a discretionary act of the competent authorities Article 9: who have to give a judgment on the basis of the level of inclusion of the interested person in the Italian society, of his/her personality (social dangerousness, past convictions) and of his/her economic sufficiency.

‘residence permit’ (*permesso di soggiorno*) subject to a two-year renewal through re-application.

This precarious situation of institutional exclusion can be particularly difficult for youth of immigrant background whose denied *ius soli* – literally from the Latin ‘right of soil’, i.e. the right of birthplace – may hinder full access to and participation in the fundamental civic structures of society and institutionalise boundaries between *Italiani* (‘Italians’) and *stranieri* (‘foreigners’) – even if born and/or bred in Italy. The youth of immigrant background in Italy have been defined in the literature as ‘neither migrants nor citizens, the “precariously regular” second-generation... Italians-with-a-residence-permit’ (Hepworth, 2015: 21). A number of scholars have explored the case of Italy’s so-called ‘second-generation immigrants’ in relation to their sense of identity and belonging in the face of their struggle towards formal recognition of their Italian citizenship (Ambrosini, 2004; Valtolina & Marazzi, 2006; Colombo, et al, 2009; Thomasson, 2010; Marinaro & Waltson, 2010; Zinn, 2010; Bianchi, 2011).

Non-recognition at the institutional level can influence the self-perception of residents of immigrant background and the way belonging and identity are performed in a context that does not represent and recognise them as legitimate citizens of society. As the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor observes:

...our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. (Taylor, 1992: 8)

Nevertheless, the experience of exclusion and marginalisation from society prompts collective mobilisation seeking to restore ‘centrality’ to marginal(ised) identities. As Stuart Hall explains, as I discussed in the previous sub-section, individuals who had experienced the marginalising conditions of ‘racist society’ begin, at a certain moment in time, to mobilise socially, culturally and politically against their exclusion (Hall, 1991).

As identities often ‘at the margins’ of the media, political and institutional sphere, young residents of immigrant background have, in recent years, mobilised to raise awareness of the case of long-settled residents without citizenship. Immigrant associations, networks and groups in Italy, have in the past few years articulated ongoing calls advocating the reform of the national citizenship law, particularly with regards to the naturalisation process for non-EU resident nationals. A crucial role has been played by the association *Rete G2*, ‘the second-generation network’, founded in 2005 with the principal goal of lobbying for a reform of the citizenship law. Through the setting-up of nation-wide initiatives such as flash mobs, public debates and awareness events, *Rete G2* has represented an important civic actor in raising awareness of citizenship restrictions for long-settled residents in Italy and children of immigrant parents and the necessity to draft a reform that would strengthen *ius soli* (Riccio & Russo, 2011). To date – February 2017 – the group that is currently most active campaigning for citizenship reform is the grassroots movement *Italiani Senza Cittadinanza* (‘Italians without citizenship’) whose name signal a stronger message by drawing attention to the aspired recognition as ‘Italian citizens’.

Since 2013 with the institution of a Ministry of Integration by a left-right (short-lived) coalition government led by former Prime Minister Enrico Letta of the Democratic Party (PD), institutional proposals for the reform of the Nationality Law (Law no. 91 of 1992) received renewed attention and started being debated in Parliament. Yet, debates on the proposals for a reform of Italy’s Nationality Law already date back a few decades and have been championed by MPs and political actors across the political spectrum.²⁵ Parliamentary debates have primarily revolved around the possibility to relax the requirements of *jus sanguinis*. In October 2015, a reform bill was approved by the lower house of the Italian Parliament (*Camera dei Deputati*) which included a moderate version of the *jus soli* (*jus soli temperato*) that would relax the requirements for citizenship acquisition through naturalisation.²⁶ The adoption of this draft law

²⁵ Proposals for law reform followed soon after the approval of the Act in 1992. See Marchetti (2010). However, as discussed earlier, it is from 2006 that the citizenship law reform received increased attention in parliamentary debates.

²⁶ Children born in Italy would be eligible to citizenship acquisition after at least 5 years of permanent residence in Italy (*Jus soli temperato*) or after regularly attending educational or training courses for at least 5 years (*Jus culturae*).

would allow almost one million under-age residents who were born and/or educated in Italy to become juridically 'Italian'. Yet, one year later, the bill has yet to be enforced and is awaiting to be approved by the Senate. Delay in the process of approving a reform indicates that the granting of citizenship to thousands of residents who were born in the country and/or have lived in Italy for all or most of their lives is still a controversial subject for some political actors and fringes of society whose ideologies are grounded in an essentialist and fictional model of national identity.

2.3.2.1 *The 'new Italians'*

Within the context of ongoing demands for inclusion into the national institutional sphere from residents of immigrant background in Italy, the need to seek novel ways of talking about cultural diversity in Italy has emerged. In this regard, it can be argued that the labels *immigrato* ('immigrant') or even *straniero* ('foreigner') are unsuitable to represent and define long-settled residents who are Italian *de facto*, yet not by national law.

In recent years, research into the case of denied citizenship rights to a part of the resident population and consequences for people's feelings and perceptions on identity and belonging, has addressed the challenge to find appropriate labels for defining young residents of immigrant background (or rather, of immigrant parents) in Italy. The term 'second-generation immigrants' or second-generations (*seconde generazioni*) has been used extensively in sociological work as well as in public and political discourse. However, Thomassen (2010) identifies the following problematics. Firstly, 'second-generation immigrants' may not actually belong to the same generation. For instance, two individuals, one born in Italy in the 1980s and one born in the 2000s both to immigrant parents would not be classed as belonging to the same 'generation' in sociological terms. Secondly, the label tends to make generalisations on a category of people that have little in common given the great diversity that exists among so-called 'second-generation immigrants' in Italy – as well elsewhere – in terms of national, linguistic, religious, educational, and 'class' backgrounds. Thirdly, one may argue that any human being is second-generation to their parents. The term also seems to lay an assumption that second-generation immigrants *feels more different* than their parents than any other 'second-generation' of non-immigrant background which may not be the case. Finally, the label seems to

assume that ‘second-generation immigrants’ are ‘immigrants’ when most of them might not have had any direct experience of migration being born and bred in Italy (Thomassen, 2010). On this point, I recognise that the label I have chosen to use, namely ‘residents of immigrant background’ bears this last limitation as it has been addressed in the notes to text at the beginning of the thesis.

Despite embedding a series of problematics, the label *seconde generazioni* has been strategically embraced by some organisations and citizenship reform advocacy groups as a strategic act of self-identification for pursuing a collective action (Hall, 1991) such as in the case of the aforementioned ‘G2 network’.

In recent years, however, the expression *nuovi italiani* (‘new Italians’) has also started to be used in citizenship reform-advocacy discourse and increasingly in general in liberal discourses to indicate long-settled immigrants in Italy at large. In an attempt to move away from the connotations of ‘otherness’ that the term ‘immigrant’ embeds, the expression implicitly draws attention to and suggests support for the aspired recognition as ‘Italian citizens’ of long-term ‘immigrant residents’ in Italy or of children of immigrant parents. ‘New Italians’ or ‘new citizens’ are expressions that have been appearing in the institutional political discourse of the left (largely the centre-left Democratic Party) showing commitment to the citizenship law reform.²⁷

Research and scholarly studies have also adopted the term ‘new Italians’ when presenting research on ‘second-generation immigrants’ or on long-settled immigrant residents at large (Turco & Tavella, 2005; Della Zuanne et al., 2009; Parenzan, 2009; Berrocal, 2010; Bianchi, 2011; Giustiniani, 2011). Yet, it is difficult to trace the trajectory of the use of the term across the various discursive arenas: political, institutional, civic, grassroots, scholarly. From what I have observed, the term may have first appeared in institutional discourse and political language on that fringe of the political spectrum championing the citizenship reform, and been subsequently

²⁷ More precisely, the term had started appearing a decade ago or so. Albeit its use was initially sporadic. One of its first appearances in the literature is in the book that Former Minister of Social Affairs Livia Turco of the Democratic Party (centre-left) published with the title *Nuovi Italiani. Immigrazione, pregiudizi e convivenza* [‘New Italians. Immigration, Prejudices and Integration’] discussing issues of marginalisation as well as of integration of the immigrant population in Italy. However, whilst the title of the book bears the ‘New Italian’ expression – the author mainly talks about ‘immigrants’ in the main body of the book.

strategically embraced by civic and grassroots associations and movements advocating civic rights equality of settled ‘immigrants’ in Italy.

With an emphasis on national identity, the expression ‘new Italians’ retains a nation-centric view of identity. Berrocal observes that ‘new Italians’ re-proposes the old idea of the ‘Nation’ to which ‘new Italians’ are inserted. Moreover, he argues, the label opens up the risk of a new patriotism ‘where new identities are incorporated in the same old paradigm’ (2010: 86). Similarly, Faloppa (2011) suggests that the expression assumes an overriding Italian identity while it plays down on the possibility, for the ‘new Italians’, to experience the coexistence of multiple belongings, cultures, and identities.

The term ‘new Italians’, used to define residents or citizens of immigrant background and even ‘immigrants’ in Italy at large, shows the intention to advance a cultural-political agenda seeking to change the regime of representation of ‘immigrants’ in Italy and to show advocacy for citizenship law reform. The expression and its uses connect with Stuart Hall’s critical reflections on the cultural politics of racialized or, in this case, marginalised identities embracing a more essentialised version of themselves for the purpose of pursuing a collective ‘political’ endeavour. The strategic construction of collectivised identities signifies re-assignment of minority groups’ agentic power over self-representation and the re-appropriation of a discursive space from where to begin to articulate a counter- or alter-discourse.

To conclude, the recent emergence of a new language for designating long-settled immigrants in Italy suggests on the one hand the desire to move away from a rhetoric and view of immigration in Italy that has long perpetuated ‘otherness’ and negative connotations associated to the semantic world of ‘immigration’, both at the media and political-rhetoric level. On the other, it draws attention to calls for equal citizenship rights and to the necessity of recognising long-settled immigrants – including crucially young residents born in the country – as ‘citizens’ of an increasingly culturally diverse European society. Influenced by Stuart Hall’s critical examinations on the counter-hegemonic tactics of identity-based struggles, this section has illustrated the theoretical complexities underpinning the possibility for the construction of an alternative discourse on immigration and cultural diversity.

2.4 Conclusions

This first literature review chapter has presented and discussed the context of immigration in contemporary Italy in its multiple dimensions and interwoven complexities of historical, political, and socio-cultural processes.

The three sub-sections aimed to equip the reader with a framework of understanding for the emergence of intercultural digital media as the object of this work. As media platforms seeking to offer alternatives to mainstream media and public discourses on immigration and cultural diversity, intercultural digital media performs an intervention in a specific moment in time influenced by specific set of discourses, collective practices, and experiences.

Firstly, in section 2.1., the chapter discussed the principal discourses surrounding and influencing the mediated construction of immigration and cultural diversity in Italy. The section examined the way the discourse on immigration has been articulated in the media and political arena, with an over-emphasis on sea-arrivals, ‘illegal immigration’ and concerns for security for national and local communities. Italian media has been struggling to provide a representation of immigration outside a problem-oriented narrative and where cultural diversity is a constituent part of society. It is a contestation of the way diversity is portrayed in mainstream media and of the limited media access opportunities that has prompted the setting up of alternative media initiatives as will be discussed in the next chapter. Secondly, section 2.2., influenced by scholarly discussions on the framework of ‘interculturalism’ as an alternative to the negatively charged ‘multiculturalism’, examined Italy’s policy of diversity characterised largely by a de-centralised approach to the ‘management of diversity’ leading to the thriving of locally-grounded practice-based initiatives of intercultural vocation. This context is instrumental to the emergence as well as understanding of ‘intercultural digital media’ as media initiatives promoting intercultural relations rather than interests of individual ‘ethnic communities’. Thirdly, section 2.3 discussed recent institutional and grassroots efforts towards citizenship path for residents of immigrant background and the emergence of a ‘new Italian’ cultural politics. Such citizenship-advocacy discourse signifies a call for the

recognition of ‘immigrants’ as ‘citizens’ and opens up the possibility of the exploration of this or similar discursive strategies at play in intercultural media discourses.

The next chapter reviews and discusses literature in relation to the possibilities enabled by digital alternative media platforms to perform and promote discourses, views, and practices which are alternative to those offered by mainstream media. It will also situate the case of Italy’s ‘intercultural media’ within the more widely explored field of ‘ethnic minority media’ and illustrate, drawing on scholarly literature and research, the distinct characteristics of Italy’s intercultural (digital) media at the centre of this research.

Chapter 3 Alternative Media and Cultural Diversity: situating 'Intercultural Digital Media'

The previous chapter focused on the cultural and socio-political contextual background informing the emergence of intercultural digital media as the media form under scrutiny in this study. Following on from the previous section, this chapter discusses the field of alternative media emerging in the online media sphere as the terrain enabling the experimentation and production of counter- or alter-hegemonic discourses and practices. This chapter delineates intercultural digital media as a form of alternative media situated in Italy's digital media landscape. Literature defining and exploring the diverse landscape of alternative media in digital environments is reviewed and discussed.

As a media form restoring centrality to residents of immigrant background both as producers and as protagonists of the published stories, Italy's intercultural digital media bears some commonalities of intent with the more researched field of 'ethnic (minority) media'. Such field is critically examined according to a topological approach in order to understand the way intercultural media both shares common ground and distances itself from this media genre. I will then argue that the investigation of Italy's intercultural media can be situated within the complexities of a multi-faceted media field whose investigation is grounded on the understanding of both 'alternative media' and 'ethnic media'.

3.1 Digital citizenship

This study considers an alternative media form that has started emerging online in Italy from around 2000. Technological innovations in digital communications have been instrumental to the growth of bottom-up media practices throughout the last decade (Deuze, 2006). Additionally, other socio-political and cultural factors including global market forces and increased international mobility have contributed to the proliferation of alternative, oppositional, collaborative media initiatives (Deuze, 2006; Coleman & Blumer, 2009). As platforms grown out of a contestation with dominant ways of representing diversity in Italy as well as with under-representation of residents of

immigrant background in major news organisations, intercultural media have benefited from the possibilities enabled by ‘the democratic potential of the Internet’ (Siapera, 2006).

The Internet, enabling digital communication, has the potential to facilitate membership, participation and encourage ‘social inclusion’ of individuals within society (Papacharissi, 2010a; 2010b). Digital communication and technological innovations may provide opportunities for the expression and circulation of stories, perspectives and narratives that remain at the margins of mainstream media society. As Coleman & Blumer (2009) note, the ‘discursive role’ of the Internet involves potentially larger audiences, more communications exchange and wider opportunities for self-expression. Similarly, Couldry (2014) observes that digital means enable discursive possibilities and narrative-exchange. Particularly, technological innovations have enabled opportunities for ‘new voices’ to be heard and increased mutual awareness of these new subjects (Couldry, 2010).

Nonetheless, theorists of digital culture have also questioned the so-called democratic potential of the Internet. For Coleman & Blumer (2009) it is more appropriate to refer to a ‘vulnerable’ democratic potential since digital technologies can also create new or reinforce existent inequalities (Papacharissi, 2010). Furthermore, sociologist Manuel Castells argues that exclusion from Internet access is ‘one of the most damaging forms of exclusions in our economy and in our culture’ (2001: 3). A vast body of theory has discussed the ‘digital divide’ in relation to Internet access and skills in the use of digital technologies (Regnedda & Muschert, 2013). Some authors note that digital media and online platforms have produced a ghettoization of the public sphere. As Zygmunt Bauman observes in an interview with Mark Deuze, digital media platforms most often operate by ‘bringing together like-minded people and separating them from other-minded people’ (2007: 676).

Some authors have talked about the risk of ‘fragmentation’ of the public sphere (Deuze, 2005; 2006; Siapera, 2006) as well as behaviours of ‘hyper-individualisation’ (Deuze, 2005) and self-centrism. Another aspect to consider is the discrepancy between online activism and ‘offline’ action in society. For Bauman, the Internet may sometimes give an ‘illusion of action’ to those individuals engaged in digital activism

for good causes (Bauman, 2007). While maintaining a critical approach to the possibilities for participation, interaction and self-expression opened up by technological innovations, a growing body of studies have, in recent years, discussed the importance of digital infrastructures as opportunities enabling citizens to participate and engage in the domain of informal politics as I will discuss in the following sub-section.

3.1.1 Citizenship: legal status or practice?

From the mid-2000s we started witnessing an increasing shift of people formerly known as the audience (Rosen, 2006) from media recipients to active producers of media content. The emergence of a new type of ‘deeply critical global citizen who is excited about the ideals of democracy but is losing confidence in its national practice’ (Norris, 1998 cited in Allan, 2008: 257) is what largely defines practices of citizen journalism in the contemporary media sphere. Some contemporary scholars have found it useful to situate the concept of ‘citizenship’ within the context of civic engagement through digital media platforms (Couldry 2014; Papacharissi, 2010a; Mossberg et al, 2008).

Citizenship is a fluid and widely debated concept whose definition is historically-sensitive, having evolved with the changes of economic, socio-cultural and political circumstances and processes (Coleman, 2009; Papacharissi, 2010). For some scholars, the traditional notion of citizenship as legal membership of the national community (Marshall, 1963) requires further examination and development. Coleman (2009) argues that the notion of ‘citizenship’ can be understood in at least three ways. Firstly, in a ‘legal-judicial’ way, as official membership of a political community, usually a nation-state. Secondly, as political citizenship, extending beyond the officially-recognised citizenship. This notion highlights the potential for the ‘political citizen’ to exercise democratic influence over fellow citizens as well as the nation state. Thirdly, as ‘affective citizenship’, a kind of citizenship primarily concerned with the mobilisation of feelings of civic belonging, solidarity, and loyalty to a civic project that does not necessarily assume the legal-judicial status as a prerogative. Such notion, for Coleman, is encapsulated in the declaration attributed to Massimo D’Azeglio

following the Italian unification process that led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861: ‘We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians’.²⁸

Within the context of increasingly culturally diverse societies, the notion of citizenship gains complexity and needs to be understood in its multiplicity of modes of articulation. Increasingly in modern political and cultural theory, the notion of citizenship has been recast away from legal-judicial definitions that exclude, for instance, undocumented migrants, towards a ‘form of identification, a type of political identity; something to be constructed, not empirically given’ (Mouffe, 1992: 31). In particular, the expression ‘digital citizenship’ has been used in recent years to highlight the capacity and potential for civic engagement in society enabled by digital media and communication technologies (Mossberg, et al., 2008). The use of technology for civic action such as political activism demonstrates how Internet use is instrumental to citizenship in the digital age (Mossberg et al., 2008). Individuals engaged in the sphere of civic action through digital communication are viewed as ‘active citizens’ ‘who actively intervene and transform the media landscape’ (Rodriguez, 2001):

[Citizen media] implies first that a collectivity is enacting its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities, and institutionalized social relations; and third, that these communication practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformation and changes are possible. (Rodriguez, 2001: 22-23).

The notion of digital citizenship draws on a broader conception of citizenship that is irreducible to a legal status or nationality. In this regard, citizenship is not about legal membership to a nation-state but, as discussed above, it is performed within everyday practices of civic participation. Similarly, political theorist Engin Isin suggests that citizenship – albeit he specifically refers to ‘European’ citizenship – ‘is enacted through not only legal but also cultural, social, economic and symbolic rights, responsibilities and identifications that are irreducible to citizenship [of a state]’ (2013:

²⁸ Massimo Taparelli, marquis d’Azeglio (1798-1866) was an Italian-Piedmontese statesman and politician (he was Prime Minister of Sardinia and then Senator of the Kingdom of Italy) who advocated the Italian national unification by the expulsion of all foreign powers from the then-divided Italian state. The quotation is attributed to him but historians seem to agree that evidence that he said those exact words is almost inexistent.

19). Accordingly, subjects that are not citizens by law still enact citizenship rights: their social and political struggles against inequalities are acts of citizenship (Isin, 2013). Therefore, citizenship is viewed as a performative act

...in the sense that it involves being and acting with others, negotiating different situations and identities, articulating ourselves as distinct yet similar to others in our everyday lives, asking questions of right and wrong and acting as citizens. Through these social struggles, we develop a sense of our rights as others' obligations and of others' rights as our obligations (Isin, 2013: 22).

Subsequently, citizenship can be enacted by individuals who are not citizens by law, yet fully participate in the common civic, socio-economic and political life of a certain state and claim rights in these multiple entwined spheres.

The conceptual framework of digital citizenship allows us to consider digital media practices seeking to perform social change in society as expressions of citizenship acts. It enables us to look at digital media as sites for the articulation of political and identity struggles enacted by those individuals who might not be citizens 'by law'. This is particularly relevant to the present study with regards to the issue of restricted citizenship access to 'residents' – as not yet formal 'citizens' – of immigrant background in Italy as discussed in the previous chapter. The restricted access to national citizenship and subsequent limited opportunities for participation in the formal structures of society are sought to be redressed through participation in initiatives of media engagement. As Coleman & Blumer maintain, institutional void can be (partially) filled in the digital sphere 'in which tensions between state-centric and democratic citizenship can be played out' (2009: 7).

The tension between civic engagement through digital media participation as informal performance of citizenship and advocacy for state-promoted citizenship represents an interesting aspect that this study will consider through in-depth analysis of the content of intercultural media presented and discussed in the analytical chapters of the thesis. Particularly, it may add complexity to Atton's statement according to which 'citizen media are aimed not at state-promoted citizenship but at media practices that construct citizenship and political identity within everyday life practices' (2008: 123). Because the issue of state-citizenship bears a certain importance within the cultural politics promoted by Italy's intercultural digital media, this study offers a problematisation of

the idea that ‘digital citizenship’ as a performative act through active digital engagement and ‘state-citizenship’ are somehow antithetical or separate domains.

3.1.1.1 ‘Citizen media’ for ‘non-citizens’?

Media scholars have increasingly drawn attention to small-scale civil society media initiatives emerging in Europe and Western democratic societies (Hintz, 2010). A number of different overlapping categories or sub-genres of bottom-up citizen-contributed media outlets have emerged over the last decades: ‘citizen media’, ‘grassroots media’, ‘radical media’, ‘community media’, are only few labels within a multitude of terms falling within the macro-categories of ‘civil society media’ or ‘alternative media’.

For the purposes of this study it is worth spending some words on ‘citizen media’ as a label which has been widely used in the literature since its early appearances in the early years of the 2000s (see Allan, 2008). A first crucial point to highlight is the wide array of initiatives falling within the umbrella term of ‘citizen media’ (or ‘citizen journalism’). Such great diversity of experiences stems from a plurality of evolving meanings associated to both ‘citizenship’ and ‘journalism’. As Cottle maintains ‘citizen journalism has evolved rapidly across recent years and is expressive of the surrounding culture, organisational structures, and politics of civil societies’ (2009: xi). In the category and term ‘citizen media’, emphasis is placed on the idea of empowerment through media engagement of common ‘citizens’. As Rodriguez, argues, citizen media are projects of self-education through which a citizen ‘actively participates in actions that reshape their own identities, identities of others and their social environment’ (2000: 19).

Despite the fact that intercultural digital media at the centre of this study are media platforms that may include non-professional journalists in media-production, the label ‘citizen media’ presents some semantic problematics in relation to this work. Because the term ‘citizen’ implies a formal recognition by a nation-state, then by definition stateless individuals, refugees or residents in the process of awaiting citizenship granting do not juridically qualify as ‘citizens’. This can be problematic when ‘non-citizens’ engage in media activism and hence whilst exercising ‘digital citizenship’ in

the sense we discussed earlier do not qualify as legally recognised ‘citizens’ of a nation-state.

Restricted access to Italian citizenship through naturalisation is a contested issue among long-settled residents of immigrant background in Italy as I illustrated and discussed in the previous chapter. Reform of the current citizenship law is often advocated by media practitioners of intercultural websites who themselves might not (yet) be Italian citizens by law. Therefore, for the purpose of this work which examines an alternative media form engaging ‘residents’ (as well as ‘citizens’) of immigrant background whose citizenship status is a contested issue in the current national socio-political debate as I discussed in chapter 2, the label ‘citizen media’ does not seem to reflect the tension between aspired ‘legal citizenship’ and current ‘resident status’ of many long-settled immigrants in Italy.²⁹ Conversely, ‘alternative media’, being a broad and flexible category remains the term that, I argue, best defines the major intent of intercultural media – namely providing an *alternative* to mainstream media’s accounts of immigration and cultural diversity – devoid of references to the contentious ‘citizenship status’.

3.2 Defining ‘alternative media’

In the literature, the category of ‘alternative media’ has been used to define those citizen-based initiatives seeking to provide an *alternative* to commercial and public service mainstream national media where discourses articulated by under-represented groups in society can be enacted (Atton, 2002; 2004; 2008; Bailey, et al., 2007; Coyer, et al., 2007; Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). I therefore suggest to view intercultural digital media a form of ‘alternative media’. Like ‘citizen media’, ‘alternative media’ is an umbrella term used to encompass a wide range of media initiatives, practices and experiences. Nevertheless, the term seems to particularly suit the case of Italy’s intercultural digital media, placing emphasis on the ‘alternative agenda’ that these media pursue (Silverstone, 1999).

²⁹ Furthermore, the label ‘citizen media’ has not been utilised in the Italian context. Its equivalent in Italian (*media dei cittadini*) does not appear in the Italian-language literature.

Alternative media are, by definition, media platforms, generally small-scale that ‘that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, perspectives’ (Downing, 2001: v). Similarly, Atton (2004) defines alternative media as those ‘media projects, interventions and networks that work against or seek to develop different forms of the dominant, expected (and broadly accepted) ways of doing media (*ibid*: ix).³⁰ Therefore, what alternative media practitioners generally contest in mainstream media is a set of interwoven aspects of hegemonic media, including content, production routines, structural organisation, and corporate media political economy. Nonetheless, some scholars seem to agree that the most important feature of alternative media lies at the content level (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). As Atton & Hamilton note, ‘one of the principal intents of alternative media is to fill the gaps that its reporters believe have been left by mainstream media’ (2008: 79).

In recent years, ordinary citizens or groups who perceives themselves as marginalised within the mainstream community have become engaged in the content-production process so that their viewpoints are foregrounded. Alternative media communities are typically formed around a shared interest (Wanger, 1998) or a common call for acknowledgement (Mitra, 2001) on behalf of communities or individuals demanding more inclusive and democratic means of communication.

Other defining features of alternative media include their organisational structure. In contrast to media from major news organisations, alternative media are allegedly more open to participation and to forms of horizontal communication and decision-making between contributors. Additionally, some scholars have suggested that one of the defining features of alternative media is the relative autonomy from corporate capital (Hackett & Carrol, 2006). Although many ‘alternative media’ outlets are generally not revenue-driven enterprises and position themselves outside the commercial sector, the political economy of alternative media is complex and at times contradictory (Atton & Hamilton 2008: 40). Seeking to go beyond a polarised vision of ‘the mainstream’ vs. ‘the alternative’, authors increasingly point out the complexity and fluidity of this relationship characterised by elements of continuity, discontinuity, contradiction, and change (Cottle, 2000; Atton, 2004; Meli & Maneri, 2007).

³⁰ Similarly, Couldry & Curran suggest to define alternative media as “a media production that challenges, explicitly or explicitly, concentrations of media power, whatever form those concentrations may take in different locations” (2003: 7).

3.2.1 Alternative vs. Mainstream

The relationship between the ‘alternative’ and the ‘mainstream’ is informed by a complexity of factors and relations. Contemporary media scholars seem to agree that alternative media very rarely operate entirely independently of state and market or commercial forces (Deuze, 2006; Atton 2002; 2004; Bailey et al, 2007; Uzelman, 2005). Coyer, et al. (2007) talks about a state of ‘relative independence’ of alternative media ‘from and in negotiation with institutional and corporative power’:

Our own view is that questions of power, its distribution and exclusions are key, and that all alternative media work exists and flourishes in the various spaces of ‘relative independence’ from and negotiation with, institutional power (Coyer, et al., 2007: 10).

As Deuze notes, most often, the establishment of alternative media online is not the exclusive domain of non-profit organisations or voluntary initiatives but it might even take place ‘within the walls’ of major media organizations or institutions (2007: 272). Today, both the mainstream and the alternative are increasingly fluid and hybridised domains. On the one hand, one can observe the shift occurring gradually throughout the last almost two decades of the mainstream media towards participatory communication forms such as integration of user-generated content in news-production, collective blogs sections in online newspapers, experiments in collaboration between professional and amateur or citizen journalists. On the other hand, alternative media themselves may embody features or rely on content ‘borrowed’ from the mainstream media. Sometimes they can even be hosted within the platform of mainstream media institutions and subsidised by a major publisher or media organisation. Furthermore, media activist and scholar Scott Uzelman talks about ‘the contingency of the alternative’, that is what is alternative at a particular moment in time can become mainstream at a subsequent moment (2005).

Some authors have viewed this ‘cosy relationship’ between mainstream and alternative as problematic. However, for Uzelman it is integral to the very definition of alternative media: ‘alternative media strategies, by demanding change of powerful institutions, in some respects take for granted the legitimacy of these powerful institutions’ (2005:17).

Rather than demanding radical revolutionary changes within major media corporations, alternative media activists often demand that the mainstream media 'temper undesirable behaviours and make room for other perspectives within existing formats' (*ibid*: 25). Scholars have coined and used different labels to indicate various degrees of 'radicality' (or 'alternativeness') with regards to the different dimensions of alternative media platforms (Atton & Hamilton 2008: 28). The extent to which alternative media break with established routines of mainstream media culture can vary: what is alternative can refer to values or ideologies, type of stories, production routines or certain intents and aspirations. Furthermore, as McGuigan maintains, there may be a difference between 'alternative' and 'oppositional' or 'counter-hegemonic': whilst 'alternative culture' seeks a place to coexist within the existing hegemony, 'oppositional culture' aims to replace it (1992: 25).

The complex and at times ambivalent relationship with mainstream media and different interpretations of 'the alternative' is reflected in great diversity in terms of content-production practices and political economy embraced by the individual alternative media practices and platforms. As Bailey et al., note:

Some totally independent of market or government, some dependent on the state for their resources, others drawing on advertising to finance their operations; some re-producing hegemony, others clearly counter-hegemonic; some reactionary, some reformist, some revolutionary and others less obviously political. (Bailey et al., 2007: 153)

Most often operating 'within' and not 'outside' the conditions of market and production, alternative media are not exempted from the commercial and economic constraints that characterise the mainstream media sphere. Embracing mainstream conventions and commercial models of communications as well as more professionalised modes of production are some of the consequences of the intensified commercial model of media to which also 'less commercially minded and more ideologically driven media' have adapted (Kenix, 2015: 73). As Kenix suggests it would be simplistic to view alternative media as a uniform distinct field from mainstream media, when the two domains are characterised by mutual influences, complexities and transformations (2015).

Given the great diversity of approaches and interpretations to what is ‘alternative’ literature on so-called ‘alternative media’ encompasses a wide range of media experiences, practices and platforms. Whilst on the one hand the scholarly media field of alternative media may to some extent overlap with that of ‘citizen media’ the two fields emphasise distinct dimensions. ‘Citizen media’ underscores empowerment of ‘citizens’ in engaging with the media production process, whereas ‘alternative media’ stresses the alter-hegemonic intent prompting the establishment of the media initiative.

In order to identify a scholarly framework of understanding whereby to situate the media form at the centre of this study, the broad category of ‘alternative media’ allows for an examination of Italy’s intercultural digital platforms as a media form seeking to provide an *alternative* to mainstream media in relation to the narration of cultural diversity in society, as well as to the inclusion of residents of immigrant background into the media production structures. At the same time, intercultural media shares some common ground with a specific subset of alternative media, that is media produced by and or addressed to ‘ethnic minorities’. Yet, as I will show during the next sub-section, Italy’s intercultural digital media present some distinct features that crucially set them apart from the more extensively researched field of ‘ethnic minority media’.

The next section introduces and discusses the multifaceted media landscape of media produced by and/or for immigrant or ‘ethnic minority’ communities in immigrant-receiving countries largely in Europe and America. I suggest to consider this highly heterogeneous minority-media landscape as a subset of ‘alternative media’. Bearing in mind the complexities of the relationship between alternative and mainstream media, ‘ethnic minority media’ offer – to the community they serve and/ or to the wider public – an alternative to the perceived ‘mono-culturalism of a mainstream mediated world’ (Fleras, 2011: 241).

3.3 From ‘ethnic minority’ media to ‘intercultural media’: mapping the field

Over the last two decades, alternative media initiatives seeking to redress power imbalances in the provision of news and information for ‘immigrant’ communities, by restoring centrality to immigrant voices and perspectives, have flourished. Media outlets produced for and / or by immigrants or ‘ethnic’ minorities (Matsaganis et al.,

2011) have populated the media landscape of many immigrant-receiving countries worldwide. Increased international migration flows and population mobility have prompted an increasing desire or necessity to stay connected and informed about issues concerning the local community in the country of residence as well as in the 'homeland'. Furthermore, the development of digital technologies and the growth of digital alternative media as small-scale citizen-based initiatives as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, have played a crucial role in facilitating the development of so-called 'ethnic (minority) media' in recent years.

Under the umbrella category of 'ethnic media' (or 'ethnic minority media'), falls a wide array of media initiatives differing in location of production; type of community engaged in production or as audience; goals; medium; content; organisational and production routines; political economy and so forth. What all these initiatives have broadly in common is the engagement of an 'ethnic minority' community in the founding and/or production of the media platform content and/or as the main target audience. Moreover, at the content level, these media broadly share the struggle 'for "authentic" and/or pluralistic representations' which do not find adequate space in the dominant media agenda (Cottle, 2000b: 3). The functions that these media perform vary according to the interests, concerns and necessities of the community they serve and / or that produces them. This can range from the provision of information and news about the country of origin; news and events concerning the local and national community of settlement; the promotion of collective initiatives with local institutions and associations; opportunities for self-representation and for identity exploration (Morcellini, 2011).

As media outlets seeking to restore prominence to 'minority' and under-represented voices and produce content reflective of the interests of communities in countries of settlement for immigrant or 'ethnic minority groups, these initiatives represent a crucial field for exploring the cultural politics of 'new identities' (Hall, 1987; 1988) in increasingly culturally diverse societies. Media produced by and / or targeted at 'ethnic minority' or immigrant communities in Western immigrant-receiving countries have attracted scholarly attention particularly in Europe and North America. In media scholarly work, various labels have been deployed – often interchangeably – to

indicate the various types of media produced by and / or addressed to immigrant or ethnic minority or diasporic communities.

Studies about ‘ethnic media’ – or ‘ethnic minority media’ – (Riggins, 1992; Husband, 1994; Cottle, eds, 2000; Matsaganis et al., 2011); ‘diasporic media’ (Georgiou, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Karim, eds, 2003; Alonso & Oiarzabal, eds, 2010), ‘immigrant media’ (Hickerson & Gustafson, 2014), and ‘multicultural media’ in the Italian context (Meli & Maneri, 2007) have concentrated on various aspects concerned with the media under investigation. These may include: a mapping of the existing platforms in a particular geographical or national context; the role that these media play in serving the interests of different ‘ethnic’, ‘immigrant’ or ‘diasporic’ communities; the way these media articulate and (re)negotiate cultural identity and belonging; the extent to which participation in these media initiatives represents, for members of ‘immigrant’, ‘ethnic’, ‘diasporic’ communities an opportunity for ‘integration’ in the wider society or conversely may foster segregation and ghettoization; the way opportunities for participation in the wider society are enabled or restricted by these platforms.

Terminological preferences vary according to the scholarly traditions and approaches to the study of these media as well as to the specific characteristics of the community that produces them and/ or to which they are targeted. Furthermore, the different labels employed to define ‘ethnic’, ‘diasporic’ or ‘immigrant media’ among many other adopted categories is reflective of different socio-cultural traditions and ideological implications in understanding and theorising ‘difference’ in modern and contemporary societies. Research in America and in Europe has focussed, in recent years, on ‘ethnic media’ – or ‘ethnic minority media’. Matsaganis, et al., (2011) define ‘ethnic media’ as ‘media that are produced *by* and / or *for* (a) immigrants (b) racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities, as well as (c) indigenous population living across different countries” (*ibid*: 10).³¹ According to this definition ethnic media functions as a broad term encompassing a wide range of media outputs. In general, ethnic media target a specific ‘ethnic’ community who publish / broadcast content in their own language

³¹ Caspi & Elias (2011) differentiates between two prototypes of ethnic media: media-for and media-by minorities. But the distinction might be problematic as sometimes hybrid production processes are at work in alternative/ ‘ethnic media’ newsrooms.

and offer a range of information of interest to a specific 'ethnic' audience (Matsaganis et al., 2011).

In British scholarly and public discourse, the term 'ethnic minorities' is largely utilised with reference and as synonym for 'immigrant communities'. However, the term 'ethnic media' carries some crucial problematics. Firstly, the qualifier 'ethnic' implies an opposition between 'ethnics' and 'non-ethnics' which is inherently problematic as everyone is 'ethnic' and subsequently 'ethnicity' intended as marker of difference is a cultural construct (Hall, 1989; Chow, 2002). Secondly when the term features as 'ethnic *minority* media' a problematic opposition between an 'ethnic minority and a 'non-ethnic majority' is also being created. As Matsaganis et al. (2011) note, the term 'minority' connotes the idea of a power differential in which one ethnic group is compared against another more powerful group. Moreover, the term 'minority' would not be appropriate to instances where the 'minority' population is actually the 'autochthonous' population such as in the case of 'indigenous' communities or in metropolitan areas with great cultural diversity.

Across Europe other labels have been used to define media produced and/or for immigrant groups in society. In France, for instance, media set up by immigrants or citizens of immigrant background have been called *media des diversités*, translatable as 'diversity media' (Institut Panos, 2007). The term 'diversity media' is devoid of references to controversial categories such as 'ethnicity' or the 'minority status' of immigrant communities. Matsaganis et al. (2011) observes that this has to do with the fact that in France very rarely 'one has to describe themselves as White or Caucasian, African-American or Black, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, or indigenous, as people often have to do in the United States, Canada, UK, and elsewhere' (*ibid*: 8). This resonates with the Italian context where declaration of one's 'ethnicity' is uncommonly used in formal documentation.

Over the last two decades, there has been an increasing scholarly interest in 'diasporic media' research. However, it seems that the term 'diaspora' has been increasingly widened to include migratory movements of significant proportions in modern and contemporary times: the term 'diaspora' has been often used as a synonym for

‘migration’ in scholarly studies.³² Accordingly, the term ‘diasporic media’ has been used as synonym for ‘ethnic (minority) media’ or ‘immigrant media’ in research studies (Georgiou, 2003; 2005; Karim, 2003; Alonso & Oiarzabal, eds, 2010).

The term ‘immigrant media’ has been used comparatively less than the labels discussed and principally in the context of the United States. Matsaganis et al. define immigrant media as a subset of ‘ethnic media (2011). Conversely, Hickerson & Gustafson suggest to treat the ‘immigrant press’ as an autonomous and distinct field to the ‘ethnic press’, the latter being a term that has become increasingly vague by subsuming a multitude of other terms, concepts and subfields (2014: 946). Furthermore, according to Hickerson & Gustafson (2014), one of the main functions of the immigrant press in the US context is to ‘promote assimilation and/or citizenship’, whilst the ‘ethnic press’ has traditionally covered issues largely concerning the ‘homeland’ (*ibid*: 10). Despite the fact that the spectrum of issues covered by ‘ethnic media’ may not be restricted to homeland interests, Hickerson & Gustafson (2014) draw attention to issues traditionally less explored within the multifaceted field of ‘ethnic media studies’ such as national belonging and struggles towards citizenship recognition. Nonetheless, the outlets classified as ‘immigrant press’ in the study are produced and/or addressed to a specific ‘immigrant’ community, while the instance or possibility of media produced by (and/or targeted to) ‘culturally mixed’ immigrant communities has not been investigated.

Studies exploring media produced by and/or for ‘ethnic’, ‘immigrant’ or ‘diasporic’ communities – regardless of terminological variations and the wide range of issues explored relating to the media engagement and practices of these communities – have overwhelmingly focussed on the interests of specific communities sharing a similar ‘ethnic’, ‘immigrant’ ‘diasporic’, national or religious background. With very little research considering alternative media initiatives produced by and/or for individuals

³² The term ‘diaspora’ was traditionally employed to describe the historical dispersion of peoples that maintained a strong attachment to their homeland. In these sense the Jewish diaspora have been paradigmatic. However, the ‘acceptation’ of /diaspora/ has been progressively widening by including different subjects or categories in the definition such as immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, exile communities, religious communities and so forth. The reference to the original homeland has become more attenuated and other cultural factors of attachment can play a fundamental role into the process of diaspora (Butler, 2001).

of culturally diverse backgrounds sharing the experience of residency in the same country of settlement, this work seeks to redress a gap in the rich body of literature devoted to small-scale alternative media engaging individuals – residents or citizens – of immigrant background in increasingly diverse democratic societies. In this sense, media scholarly work in Italy does not represent an exception. While a few studies have mapped and investigated media produced by particular ‘ethnic communities’ (Meli & Maneri, 2007; Maneri, 2011; Meli, 2011), the case of media produced by culturally diverse teams of contributors has either received limited scholarly attention or has lacked an in-depth focussed investigation.

3.3.1 The Italian ‘immigrant’ media-scape: ‘media multiculturali’

With increasing cultural diversity in Italy, what has emerged over the last decades is the necessity and demand to recognise the representational and communicative needs of immigrant residents whose voices, identities, and interests have been for long largely under-represented in mainstream media discourse as discussed in chapter 2. Throughout the last three decades, a number of media for and/or by immigrants have emerged in Italy with similar patterns and characteristics to the ‘ethnic media’ in other immigrant-receiving countries in Europe and North America.

According to Maneri (2011) the following key socio-cultural factors prompted the emergence of media produced for and/or by residents of immigrant background in Italy. Firstly, the acknowledgement by publishers or media groups of a ‘new’ culturally diverse readership with their own ‘information needs’. Secondly, the aspiration of a generation of journalists – or aspiring journalists – of immigrant background seeking to embark on a journalistic profession facing restricted access in mainstream news organisations. Thirdly, the desire to contrast the partial or distorted representation of the immigration phenomenon constructed by Italian mainstream media. Further factors typical of ‘ethnic media’ are the necessity or desire to maintain ties with the country of origin, the provision of practical information about a particular community, the promotion of activities, campaigns and work of public personalities of immigrant background (Maneri, 2011).

Media initiatives aiming to voice the interests of a particular ‘ethnic minority’ community or of the whole immigrant resident population numbered only a handful in

the early 1980s. They mainly consisted of radio programmes aired by some progressive and often independent radio stations.³³ Publications classifiable as ‘immigrant press’ started emerging in the late 1980s and increased substantially throughout the 1990s, when ‘immigration’ entered in the public and media discourse (see chapter 2). Early ‘ethnic press’ catered to the immigrant population largely emerged as part of the activities and initiatives of cultural associations such as diversity advocacy associations and immigrant associations / groups (Meli & Maneri, 2007). As shown in section 2.2. the tradition of Italy’s locally-grounded civil society activism of third-sector organisations often filling the vacuum left by the shortcomings of national welfare and ‘multicultural’ policy, played a crucial role in the growth of media outlets by and / or for immigrant residents in Italy as part of the activities of immigrant associations and diversity advocacy groups.³⁴

From the late 1980s and increasingly throughout the 1990s, mainstream media also manifested some interest in catering for immigrant residents with a handful of innovative programmes throughout the years which remained niche and sporadic initiatives as mainstream media in Italy remain overwhelmingly ‘white Italian’ ghettos as discussed in the previous chapter. Despite being initiatives produced within and by mainstream media organisations, researchers have included them as part of the ‘ethnic media’ sector (see Meli & Maneri, 2007).

Within scholarly work examining the Italian landscape of media produced by and/or for residents of immigrant background, the large majority of research available has largely concentrated on media initiatives produced by single communities sharing the same nationality or ‘ethnic’ background. Occasional references to *media etnici* (‘ethnic media’) have been made in left-leaning progressive press. In an article published in the Italian web magazine *Reset*, the fast-growing phenomenon of *media etnici* in Italy was defined as ‘an emerging media trend revamping the dominant

³³ 1980 saw the creation of the first ‘ethnic radio program’ in Italy, *Radio Shabi*, offering news and entertainment in Arabic language aired weekly on Radio Popolare Milano. In the late 1980s other weekly radio programs were launched: *Los Arêtes que Faltan a la Luna*, still on Radio Popolare Milano and *El Guayacán* aired on Radio Città Aperta (Rome), both offering news and music targeting Latin American communities (Maneri & Meli, 2007).

³⁴ The first newspapers recorded produced by immigrants were *Assadakah. Una Finestra sul Mediterraneo* (1988), a monthly magazine in Arabic and Italian, and *Tam tam* (1994), created by a network of associations in Milan offering news and information useful to the whole immigrant resident population (Maneri & Meli, 2007).

mainstream press' (Custovic, 2010: 1). Yet, the only systematic study of the 'immigrant media' landscape in Italy dates back to 2007. The study, funded by the non-profit organisation COSPE³⁵ and the National Association for Intercultural Press (ANSI)³⁶ was titled *Il Fenomeno dei Media Multiculturali in Italia* and systematically mapped and critically investigated the landscape of media produced by and/or for immigrant communities in Italy. The research aimed to:

...analyse the size, the growth and the boundaries of the multicultural media sector ...Moreover, the study aims to build a framework for the representatives of local and national institutions so that they will understand the importance of this [media] phenomenon and adopt adequate measures in its support. (Maneri & Meli, 2007: 20)

The label *media multiculturali* ('multicultural media') is used by Maneri & Meli as a broad term encompassing media initiatives ranging from press publications to radio and TV programs produced by and/or for immigrants in Italy, yet largely including outlets produced by single 'ethnic' communities. The study records 146 media outputs. Of these, 63 were print publications (largely monthly magazines), 59 radio bulletins (largely weekly productions), and 24 TV programs (largely broadcast weekly) (Maneri & Meli; 2007). Figure 2 in the next page, retrieved from the study, shows the number of initiatives launched from the late 1980s to the 2002-2004 showing a peak in the years 2002-2004.

³⁵ COSPE (Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries) is a non-profit association active with projects of international cooperation in developing countries with approximately, while in Italy and in Europe promotes fair and sustainable development, intercultural dialogue and human rights.

³⁶ ANSI (National Association for Intercultural Press) is a national non-governmental association promoted and created by journalists of foreign origin who work both in mainstream and 'ethnic' media across Italy. ANSI was founded with the purpose of protecting the rights of journalists (or aspiring journalists) of immigrant background, facilitate networking, self-organization, and promote activities for the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

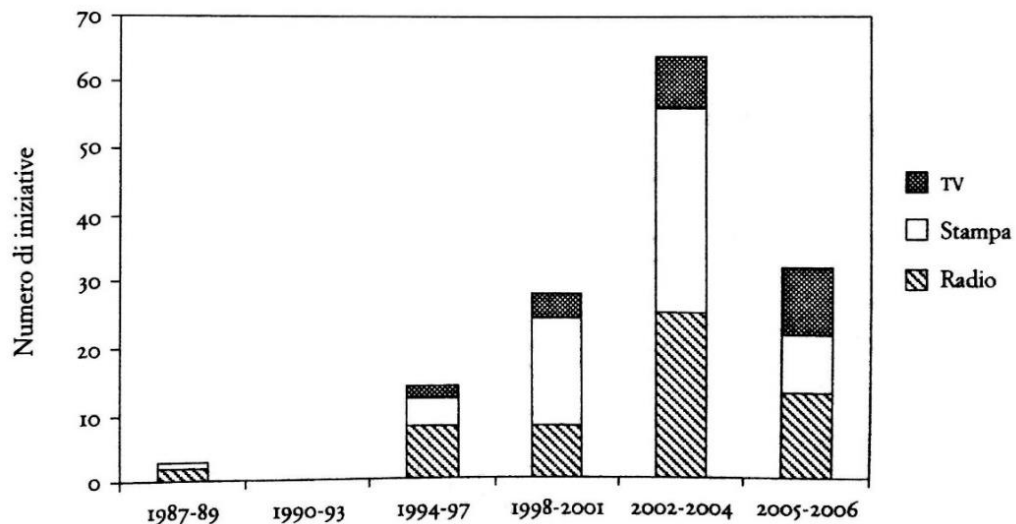


Figure 1 - Number of initiatives per year (in Maneri & Meli, 2007: 19)

According to the authors, behind the phenomenon of Italy's multicultural media is a 'fundamental motivational factor... the necessity to contrast the criminalising and alarmistic representation of the immigration phenomenon by mainstream media'. (Maneri & Meli, 2007: 20). The key elements defining 'multicultural media' are: a) immigrants settled in Italy are involved as founders of the outlet and/or as producers of the media content; b) the target audience is entirely or partially 'non-autochthonous', namely of immigrant background; c) content includes stories and news concerning people's country of origin, the migration journey, national and local events, advice and support on residency policy and paperwork (Maneri & Meli, 2007).

This study examined the multiple aspects of the 'multicultural media sector' combining quantitative data gathering methods (content analysis and questionnaires) with qualitative interviews and ethnography (2007). Fields explored in the research include evolution and geographical distribution; formats; ownership and funding bodies; contents and genres; languages and audiences. With regards to the relationship with mainstream media, the authors note that such relationship is not openly antagonistic. Multicultural media might not be necessarily free of bias or governmental or corporative influences (Meli & Maneri, 2007: 107). What makes multicultural media 'alternative', is instead a certain informality and subjectivity of style reflective

of the mutual relationship of trust among practitioners: contributors share similar views and often the country of origin. (Maneri & Meli, 2007).

Although this work remains a valuable attempt to build a systematic picture of the multicultural media landscape in Italy across different platforms and throughout two decades (from the late 1980s to 2007), Maneri & Meli's research present two key limitations. Firstly, the study fails to make any reference to the 'digital media landscape' that in 2007 had already started attracting interest on behalf of immigrant communities and that might have partly explained the decline in traditional multicultural media outlet (broadcast and print) shown in picture 2. Secondly, in their research, the authors do not provide a clear differentiation between media produced by and/or for specific immigrant communities ('ethnic media') and media with culturally diverse teams of contributors addressed to an Italian-speaking public of diverse backgrounds. Consequently, the study fails to provide a focussed and in-depth examination of the characteristics of 'intercultural media' as arguably a distinct media genre from 'ethnic media'.

However, in subsequent publications, where the two authors discuss the evolution of the 'multicultural media' landscape, they have partly redressed the above considerations. In a journal issue devoted to media engagement by immigrants in Italy (or 'new Italians'), Meli (2011) introduces some of the 'multicultural media' initiatives which have emerged on the Internet. In the same issue, Maneri (2011) considers the instance of media platforms in Italian and hence open to immigrant contributors of diverse immigrant background as well as 'native' Italians. Interestingly, Maneri (2011) switches to use the expression 'intercultural media' to indicate both media produced by and/or for a specific immigrant community and media produced in Italian by and/or for the culturally diverse resident population. However, the preference for the term 'intercultural' over the previously adopted 'multicultural' media is left unexplained and untheorized in the article.

Overall, whilst the emergence of online initiatives has been acknowledged in the literature on 'ethnic media' in Italy – largely under the label of 'multicultural media' – the digital/online media-scape has not been investigated as systematically as Meli & Maneri did with broadcast and print media in the 2007 study. Furthermore,

terminological and conceptual confusion and overlapping of the labels ‘ethnic/ ‘multicultural’/ ‘intercultural’ media in the Italian scholarly literature has not yet allowed us to consider, in its distinct characteristics, the specific case of media set up and/or produced by culturally diverse (or ‘mixed’) teams of contributors resident in Italy which is the focus of this study.

3.4 Intercultural media

This section introduces and discusses ‘intercultural media’ as a less explored media category or genre within the more widely researched types of small-scale citizen-based alternative media serving the interests of ‘immigrant’ (or ‘ethnic’ or ‘diasporic’) communities as discussed in the previous sections. The possibility of the existence as well as the examination of media produced by and/or for individuals from *diverse* immigrant backgrounds has rarely been accorded attention in media scholarly work.

Media produced by diverse teams of contributors may operate a different cultural politics to that pursued by ‘ethnic minority media’ which is arguably concerned with issues of interest to *one individual* ‘ethnic’ or ‘immigrant’ community. By representing the interests, concerns and demands of individuals from different ‘immigrant backgrounds’ having in common residency or citizenship in the same national or local community of settlement, intercultural media feature an agenda where questions of civic belonging, national identity, citizenship and inter-cultural relations are central domains variously articulated in the content and practices of these media.

3.4.1.1 Defining Intercultural Media

As discussed in the previous chapter, interculturalism is a theoretical framework that has been advocated by scholars as an alternative to ‘multiculturalism’, a paradigm for conceptualising and implementing diversity policy that has been charged with negative connotations in recent years. With a renewed focus on the importance of inter-cultural relations through practice-based activities, interculturalism offers a paradigm for the practice and experimentation of collaborative cultural endeavours promoting diversity through dialogue, exchange and interaction across ‘differences’.

Interculturalism also offers a framework enabling one to re-think media practices as inclusive of diversity and where to practice inter-cultural collaboration. In his studies on intercultural communication, Corte (2011; 2014) has theorised the possibilities for ‘intercultural journalism’. The author distinguishes a ‘multicultural’ from an ‘intercultural’ approach to cultural diversity in the media. For Corte, a multicultural approach to communication merely acknowledges the presence in society of ‘other’ cultures. In the media context, this approach may consist of granting space for the narration of ‘other’ cultures, with news and information concerning specific ‘immigrant’ or ‘ethnic’ communities (2014). Such approach is evident in those initiatives, which aims to ‘give a voice’, to immigrant associations or communities by allocating ‘diversity quotas’ within overwhelmingly white mainstream newsrooms or programming (Corte, 2014):

The multicultural press makes a step forward towards ‘tolerance’ and ‘respect’ for cultural diversity. It, however, only represents a partial success as it merely acknowledges and recognises the different cultures without encouraging dialogue and interaction.³⁷ (Corte, 2014: 35)

Conversely, intercultural communication is, for the author, based, in principle, on a dynamic process of mutual collaborative learning through communicative exchanges between ‘cultures’ (Corte, 2002; 2011; 2014). As I discussed in the previous chapter, the conceptual paradigm of interculturalism accords importance to the idea of interaction and exchange between and across differences (Modood & Meer, 2011; Cantle, 2012; Rattansi, 2012). Milton Bennett observes that such emphasis on ‘inter-action’ underpinning the theorisation of intercultural communication, does not mean that an intercultural approach underplays the value of knowledge of different cultures (2013). What is being rejected, instead, is an essentialist folkloristic interpretation of cultural difference that has allegedly characterised early (or mis-) interpretations of multiculturalism as discussed in the previous chapter (*ibidem*).

Understanding the principles of an intercultural approach to media discourses and practices about cultural diversity enables reflection upon the possibility of a cultural politics that goes beyond the particularistic interests of single ‘ethnic’ communities and instead seeks to engage the whole resident population in its cultural diversity.

³⁷ My translation from original Italian text.

Aspiration to realise a more inclusive, diverse, pluralistic, inter-relational way of producing media content characterises media platforms contributed by resident and citizens of different cultural backgrounds.

Within the broad media-scape of alternative media produced by and/or for immigrants or ethnic minorities, intercultural media represent a distinct media form. Whilst on the one hand, intercultural media share with ‘ethnic media’ the aspiration to restore centrality to issues concerning residents or citizens of immigrant/ ‘ethnic minority’ background and their voices, perspectives, and stories, on the other hand, they present some distinct characteristics. The label ‘intercultural digital media’ is an operational term chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, to facilitate the examination of a media form that has not received scholarly or public attention in Italy or elsewhere and hence has been lacking its distinct label. Secondly, to distinguish ‘intercultural media’ from more researched media categories in the context of diversity such as ‘ethnic media’ operating as all-embracing terms – as discussed in the previous chapter – and hence not suited to capture the distinctive characteristics of intercultural media. Thirdly, the term places emphasis on the key distinctive feature of intercultural digital media which is broadly the practice and promotion of cultural diversity through inter-cultural collaboration.

Having culturally diverse teams of contributors is the key feature of intercultural media that set them apart from ‘ethnic minority’ media and also influences the choice of the language of publication as well as the overall ‘cultural politics’ pursued by the projects. As Maneri & Meli (2007) note, the language of publication is always a ‘political choice’ that speaks to what relationship the platform seeks to perform with readers and the target public. The fact that intercultural media are published in Italian, the language of the national community of settlement, and can be consumed by the whole resident population, of immigrant background and not, move the attention from an ‘ethno-communitarian’ focus of ‘ethnic minority media’ to the potential of engaging the wider resident audience despite and across their different ‘ethnic’, religious, linguistic, and national backgrounds.

3.4.1.2 *Intercultural media in the literature*

Whilst literature has extensively explored media for and/or by specific ‘ethnic’ or ‘immigrant’ or ‘diasporic’ communities, the instance of media initiatives produced by contributors of diverse immigrant backgrounds, have received little if no attention in media scholarly literature in Italy or elsewhere. I contend that this may be ascribed to the following reasons. Firstly, the large majority of ‘immigrant media’ tend to be addressed to and/or produced by specific ‘ethnic’ communities, hence, more research has concentrated on this type of media. Secondly, when media produced by culturally diverse teams of contributors have been considered, these have been incorporated within the all-encompassing category of ‘ethnic (minority) media’ (Maneri, 2011; Maneri & Meli, 2007).

French media academic Eugenie Saitta has been one of the few researchers considering the case of media in Italy with ‘culturally mixed’ newsrooms (2010; 2014; 2015). In two journal articles Saitta reported findings largely focussing on one Italian citizen-contributed print newspaper *Yalla Italia*³⁸ with a ‘culturally mixed’ newsroom, largely composed of second-generation immigrants of diverse cultural backgrounds. Through ethnographic methods and interviews with editors and contributors, Saitta found that despite the newspaper promoting a vision of inclusion and of diversity of opinions, the observation of organisational and production routines suggested the existence of a ‘top-down decision making process’ influencing the journalistic output (2015). More specifically, corporate constraints from the publisher influenced the editorial policy of the newspaper as well as its very own recruiting process of the contributors on the basis of ‘ethnicity’, degree of ‘integration’ and educational background.

Saitta’s findings, albeit limited to one media outlet, confirms the ambivalent and complex relationship between the ‘alternative’ and the ‘mainstream’ and most importantly offer some preliminary ground to further explore the possibilities and limitation of practiced ‘interculturalism’ across multiple media platforms as one strand of this study. Whether briefly acknowledged in the literature (Meli, 2011; Maneri, 2011) or examined as isolated case studies (Saitta, 2010; 2014; 2015), the case of media produced by culturally diverse teams of contributors, largely of immigrant

³⁸ Yalla Italia was launched as a print newspaper based in Milan but moved online since 2011 as a collective blog. The outlet is included in our study.

background, have not received an in-depth focussed investigation in the Italian and seemingly in a European context.

The emergence in the Italian alternative media-scape of media initiatives with culturally diverse teams of contributors seeking to redress the power imbalances of the mainstream media is grounded in some of the socio-cultural factors specific (yet, not exclusive) to the Italian context as outlined and discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, it has been observed that the rather even distribution of Italy's immigrant population across metropolitan and suburban areas of the country makes it a smaller market for press publications targeting specific 'ethnic' communities compared to other European countries, where 'ethnic minorities' have settled more cohesively in communities (Maneri & Meli, 2007; Maneri, 2011). It has been argued that such territorial dispersion may be the consequence of late-coming migration and of a missing model of multicultural policy that has prevented 'ghettoisation' (Ambrosini, 2004) as already discussed in section 2.2. Maneri & Meli (2007) suggest that such 'territorial dispersion' of the immigrant population in Italy may have been a factor hindering the distribution and circulation of the 'ethnic press' seeking to target and reach members of specific 'ethnic' or national backgrounds who may have not settled in the same urban (or suburban) areas, hence its decline after 2004. However, to date, research has not yet provided data on whether intercultural media have thrived more in Italy than in other European countries because of the above demographical factors and/or what is the proportion of 'ethnic media' versus 'intercultural media' in Italy compared to other countries.

Nevertheless, editors of media outlets targeting the 'immigrant population' have on a few occasions explained the choice of publishing in Italian as an opportunity to reach out to a larger audience which may also include Italians of single national heritage who may be interested in matters of immigration and cultural diversity (Sangiorgi, 2011; Baudet Vivanco, 2011). In this regard, it is important to note that the large majority of long-settled contributors have very high level mastery of the Italian language and for youth of immigrant background or so-called 'second-generation immigrants', Italian can be the native language (or one of their native languages). As discussed in the previous chapter, Italy's long-settled population of immigrant background and the

increasing number of naturalised Italian citizens (or residents in the process of being granted citizenship) represent a crucial component of Italian contemporary society.

3.4.1.3 *Why study 'intercultural digital media'?*

The opportunities created by digital communication, as discussed at the beginning of the chapter, have opened new avenues for the 'ethnic press'. In recent years, studies on 'ethnic media', 'diasporic media' have increasingly focussed on platforms established on the web which has represented, in some cases, a domain where to experiment with more democratic and often more cost effective forms of communication and interaction.

In the Italian context, it has been observed that print and broadcast 'ethnic media' initiatives had started decreasing from 2004: whilst some print publications have moved online, several new ones have also been created online (Meli & Manier, 2007; Maneri, 2011). In 2011, Anna Meli, one of the two authors of the 2007 study on Italy's 'multicultural media' (see 3.3.1.) wrote:

It has not yet been investigated, at the national [Italian] level, the domain of new media (online newspapers, web radio and web TVs) that seems to be, both in numeric and innovation terms, a fertile ground that is particularly second-generation immigrants.³⁹ (Meli, 2011: 30)

A few years later, no scholarly study has yet been published focussing on Italy's digital media platforms for and/or by residents of immigrant background (with either culturally 'mixed' or 'ethnic' newsrooms). Therefore, this study accepts the challenge proposed above by according attention to the digital media sphere as a terrain that has, in the last decade, seen a thriving of media platforms seeking to restore centrality to marginalised (or perceived so) perspectives, voices, and stories. Offering opportunities for participation and for the practice and performance of digital citizenship (Mossberg, et al., 2008; Couldry, et al. 2014), digital media platforms represent a valuable field for research focussing on the possibilities for the articulation and expression of 'alternative' discourses.

³⁹ Translation mine from original text in Italian

Within the wide array of alternative media initiatives concerned with immigration and cultural diversity that have been established on the web, this study chooses to investigate the specific case of ‘intercultural media’ that emerged online throughout the last decade. Choosing to focus on media produced by culturally diverse teams of contributors and targeting the whole (immigrant) population enables me to explore a scarcely researched and almost unacknowledged media form, compared to the more widely examined field of ‘ethnic minority media’. Expression of the ‘new Italians’ (see 2.3.2), intercultural media accord, at least in principle, importance to the condition of residency and citizenship across ‘differences’ over that of ethno-communitarian belonging which underpins the politics of ‘ethnic minority media’. How and to what extent an intercultural politics is practiced and through what discursive means is central to the investigations of this work.

3.5 Conclusions

The chapter aimed to discuss and review literature surrounding different domains informing the understanding and the investigation of the media form at the centre of this study. The chapter first discussed the opportunities enabled by the digital media sphere for participation and practices towards enhanced opportunities of citizenship engagement. I then discussed the domain of ‘alternative media’ as a broad category emphasising the intent to offer an alternative to mainstream media, arguing the complexities between the alternative and the mainstream. The second part of the chapter situated intercultural media within the more extensively researched field of ‘ethnic (minority) media’ outlining and underscoring its distinct characteristics. As a digital media form situated within the broad landscape of alternative citizen-contributed initiatives seeking to ‘fill the gaps’ left by mainstream media, intercultural media seek to move away from the ‘communitarian’ interests of specific ‘ethnic’ or ‘immigrant’ communities through the setting up of culturally diverse teams of contributors that reflect the increasing diversity of Italy’s contemporary society. As Chapter 2 illustrated, with national media failing to capture the complexities of an increasingly culturally diverse society whereby long-settled immigrants demand recognition as ‘citizens’, intercultural media represent fundamental means to explore

the possibility of the construction of an intercultural politics performed by ‘new identities’ (Hall, 1988) seeking to express, through inter-cultural collaboration, their multiple interests, concerns, demands and narratives as ‘citizens’ of society.

Chapter 4 Research Questions and Methodology

The previous chapters reviewed and discussed literature exploring a range of debates, concepts and practices instrumental to understanding the context and conditions of emergence of intercultural digital media. Specifically, Chapter 2 discussed literature and theoretical principles informing some key socio-cultural and political discourses and practices in relation to dominant representations of immigration and cultural diversity in contemporary Italian society. It also critically explored the possibility of the collective construction of a ‘new’ cultural politics aimed at challenging or broadening the dominant regime of representation. Chapter 3 focussed on the websites creating a platform for the articulation of an alternative discourse on immigration and diversity. In particular, by reviewing and discussing literature examining ‘alternative’, ‘citizen’-contributed media initiatives and in particular ‘ethnic minority media’ the chapter aimed to situate Italy’s intercultural media within existing alternative media genres and practices, while introducing its characteristics as a distinct media form.

This chapter discusses the methodology employed to investigate the research questions at the centre of this study, as presented in the below sections. Through a combination of qualitative methods for the analysis of texts and interviews, the study aimed to answer four key research questions as introduced and discussed in the below section. Subsequent sections elaborate on the specific methods adopted and methodological choices made to answer each individual question.

4.1 Research Questions

As previously stated in the Introduction of the thesis (Chapter 1), the overarching aim of this study is to explore and understand the case of intercultural digital media in Italy as an alternative media form that has received little scholarly attention, particularly in comparison with the relatively more researched field of ‘ethnic minority media’. Each question explores a particular aspect of these platforms in order to understand this media form in its multiple dimensions including expressed ‘mission’, structural and content features, agenda, cultural politics and context of production. As follows, I introduce and briefly discuss the four main research questions of this study.

RQ1 – What are the principal characteristics of Italy’s intercultural digital media landscape?

This first research question considers intercultural digital media as a coherent media form, which despite variety between individual platforms, encompasses websites with a common set of features and characteristics. To explore the question, I systematically map the media landscape of Italy’s intercultural sites to identify patterns and features in relation to various structural and content aspects including timeline and location of emergence, themes, and funding models.

RQ2 – How is the intent of intercultural digital media expressed and performed?

The second question examines more closely and in greater detail the way a selected sample of platforms articulate their intents and how these are expressed in the overall structural organisation and agenda of the sites.

RQ2a – What is the ‘mission’ and aims of the sites and how are these articulated in the mission statements?

This sub-question analyses the intents and aims of the platforms as they are articulated and promoted in the mission statements.

RQ2b – How do the aesthetics, content features, and structure of the homepages express the purpose, agenda, and values of the sites?

The question explores the way the ‘mission’ of the sites is performed through the agenda, values and interventions represented in the platforms by analysing the organisational, aesthetic and content features of the homepages.

RQ3 – What alternative discourses and narratives of immigration and ‘new citizenship’ do personal stories published on the sites articulate and promote?

This question is concerned with exploring the construction of ‘alternative’ representations of the ‘immigrant subject’ and with critically examining to what extent discursive constructions promoting ‘new citizenship’ challenge dominant representations of immigration and cultural diversity in Italy.

RQ4 – What are the practitioners’ organisational and production practices and their experiences of running and maintaining an intercultural digital media platform?

This question focusses on the context of practice and production of the sites. It explores the experienced practices, motivations, challenges and views of practitioners of intercultural websites. The exploration of this question enables me to draw conclusions on the significance, potential and limitations in the construction and performance of an intercultural politics performed through digital media platforms.

The next sections investigate each individual strand of the study and methods adopted for their investigation.

4.2 Mapping intercultural digital platforms

The first research question is to provide an overview of the principle characteristics of Italy's intercultural digital media, a media form encompassing a wide array of digital media platforms with a common set of distinguishing features as outlined in the previous chapter (section 3.4.). A mapping exercise enables me, firstly, to understand and establish the boundaries of the 'population' (in sampling terms) of intercultural digital media as a distinct media form. It also presents a systematic and comparative picture of these media from which commonalities and patterns across the platforms can be observed and discussed. Secondly, the mapping facilitates identification of common characteristics across the websites to be analysed in greater detail and in a comparative fashion in subsequent chapters. Therefore, it also facilitates the sampling of five websites which will represent the smaller sample for examining content features in greater detail and through a more in-depth analytical approach.

The mapping of intercultural sites draws on tools for collecting and analysing largely descriptive data of a specific media form or genre, particularly within the realm of 'alternative' media outlets. Media academic Myra Georgiou published a series of reports mapping diasporic media across European countries (2003; 2005a; 2008). In her studies, Georgiou examines and maps 'minority media' set up by diasporic communities across Europe or in specific countries by collecting and coding largely descriptive data concerning location, type of platform, and community served. In introducing her methodology, Georgiou explains that mapping as 'is a necessary starting point, especially in this area where there is a lack of data' (2003: 23). Similarly,

Maneri & Meli (2007) as discussed in Chapter 3 offer a systematic mapping of existing ‘multicultural media’ in Italy (see section 3.3.1.) in order to ‘analyse the size, the growth and the boundaries of this media sector’ (*ibid*: 20).

Therefore, the mapping of intercultural digital media presented in Chapter 5 is broadly influenced by mapping methodologies aimed at providing a comprehensive description of the key characteristics of a certain media landscape that has not hitherto been investigated in the literature. However, the mapping exercises of Georgiou (2003; 2005a; 2008) and Maneri & Meli (2007) tend to remain confined within the principal scope of numerically quantifying ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘diasporic’ media. These studies have limited focussed in-depth examination of both content features and production experiences of the considered media outlets. Hence the present study seeks to critically explore the media form at the centre of the investigation in greater detail and in relation to different aspects such as context, content, and production.

4.2.1 Constructing the mapping: selection criteria, process, and tools

Constructing an operational definition was both preparatory and instrumental to undertaking a mapping of intercultural digital media. Since the start of this work, I have recorded descriptive data and information corresponding to each individual website falling under the operational definition of ‘intercultural digital media’, which I define as: *media outlets published online in Italian whose content is produced by culturally diverse teams of contributors, largely residents or citizens of immigrant background with a principal or significant focus on matters relating to immigration and cultural diversity.*

Based on the above operational definition, the criteria for identifying the population of websites are the following:

- (1) *Platform*: digital/online
- (2) *Contributors*: collective teams of contributors of diverse cultural background resident in Italy, largely including residents and citizens of immigrant background as well as citizens of single Italian heritage.
- (3) *Significant focus*: matters relating to immigration and cultural diversity
- (4) *Primary language*: Italian
- (5) *Audience*: Italian-speaking resident population (of immigrant background and non).

Since October 2011 I have been collecting data and information relating to those media outlets that fell under the operational definition of intercultural digital media and the five above criteria and a total of 35 websites were identified. The scope of the mapping aims to be exhaustive as it seeks to identify all existing sites whether currently active as of January 2017 or not. As for exclusion criteria, those initiatives that did not meet the above criteria were excluded from the mapping as they would have not been sufficiently relevant to the scope of this study. For instance, blogs or sites ran by a single author were not included since the present work is primarily interested in the collective representations of and practice of intercultural politics as a collective endeavour. Similarly, sites with newsrooms including contributors of immigrant background, yet offering generic information without manifesting the expression of a cultural politics concerned with matters of immigration and cultural diversity, were not included. Whilst I recognise that these initiatives might have research value, the operational definition of intercultural media needed to be observed to include only the platforms comprising this media form. This scope ensured that a comparative analysis of all the platforms was possible.

To identify digital platforms to include in the mapping, the website *media & multiculturalità* (www.mmc2000.net)⁴⁰ has been a crucial tool. The website hosted an electronic database listing media initiatives with a focus on ‘multiculturalism’ / cultural diversity that has emerged in Italy over the years and classified by format (print / radio / TV / Internet). Yet, the database did not distinguish platforms produced by culturally diverse teams of contributors, individual or collective initiatives. After 2013, when the site was closed down due to lack of funding, I continued to search the Internet for existing initiatives falling under the operational definition of intercultural digital media. More specifically, I performed relevant keyword searches on Google Italy (using keywords such as ‘notizie’ OR ‘news’ OR ‘storie’, AND ‘intercultural*’ OR ‘multicultural*’, OR *immigra** OR ‘nuovi italiani’, OR ‘nuovi cittadini’ OR

⁴⁰ *Media & Multiculturalità* (www.mmc2000.net) was a website founded in 2000 as a multi-cultural online radio with broadcasts in 5 different European countries. However, over the years it expanded and evolved, arriving to include new sections including a database of media initiatives concerned with immigration and cultural diversity. The website was sponsored by and affiliated to COSPE (Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries) an Italian non-profit association active with projects of international cooperation as well as with initiatives in Italy and in Europe promoting ‘intercultural dialogue’ and an overall positive view on cultural diversity.

‘*seconde generazioni*’; OR ‘*rimforma cittadinanza*’). A few further initiatives were identified from cross-references on other platforms.

Some of the websites included in the mapping were no longer active at the inception of the research or had been closed down during the course of it. However, the Internet Archive website (<https://archive.org/>), a non-profit digital library project that preserves webpages for the historical record, provided me free access to those websites no longer directly accessible.

4.2.1.1 Coded categories

For each website, descriptive data were collected in relation to the following fields:

1. Name
2. Web address
3. Self-definition
4. Launch date
5. Location
6. Editor-in-chief
7. Themes
8. Funding strategies
9. Ownership/affiliation
10. Termination date/current status

The descriptive data corresponding to the fields (1) to (6) and (10) were obtained largely through retrieving the relevant information published on the website. Information concerning funding strategies was gathered both through website information but also complemented by interviews with the editors of some of the websites (see section 4.4.). As for coding the themes (7), the following coding process was undertaken. A total of eight different common recurring themes (or topic categories) were identified across the 35 identified websites by coding the principal topic categories for each website. The coding was conducted by considering the topic categories in the menu bars of the websites. In those instances where the articles or posts published under those categories did not fully reflect the description of the category in the menu bars, a judgement was made on what category would best describe the content of that particular section. For instance, if the section *Società*, largely hosts stories talking about experiences of ‘integration’ of residents of immigrant background in Italy, the category ‘Integration’ was chosen (rather than ‘Society’).

Coding descriptive data relating to the websites' information enables me to draw a systematic picture of intercultural sites that have emerged online in Italy since their first appearances. Despite the search for the platforms aimed to be exhaustive, realistically a few initiatives might have slipped the researcher's net. The mapping also enables a longitudinal overview of initiatives classified as intercultural media. This facilitates identification of significant common characteristics to be examined in greater detail in a comparative way across a smaller sample of websites. The mapping is therefore both instrumental and preparatory to exploring the content dimension of intercultural digital media as discussed in the following section.

4.3 Analysing digital media texts: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis approach

Building on the key characteristics of intercultural media identified by the mapping, the second and third research questions of this study aim to explore some of the content features of a sample of intercultural sites through a more in-depth analytical approach. As sites offering the possibility for the construction and promotion of a cultural politics grounded on the practice of inter-cultural collaboration for constructing alternative representations of immigration and cultural diversity, intercultural platforms present a number of content features and discursive dimensions worthy of investigating. This section focusses on the methodological approach employed to analyse: the self-represented 'mission' of the platforms and the way this is expressed in the overall aesthetics, structure, and agenda of the homepages (RQ2); and what kind of discourses of immigration and 'new citizenship' the sites construct and promote (RQ3).

In order to answer these two questions a qualitative methodology for the analysis of media 'texts' was selected. In particular, given the focus on the 'content' dimension of the platforms, tools and approaches borrowed from Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Analysis were principally employed. The next sections outline and discuss the methodological framework and specific tools and choices informing the analytical part of this study.

4.3.1 *Critical Discourse Analysis*

Critical Discourse Analysis (or CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of 'texts' which encompasses a range of tools and frameworks largely influenced by critical linguistics and social theory. CDA embraces a social constructivist approach that places weight 'on the active role of discourse in constructing the social world' (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002: 7). According to this view, discourses both influence and are influenced by social practices with discourse itself viewed as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995a; 1995b). This conception of discourse as social practice is indebted to poststructuralist theory. In particular, Michel Foucault's theory on power and knowledge played a key role in the development of Critical Discourse Analysis. According to Foucault, discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49). This view of discourse as a form of practice, which both constitutes the social world and is constituted by it (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002) is a key premise in Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis focusses on the ways ideologies are legitimated, enacted and reproduced in 'texts', whether written or spoken. As Machin maintains 'the process of doing CDA involves looking at choices of words and grammar in texts in order to discover the underlying discourse(s) and ideologies' (2012: 20).

The work of Norman Fairclough has made a major contribution to the development of CDA. Fairclough defines Critical Discourse Analysis as 'an attempt to show systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices' (1995b: 16). More precisely, he conceives the text as 'embedded in the contexts of its production, distribution and reception as well as in wider social, political, economic and cultural contexts' (*ibid.*:17). Fairclough's critical approach to discourse analysis is based upon a three-dimensional conception of discourse which is seen simultaneously as a 'text' (spoken or written), a 'discursive practice' (text production and interpretation) and 'socio-cultural practice' (1995: 97).

With regards to the way I set out to examine my object of study, this embeddedness of discourses in contexts means that, alongside a detailed linguistic analysis of the content it is also important to look at the context of emergence and production of the sites. While the mapping exercise provides an overview of the key characteristics of intercultural websites situated in a specific socio-cultural context of emergence, an

examination of editors' experienced practices and motivations offers an insight into the context of production of intercultural media texts. Therefore, this study recognises that the 'micro-level' of analysis of the linguistic features of a text such as syntax, metaphoric structure and rhetorical devices are informed and influenced by production contexts and processes (the 'meso-level') as well as by broad, societal currents of power, dominance and inequality between groups in society (Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2008).

4.3.1.1 Power and ideology in 'alter-hegemonic' texts

The question of power has been a central issue driving the theorisation and application of CDA. Critical Discourse Analysis distinguishes itself from Discourse Analysis for the weight it places on issues of power inequality embedded in discursive practices and for an aspiration to social change in the direction of disclosing and redressing power imbalance. CDA is 'critical' in the sense that it has typically focussed on how unequal relations of power are negotiated, enacted and reproduced in discourse and how these can be redressed in the pursuit of equality and social change (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002: 63-64). As Theo Van Dijk argues, CDA has been a methodology most often employed for uncovering racism or other forms of oppressive ideology embedded in discourses:

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (Van Dijk, 2001: 352)

Whilst Critical Discourse Analysis has largely been utilised to investigate issues of power inequality such as racism in the press, comparatively less research, I argue, has concentrated on positive self-representations of some categories of social actors, or counter-discourse or advocacy discourse. This study then, takes on the challenge to undertake CDA on texts that position themselves as 'alternative' discursive productions to hegemonic discourses and narrations of 'cultural difference' in society. This is an uncommon terrain for CDA methodological tools, which have largely been adopted to textual domains very clearly embedding power unbalance. However, in

embracing a critical-analytical approach to media texts offering positive/alternative politics of representation and belonging for immigrant identities, my research offers new critical insights, by approaching sedimented ideological discourses connected to the cultural politics of residents of immigrant background in Italy from a more nuanced and new angle. Indeed, it is important to be aware that unbalanced relations of power and dominant ideologies can still be embedded within more progressive or ‘alternative’ political discourses.

This study draws on the analytical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis as the principal methodological influence informing the analysis of intercultural digital media. This allows exploration of the possibility for the articulation and promotion of an alternative discourse on immigration and cultural diversity in Italy. Specifically, the analysis looks at the discursive strategies expressed in and through a set of dimensions of the sites: self-represented intent (or mission statement), organisation and aesthetics of the homepage and published stories of personal narrative. In examining these multifaceted textual domains whereby discourses articulate their meanings through an interplay of different modes, hence not restricted to the written/verbal mode, the approach to CDA that this study embraces is influenced by a multimodal approach to communication and to the analysis of (digital) media texts.

4.3.2 *A Multimodality approach to the analysis of digital media*

When considering and examining digital media or ‘texts’ published on digital media platforms such as in news sites, blogs, web portals, the analysis should not disregard the *multimodal* nature of digital texts. Multimodality, both at the theoretical and analytical level offers a framework for analysing texts whose meaning, identity and values are orchestrated through multiple modes of expression.⁴¹

Multimodality can be understood as a theoretical framework, a research perspective, a field of enquiry or a methodological application (O’Halloran & Smith, 2011). It has

⁴¹ Yet, it is important to note that Kress (2010) observes that all communication is multimodal. And all texts are multimodal in the sense that language always has to be realized through, and come in the company of, other semiotic modes: when we speak we do not just articulate a message with words but also through a complex interplay of speech-sound, rhythm, intonations, facial expression, gesture and posture.

become, over the years, an increasingly popular approach to the analysis of texts and interaction across many disciplines including communication and media studies, linguistics, social sciences, visual and performative arts.⁴² Throughout the 1990s, linguistics scholars started expressing an increasing interest in meaning generated and communicated through a variety of semiotic modes, beyond the linguistic ones. In particular, linguists and social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, felt that the analysis of visual texts lacked tools for a systematic and accurate analysis equivalent to CDA's analytical toolkits for the study of verbal communication (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010).

Hodge & Kress (1988) and later Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) proposed to adopt the term 'multimodality' to underscore that the way we communicate is seldom by one single mode of communication such as verbal language. Indeed, communication is done simultaneously through many modes, such as, for instance, by combination of the visual, sound, and verbal language. For Jewitt (2009), multimodality rests on three key theoretical assumptions. Firstly, representation and communication always draw on a multiplicity of modes (or channels of representation / communication), all of which contribute to meaning-making. Secondly, each mode consists of a set of 'semiotic resources' which have meaning potential based on their past uses, and affordances based on their possible uses.⁴³ Thirdly, individuals orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes, foregrounding the significance of the interaction between modes. Communicational acts are shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign making, and influenced by the motivations and interests of people in a specific social context (*ibidem*).

Several scholars have contributed to the development of multimodality in recent years (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Machin, 2007; Kress, 2010; Jewitt, 2009; O'Halloran & Smith, 2011). The central area of multimodal research across the various studies

⁴² As a theoretical and analytical framework, multimodality stems from Social Semiotics, a branch of semiotics influenced by Michael Halliday's systemic functional model of language (1978) and early traditions of structural semiotics.

⁴³ 'Semiotic resources' are, for social semioticians, the means for meaning-making. They are the modes (material, social and cultural) that performs communicative work and articulate meanings demanded by the requirements of different socio-cultural contexts (Jewitt, 2009)

that adopted multimodality as a methodological approach is the relationships across and between different semiotic modes (e.g. images, music, verbal language, gestures, etc.) in multimodal ‘texts’ and human interaction (Jewitt, 2009).

In media environments characterised by increased sophistication, range and complexity of media texts and practices, the study of multimodality becomes crucial. Particularly, digital media represent a research domain that can benefit greatly from a multimodal analytical approach. In digitalised forms of communication, texts traditionally conceived as written are increasingly multimodal. Images, videos and interactive features are included in digital media texts along with writing. Furthermore, media texts in general increasingly also communicate also through non-linguistic features that are selected by text-producers to convey specific ideas, concepts and identities. As Adami observes, ‘websites have meaningful form beyond their posted texts’: visual semiotic resources such as layout features, colour palette, type and colour of font all concur to shape and construct the overall aesthetics of a webpage (2014: 1). It is important to underscore that, according to a multimodal approach to the analysis of ‘texts’, the selection and deployment of specific semiotic resources in the design and aesthetics of webpages is the product of choices of text-producers who draw on sedimented meanings, values, ideas, in order to convey the identity, values and intents of the site as well as to construct and connect with its ‘model reader’ (Iser, 1974; Eco, 1979).

In this study, multimodality provides a methodological framework informing the analysis of intercultural websites, particularly in relation to the examination of those textual domains benefiting from a multimodal approach to CDA. In particular, to answer *RQ2b* the analysis will consider the overall aesthetics and structure of the homepages and the way various resources (or modes) contribute to the construction and promotion of the identity, intents, agenda, and values of the platforms. As discussed throughout the chapter, the analytical part of the thesis, following a systematic mapping of the whole ‘population’ of intercultural websites focusses on specific areas of investigation of the platforms. Firstly, to answer *RQ2a*, through the analysis of mission statements, I will examine the way a sample of five intercultural digital media platforms introduce and promote the intent and aims of the sites and how broader views, ideas, and discourses of ‘diversity’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘belonging’ inform the discursive constructions of the texts. As verbal-only texts presented in a low-

figurative page of the website, this part of the analysis will largely draw on CDA tools. Secondly, to answer *RQ2b*, I explore how such ‘mission’ and intents presented in the mission texts are demonstrated and expressed in the overall aesthetics and organisation of the sites, with primary focus on the homepages. The home page analysis draws attention to the organisation and selection of content features including both verbal and visual resources and their mutual influences. By exploring the way mission values are put into practice on the sites, the multimodal analysis of the homepages will complement, exemplify, and further expand the findings of the mission statement analysis. Furthermore, a multimodal approach to the analysis of texts also informs the exploration of inter-textual meaning-making between the three domains selected for the analysis, namely homepages, mission statements and stories of ‘new citizens’ as the focus of the third research question.

4.3.3 *Analysis operationalised*

In this section I will illustrate specific methodological choices and the main selected analytical tools chosen for exploring the contents and features of intercultural digital platforms in relation to the main areas of investigations as outlined in research questions 2 and 3. From a ‘population’ of 35 websites as identified through the mapping exercise, a sample of five sites was selected for conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis of mission statements, homepages and stories of personal narrative as outlined in section above. Hence, the sites included in the mapping provided the population from which five websites were non-randomly sampled to be analysed through a more-in-depth analytical focus. *Purposive sampling* enabled me to sample cases in a strategic way so that the sampled websites possessed all the required characteristics that permitted me to conduct the analysis with relevance to the research questions (Bryman, 2008).

The five websites were selected on the basis of two main criteria: *access* and *diversity* of format and models. More specifically, the five sites in the sample had to be: (i) active and regularly updated at the time of the analysis (throughout 2014) to provide me with access to up-to-date content. (ii) encompasses some degree of diversity – to the extent this is possible within the ‘population’ – in relation to format, location and ownership / funding models. As a result of the application of the above criteria, the following websites were selected for the sample:

Name of website	Format	Launch	Location	Ownership & Funding
1. <i>A.L.M.A. Blog</i>	Collective blog	2012	<i>remote</i>	Independent / voluntarily-run
2. <i>Yalla Italia</i>	Collective blog	2011	Milan	Affiliated to publisher / private grants
3. <i>Italiani.più</i>	Web portal	2013	Rome	Affiliated to publisher / Govt.; EU
4. <i>Prospettive Altre</i>	News site	2014	Florence	EU project / EU funds; private grants
5. <i>Migrador Museum</i>	Story-telling site	2012	Milan	Independent / private grants

Table 1 – Sample of intercultural websites for in-depth comparative analysis

As already mentioned, the analysis will concentrate on three domains of the websites: mission statements, homepages and a selection of published content falling under the genre of personal narratives. Each of the following three sub-sections will introduce the key analytical tools used in the analysis of these key areas.

4.3.3.1 *Mission statement analysis*

To answer *RQ2a* I will critically examine the self-represented intents and aims of the ‘collective’ who founded and contributed to the production and running of the intercultural media platform. Mission statements are fundamental texts for understanding the purpose, values, and motivations of an organisation or a community. As David (1993) argues, the purpose of a mission statement is to define the objectives of the operations of an organisation shared by its members and to distinguish the organisation from similar initiatives.

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the mission texts of intercultural websites enables an investigation of the following entwined aspects: a) the *purpose* for which the platform was established; b) the *motivations* behind the setting up of the site; c) the *values* and *identity* of the website; d) the *language* used to promote the mission and to convey and promote certain values, interests and concerns shared by the community contributing to the platform. After selecting the mission texts of the five sampled websites from their ‘about us’ page, I conduct a comparative Critical Discourse Analysis that reveals and discusses themes, textual strategies and rhetoric devices used to present and promote the website’s intents and motivations with regards to both common strategies and individual particularities of each website. Mission statements are analysed in this study as verbal texts given the low-density of visuals in the mission pages of all five

sampled websites. A set of tools from CDA are employed in the analysis corresponding to the micro-level of textual analysis. A detailed descriptive micro-level analysis of the mission texts serves to understand wider socio-cultural practices informing the establishment, motivations, and overall cultural politics of intercultural sites.

Specifically, the analysis primarily looks at *lexical choices*, the set of words selected and used by text producers reflecting their motivations and the overall editorial ‘politics’ of the website. Examination of the selection and use of specific lexis can reveal the kind of values, meanings and ideologies underpinning the discourse, or in other words, ‘the connotative level of signification’ (Barthes, 1967). As well as word choices, word frequency such as repetition of certain words or their synonyms can reveal emphasis of certain themes and ideas: *over-lexicalisation* can give a sense of persuasion and ‘is normally evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention’ (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 37). *Re-categorisation* (or re-lexicalisation), instead is the novel and creative production of new words (Deacon et al, 2007: 156) or novel usages of certain terms. For instance, the employment of labels like ‘new citizens’ or ‘new Italians’ may point to a specific re-categorisation strategy signifying a certain identity/cultural politics that the community producing the platform seeks to promote.

As an ‘alternative’ media form, intercultural websites may try to distance themselves from mainstream media: the technique of *structural opposition* or (‘ideological squaring’) draws attention to opposing concepts or opposing classes of concepts (Van Dijk, 2006). As well as the analysis of what is in the text, examining *lexical absence* is also important. The omission of certain terms or concepts that might be expected, yet are absent, (Fairclough, 2003: 136) also embeds connotative meaning. Similarly, *presupposition* is ‘the pre-constructed elements’, the meanings assumed as given in a text (Fairclough, 1995a: 107). Identifying *modality* in modal verbs and adjectives can reveal the site producers’ personal opinion of – or commitment to – what they say (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 186) in relation to intents of the sites and

Employment of *rhetorical tropes* such as metaphors, personification/objectification, metonymy, synecdoche can reveal adherence to certain values, ideas and ideologies. In particular, metaphors are powerful rhetorical devices grounded in everyday

cognitive experiences that have been commonly employed in political discourse (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). By drawing a conceptual connection between one semantic domain and another, metaphors can serve to conceal or shape understandings and link certain ideas with specific views and ideologies (Fairclough, 1995a). As texts that seek to distance themselves from hegemonic views of immigration grounded on ‘difference’, the representation and classification of *social actors* in the mission texts is also important and can suggest how certain categories of people are represented and positioned in relation to the perspective of the text-producers. In this regard, the *use of pronouns* can reveal whether the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ divide is challenged, transformed, or maintained in the texts and with what ideological implications for the overall identity and ‘inter-cultural’ politics pursued by the platform (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

4.3.3.2 Homepage analysis

Building on the main findings of the mission statement analysis, a multimodal approach will be adopted to comparatively analyse the home page of the five sampled websites. As mentioned in section 4.3.2. homepages are multimodal texts which employ various forms or modes of communication that orchestrate the aims, values, and identity of the website. As Knox argues:

Each home page is a complex sign, consisting of a range of visual and visual-verbal signs which function as coherent structural elements. These signs employ resources such as colour, sound, image, animation, video, and verbal text as afforded by hypertext; interact with other comparable units on the page; and perform communicative (and therefore social) acts. (Knox, 2007: 23)

The design of online home pages has been a subject of analysis in recent multimodal analysis studies (Knox, 2007; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Adami 2014a; 2014b). A useful multimodal analytical framework for analysing home pages comes from the multimodal analysis of print newspapers’ front pages. Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) analysed the layout of traditional-newspaper front pages with regards to three organizational systems of meaning: *framing*, the use of various visual devices to connect or separate different elements on the page; *salience*, assigning visual ‘weight’ to elements on the page, and *information value*, the specific information values attached to the various ‘zones’ of the image (e.g. left and right, top and bottom, etc.).

These and other analytical tools will be used in our multimodal analysis of intercultural websites' homepages to explore the second part of the second research question of this study. *RQ2a* examines how the intents, agenda and identity of the sites articulated in the mission texts are demonstrated and manifested in the aesthetics and organisation of the sites. As discussed earlier in the chapter as well as verbal/written text, the selection of visuals, layout feature, fonts, and colours participate in the orchestration of meaning in multimodal texts by establishing or reinforcing connotations with existing communicative styles, genres as well as 'iconic texts'. The home page is a domain of the website that offers an insight into a range of aspects, features and dimensions of the site: aesthetics, type of content (or agenda) and its presentation and organisation, identity and values of the community operating the platform. Various elements of the five sampled websites, largely in relation to their home pages will be examined with various tools drawn from Multimodal Discourse Analysis.

First, given the high degree of intertextuality and the multiple functions of websites, the notion of *genre* borrowed from Social Semiotics is useful for classifying the content displayed on the websites. For Van Leeuwen 'genre' defines a type of text in terms of its *communicative function*. Genres are ways of achieving communicative goals including, for instance telling a story, persuading an audience to do or believe things, instructing people in some task, and so on (2005: 277).⁴⁴ *Colour, font type and size* are key features deployed by text designers to build associations to certain genres, styles and cultural traditions. Within the overall organisation of the homepage, *layout* and overall content arrangement are also signifying systems whose examination can reveal association to certain genres or styles (Adami 2014b; Knox 2012; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1998). The analysis will also look at the *structural design* of the websites, namely the organisation and labelling of content published on the platforms. This will help to understand and examine what kind of content is given *salience* within the websites and consequently what interests, values and necessities the platforms seek to express and promote.

⁴⁴ The social semiotic approach to genre focus on the *function* of texts in social interaction, on what people do to or for or with each other by means of text (Van Leeuwen, 2005).

The aesthetics of web texts is achieved through the orchestration of various modal resources (Adami 2014b). *Salience* given to certain features – achieved through, for instance, the deployment of cultural symbols, colour, tone, focus, font – draw attention to the foregrounding of certain meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 54). The role and use of images in websites plays a crucial role in the overall meaning construction and identity of the platform. The type of *iconographic and visual choices* made by text producers may reveal important dimensions and values underpinning the cultural politics of the websites. Images associated to verbal texts such as ‘thumbnail’ photographs or images can be powerful devices in the way they anchor or enhance the meaning of the posted/published verbal text. The choice of selecting images for their *metaphorical* or *iconic association* with the text or with the values promoted by the sites is also an important communicative strategy used to convey certain meanings and ideas emerging from the association of a domain of meaning to another (Machin, 2007: 6). In the platforms under investigation in this study, the choice and use of visuals can reveal connection with or reference to certain cultural symbols or signifiers such as cultural/national identity, belonging or adherence to certain views or values.

Visual representation of *social actors* can vary according to whether people are represented as individuals (‘individualisation’), groups (‘collectivisation’) or as anonymous figures (‘anonymisation’). *Modality* in visual texts indicate the degree of articulation of details (Machin, 2007) in images. For instance, the employment of sketchy images conveys different values such as for instance, ‘amateurism’ than the use of professionally shot photos. Finally, *writing* and different *styles* of writing will be also considered when examining the home pages of the websites in question. Verbal language such as the writing style of the published stories is a fundamental mode that together with organisational, layout and visual features contribute to the orchestration of meaning of the platforms reflecting the overall identity, concerns, values and agenda of the community operating the website.

4.3.3.3 *Analysing stories of ‘new citizens’*

As outlined in the first section of this chapter, the third research question (*RQ3*) is concerned with the kind of discourses and narratives of immigration and ‘new citizenship’ published on intercultural digital media platforms. This analytical strand

is influenced by Critical Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis to examine a specific category of content published in intercultural websites: articles narrating the personal stories of residents or citizens of immigrant background in Italy, which I have defined as ‘stories of new citizens’. These stories recount the personal life experiences, endeavours, dreams and reflections of residents or citizens of immigrant background. This encompasses stories posted directly by the author-protagonist of the story or third-person narratives drawing on interviews with the individual at the centre of the story.

The examination of the content of these stories offers an insight into discourses and narratives seeking to offer an alternative representation of immigration in Italy restoring centrality to questions of citizenship, belonging, integration and national/cultural identity. These aspects concerned with the life, identity, interests and demands of long-settled immigrants in Italy are often under-represented in dominant discourses on immigration, being overshadowed by the more ‘pressing’ and contentious issues of migration to Italy such as sea-arrivals, reception, and security as discussed in Chapter 2. Furthermore, these stories represent a discursive possibility for voices and perspectives of ‘immigrant subjects’ to be heard and for power imbalance between the ‘object’ and ‘subject’ of the representation to be redressed.

By examining the content of this category, I seek to identify those discursive elements which play out in the construction of an alternative narration of immigration and cultural diversity in society to that portrayed in dominant discourses. Through tools from Critical Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis, Chapter 3 illustrates the principal discursive devices such as discourses, lexis, rhetorical devices, themes and narrative structures employed in the narration of the stories analysed. In addition to analytical tools from CDA such as those introduced in section 4.3.3.1., for the examination of the stories of new citizens I also deploys tools from Narrative Analysis. Precisely, attention will be devoted to the *discourse (or narrative) schema* of the stories, the sequence of events unfolding in a story (Hansen & Machin, 2013). The analysis of the narrative structure in ‘texts’ draws on early influential studies identifying and examining narrative patterns and structures underlying ancient stories or myths (Propp, 1968; Campbell, 1949).

The analysis of the narrative elements of a story offers a useful framework for exploring the stories of ‘new citizens’ whose narratives often tell a journey developing around various events and situations. Drawing on established narrative conventions as well as on sedimented meanings and ideologies, narratives are grounded in specific socio-cultural contexts. As Riessman argues, ‘narratives are composed for particular audiences at moments in history, and they draw on taken-for-granted discourses and values circulating in a particular culture’ (2007: 3). This final strand of the analysis focussing on stories of self-representation enables me to discuss what kind of discursive strategies have been employed to offer an alternative representation of immigration and cultural diversity and how and to what extent the stories of ‘new citizens’ or ‘new Italians’ challenge or broaden established discourses and ideologies underpinning dominant representations of ‘immigrants’ in Italy.

4.3.3.4 *Sampling the stories*

A selection of 20 stories was chosen for the analysis. The stories have been retrieved from those sections of the five sampled websites which are specifically devoted to stories recounting personal experiences and endeavours of residents and citizens of immigrant background, the ‘new citizens’. The below table indicates, for each website, the specific section of the website from which the stories were selected and its self-description. Stories were selected, through purposive sampling, to provide a range of themes and experiences discussed and to create an approximately equal sample of stories with male and female protagonists.

Website	Section title	Section self-description	<u>N. stories</u>
1. <i>ALMA blog</i>	<i>Nuovi Cittadini</i> (‘new citizens’)	Fictional stories telling the life, dreams, joys and sorrows of those arrived in Italy in search of a better life	3
2. <i>Migrador Museum</i>	<i>Storie</i> (‘stories’)	Stories of immigrants in Italy.	3
3. <i>Italiani.pù</i>	<i>Ritratti</i> (‘portraits’)	Successful stories of new Italians.	5
4. <i>Yalla Italia</i>	<i>Senza Filtro</i> (‘without filter’) <i>Doppia Vita</i> (‘double life’)	Personal experiences and self-reflections of young second-generation immigrants.	5
5. <i>Prospettive Altre</i>	<i>Società</i> (‘society’)	Stories on various aspects of culturally diverse society often from the perspective of residents of immigrant background.	4
Total			20

4.4 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the editors of intercultural media websites were employed to explore the fourth and final research question of this study:

RQ4 – What are the editors’ organisational and production practices and their experiences of the challenges in maintaining an intercultural digital media platform?

Interview material supplements the textual analysis presented in the previous chapters by providing an understanding of intercultural platforms from the perspective of the media practitioners, largely those who founded and/or coordinate the operations of the media platform. As it has been suggested, one of the key functions of qualitative interviewing for research is to understand the social actors’ experience and perspective through stories, accounts and explanations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010: 175). In the present study, the interviews are conducted with the purpose of gathering information and views – through the first-hand accounts of practitioners – on a number of aspects of the context of production of the platforms, including: organisational and production practices, intercultural relations between contributors, funding, significance, challenges, and future developments of the sites. Material gathered through interviews complement some of the findings relating to the textual analysis of the content features of the sites. Combining discursive-level analysis with insights into the context of production enables the researcher to explore the relationship between discourses and media practices situated in a specific socio-cultural context of production (Fairclough, 1995).

The chosen interviewing technique is qualitative semi-structured interviews. This interviewing method allows the interviewees to express themselves in their own words. As Deacon et al. maintain, ‘semi-structured interviews abandon concerns with standardisation and control, and seek to promote an active, open-ended dialogue with the interviewer’ (2007: 67). However, despite seemingly resembling an everyday conversation, this type of interview allows the interviewer to restrict the scope of the discussion to the required pre-determined topics by referring to an interview guide setting the issues to be covered (*ibidem*).

Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out between April 2013 and April 2016. Among the interview participants were the editors of the five sampled websites of the textual analysis study (*Yalla Italia*, *A.L.M.A. blog*, *Migrador Museum*, *Prospettive Altre*, *Italiani.più*) and those of five additional platforms: *PiuCulture*, *Multicoolty*, *Enmigrinta*, *OcchioaiMedia*, *Media and Multiculturalita*. 9 of the 10 interviews were carried out by video conference due to interviewees being located in different Italian cities and being available at different times, while it was possible to conduct one interview face-to-face. Interviews lasted approximately 30-50 minutes. The sample of interviews includes founders (or co-founders) of the media outlets who are also editors-in-chief (or coordinators – depending on the chosen self-definition) of the platforms as table 2 shows. The sample size of 10 respondents was chosen for pragmatic reasons. A total of 20 editors were contacted, with a 50% positive response rate, giving a sample size of 10 respondents. Contact details were not readily available for other editors/contributors, partly as many of the platforms were no longer being updated regularly at the time of conducting the interviews. The table below illustrates details of the conducted interviews:

	Self-defined role of interview participants	Interview date	Interview type
1	Co-founder and editor-in-chief of <i>Yalla Italia</i>	05/04/2013	Semi-structured (face-to-face)
2	Co-founder and co-ordinator of <i>ALMA Blog</i>	24/04/2013	Semi-structured (Skype)
		08/09/2015	Semi-structured (Skype)
3	Co-founder and chief-editor of <i>Piu culture</i>	08/03/ 2016	Semi-structured (Skype)
4	Co-founder and co-chief editor of <i>Multicoolty</i>	14/03/2016	Semi-structured (Skype)
5	Contributor for <i>Migrador Museum</i>	18/04/2016	Semi-structured (Skype)
6	Coordinator of <i>Italiani.più</i>	11/04/2016	Semi-structured (Skype)
7	Co-founder and chief editor of <i>Enmigrinta</i>	14/03/2016	Semi-structured (Skype)
8	Founder and coordinator of <i>Occhio ai Media</i>	18/03/2016	Semi-structured (Skype)
9	Contributor for <i>Yalla Italia</i>	05/04/2013	Semi-structured (Skype)
10	Project manager for <i>Media and Multiculturalita</i>	01/03/2012	Semi-structured (Skype)

Table 2 – Schedule of the conducted interviews

Ethical procedures were observed for conducting interviews. Prior to the interview, an introductory e-mail was sent to interview participants. The e-mail introduced myself

as a researcher and offered an overview of the research and a request for collaboration as an interview participant. Those participants interested in and available to participate in the project as interview respondents were sent a consent form outlining in more detail the scope of the research and of the interview, ethical aspects of consent, confidentiality and data anonymity (see Appendix 5). No respondents are identified by name in the quotes utilised in the analysis of interview material in Chapter 8. However, given the relatively small corpus of websites analysed and specific nature of the discussion, full anonymity of the respondent as to which website they are editor for was not possible. As it has been argued, anonymization of personal data does not always ensure complete anonymity which is in most cases an impossible goal (Van den Hoonaard, 2003). On the other hand, the alternative of removing all specifically identifiable information from transcripts including the name of the website in question would lose significant content and meaning from the transcripts. Therefore, it was explained clearly to respondents before interview that full anonymity would not be possible; no respondents declined to be interviewed due to this. Moreover, a number of interviewees stated at the start of the interview that they would have been willing to waive their right to anonymity. Some interviewees even requested the transcripts in order to publish the interview on their site.

The sequence of questions was designed to build a rapport with respondents before moving on to discuss topics requiring a more personal and evaluative account of their experiences in running the project. The questions asked in the first part of the interviews included factual/behaviour questions – or more precisely *informal factual questions* (Bryman, 2014). Questions 1 to 6 are aimed at obtaining an understanding and overview of the operation of the projects including organisational structure and production processes and practices. Subsequent questions, instead (7 to 10) tend to be *about beliefs or values*. Indeed, the second part of the interview aims at eliciting the perspective of the editors on more personal evaluations of the experience of operating / coordinating / contributing to the project. Wording of the questions was generally open-ended and follow-up questions and clarification questions were also asked.

Interview plans broadly covered the following aspects:

Interview plan

1. ***Genesis and motivation*** – How did the idea of the project come about? What motivations prompted the foundation of the website?
2. ***Role*** – What is your role and responsibilities in the project?
3. ***Organisation*** – How is the ‘newsroom’ organised? (Newsroom composition; organisational structure)
4. ***Production and editorial politics*** – How was the content produced / stories decided?
5. ***Intercultural relations***: How does the project contribute to intercultural exchange / dialogue / interaction among the contributors?
6. ***Funding***: How did the platform sustain itself, financially?
7. ***Achievements***: What are the things you feel you have achieved with the project?
8. ***Challenges***: What are the challenges of coordinating a project of this kind?
9. ***Future***: What is the future of the project? What are the future plans?
10. ***Network*** - Do you have knowledge of / are you in contact with similar projects?

Table 3 – Interview plan

The analysis of the interviews is influenced by a theme-oriented approach, broadly informed by Critical Discourse Analysis. The discussion of the interview material is organised around some of the significant themes discussed in the interviews. These include organisational and production practices, cultural politics, intercultural relations, and financial sustainability of the sites. The analysis is carried out in a comparative vein and it emphasises both commonalities and differences of the editorial practices and overall vision across the sites embraced by the practitioners. The analysis of interview material serves to complement and offer a further interpretative ground for the analysis of the sites’ published content. In this regard, the editors / contributors’ accounts offer new insights into the possibilities as well as limitations for the construction of an alternative inter-cultural politics performed through and enabled by digital media platforms.

4.4. Methodological reflections and conclusions

This chapter outlined and discussed the main aims of the study and research methods adopted to explore the research questions of the thesis. As discussed in the introduction

of the chapter, the study's overarching aim is to critically examine intercultural digital media as an alternative media form emerging in Italy since 2000 practicing the possibility of an alternative discourse on immigration and cultural diversity. Through the employment of a flexible methodology triangulating qualitative methods including systematic mapping, Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Analysis, and interviews, this work aims to explore Italy's intercultural digital media in relation to its multiple textual and structural domains including their purposes, agenda, values, and discursive interventions performed in and through published content and practices.

The analytical framework that this thesis embraces is largely informed by Critical Discourse Analysis. More specifically, a multimodal approach to CDA is instrumental to examine a range of content features and discursive strategies embedded in and enabled by intercultural digital media platforms. Nevertheless, I am aware that qualitative content or 'textual' analysis and, specifically CDA, has been criticised on various grounds. In particular, the subjectivity of Critical Discourse Analysis has been a field of discussion by many media and social science researchers (Deacon et al., 2007). Because conducting CDA often 'involves a small sample, often selected according to the interests of the analysis' (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 207), findings of studies employing qualitative methods of textual analysis have been considered, in some occasions, too subjective or unrepresentative. This study takes these above points into account. However, while I am aware that small sample size risks not ensuring representativeness, in order to carry out an in-depth, focussed, detailed, and comparative Multimodal CDA analysis, a small sample was necessary. Hence, when determining sample selection, I selected sites to include a diversity of types of websites and a variety of examples of texts and features to analyse comparatively. It should also be noted that the relatively small size of the sample is partially redressed in the mapping exercise (that will be presented in the next chapter), where the entire population of websites is examined in relation to key content and structural features.

Furthermore, CDA has been criticised for leaving out context and audience from its field of inquiry. I have stressed throughout the chapters so far that the scope of this study favours the content-dimension of the sites. As a media form that has not been previously been examined, it was of important to map the field and investigate aspects relating to purpose, agenda and discursive strategies in order to understand and

examine the overall cultural politics of intercultural media sites. Furthermore, while favouring a content-focussed approach, this thesis takes into account the context of production through interviews with the editors which complement and bears the potential to exemplify and expand the content-focussed analysis.

The analytical methodology chosen for this work favours a comparative approach to draw meaningful observations and conclusions about a ‘media form’ encompassing a number of initiatives sharing a similar set of intents and agenda. I am aware that a comparative approach to the analysis of the platforms and their content might sacrifice some of the individual characteristics of the single platforms. However, the emphasis on the comparative focus of the analysis is instrumental to the scope of the project which accords attention to the examination of intercultural digital media as coherent media form – or cultural phenomenon – expression of a cultural politics situated in a specific socio-cultural context.

A further aspect worth noting is the English translation of the texts upon which both the textual and interview analyses are conducted. In other words, the analysis is carried out on the English translation of original Italian texts. In translating Italian texts into English – either extracts from texts and stories published on the websites or interview transcripts – I have prioritized a translation that adheres as much as possible to the original source texts in Italian. Without underplaying the existence of significant culturally-sensitive characteristics of the two languages, I contend that I have tried to produce a translation that is faithful to the meaning of the source text. In the instances of terms and concepts of difficult translation because bearing culture-sensitive notions, these have been discussed in footnotes.

The forthcoming chapters present and discuss the various strands of the empirical analysis: the next chapter (Chapter 5) provides a mapping of the media landscape of intercultural platforms; Chapter 6 considers the mission and homepages of a sample of five websites; Chapter 7 explores the narratives and discourses articulated and promoted in the stories of ‘new citizens’; Chapter 8 examines the context of practice and production through interview material.

Chapter 5 Mapping Intercultural Digital Media

To examine the first research question of this study, this Chapter offers a comprehensive picture of the media-scape of intercultural digital media that have emerged online in Italy from 2000 to 2015. Of 35 platforms which I have identified as forming the population of Italy's intercultural digital media, the following aspects are examined in this chapter: timeline and location of emergence; social actors involved; political economy; themes and genres of the published content.

The building of a mapping is firstly instrumental to the understanding and examination of intercultural digital media as a distinct media form. Despite forming a heterogeneous landscape of websites, each with an individual history grown out of varied civic, media and socio-cultural experiences, experimenting with different formats and genres as well as embracing different models of economic sustainability (as I will illustrate in 5.3.), intercultural media share a set of key features (as outlined in section 3.4. and in the methodology Chapter) including the setting up of culturally diverse teams of contributors and a significant focus on matters of immigration and cultural diversity. This commonality of intent and of features that set them apart from 'ethnic minority media' motivates, I argue, examining several digital media platforms as part of a distinct media form.

Secondly, the mapping serves to facilitate identification of common characteristics of the media platforms to be analysed in detail and in a comparative fashion in the following chapters, in relation to content features (Chapter 6 and 7) and aspects of production (Chapter 8). Finally, the mapping offers a longitudinal picture of intercultural digital media from which trends can be observed and discussed.

The below Table 4 lists the 35 intercultural websites alongside web page address⁴⁵ and self-description statement. The master file displaying the full list of data and information relating to individual websites can be found in Appendices 1, 2, and 3.

⁴⁵ Not all the web addresses are still in operation due to the websites being closed down. Refer to Appendix 1 for viewing launch and termination dates of each individual platform.

	Name of website	Address	Self-description
1	A.L.M.A. Blog	http://collettivoalma.wordpress.com	Collective blog of immigrant writers
2	All TV	www.all-tv.tv	Web TV for communal citizenship and intercultural dialogue
3	Asterisco Radio	www.asteriscoradio.com	Intercultural web radio: the voice of new citizens
4	Babel TV	www.babel.tv	Web community for the new Italians
5	Corriere Immigrazione	www.corrieredelleimmigrazioni.it	Online magazine about present and future Italy
6	Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo	www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org	Anti-racism news website
7	Crossing TV	www.crossingtv.it	Web TV for the second generations
8	Enmigrinta	http://enmigrinta.oneminutesite.it/index.html	Anti-discrimination news site
9	Focus Mediterranee	www.independnews.com	Independent online magazine
10	Frontiera TV	www.frontieratv.it	Web TV for learning about other viewpoints and cultures
11	Frontiere news	http://frontierenews.it	News from a pluralistic world
12	Giornalismo a modo nostro	http://giornalismo2012.wordpress.com	Collective news-site and blog
13	Glob 011	www.glob011.com	Laboratory of G-Local news
14	Immigrazione Oggi	www.immigrazioneoggi.it	News on immigration, asylum, citizenship, and EU mobility
15	Italiani.più	www.italianipiu.it	web portal for the new Italians
16	La Città Nuova	http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it	Blog for the citizens of the new city
17	Lookout.tv	www.lookout-tv.eu	Web TV produced by immigrant youth
18	Melting	https://meltingweb.wordpress.com	Magazine of the new Italians
19	Metropoli	http://temi.repubblica.it/metropoli-online	Online newspaper for a multiethnic Italy
20	Migrador Museum	www.migradormuseum.it	Virtual museum of immigration
20	Migranews	www.archivioimmigrazione.org/migranews	Immigrant news agency
22	Mixa Mag	www.mixamag.it	Web magazine on multiethnic Italy
23	Multicultural Multimedia Channel	www.mmc2000.net	Story-telling web portal
24	Multicoolty	http://multicoolty.com	Multicultural web radio
25	Noi mondo TV	www.noimondotv.eu	Web TV that speaks your language
26	Notizie Migranti	www.notiziemigranti.it	Laboratory of intercultural journalism
27	Nuovi Cittadini TV	www.nuovicittadini.tv	Web TV for telling the success stories of new citizens
28	Nuovi Italiani	http://nuoviitaliani.blog.unita.it	New Italians' blog
29	Occhioaimedia	www.occhioaimedia.org	Anti-racism watchdog
30	Osservatorio Migranti	www.osservatoriomigrantibasilicata.it	Anti-discrimination watchdog and support website
31	Piu Culture	www.piuculture.it	Intercultural newspaper
32	Prospettive Altre	www.prospettivealtre.info	News, reports, and debates on pluralist Italy
33	Rete G2	www.secondedgenerazioni.it	The second-generations' network
34	R-Nord TV	http://rnordtv.tumblr.com	Community web TV for integration
35	Yalla Italia	www.yallaitalia.it	The second generations' blog

Table 4 – Intercultural media in Italy (name; web address; self-description).

5.1 Timeline and location

5.1.1 Timeline

The launch date of the platforms enabled me to identify the timeline of the foundation of the initiatives I classified as intercultural digital media. Figure 3 shows the number of initiatives launched per year since 2000, the year in which I recorded the earliest appearance of an intercultural digital media platform.⁴⁶ The graph shows that the number of intercultural websites had been growing steadily from 2008 until 2011. As can be seen from the figure, most projects were launched from 2009 to 2011 (54%) with 7 websites launched in 2010 and the same number in 2011. Appendix 1 provides details of which specific websites were launched each year.

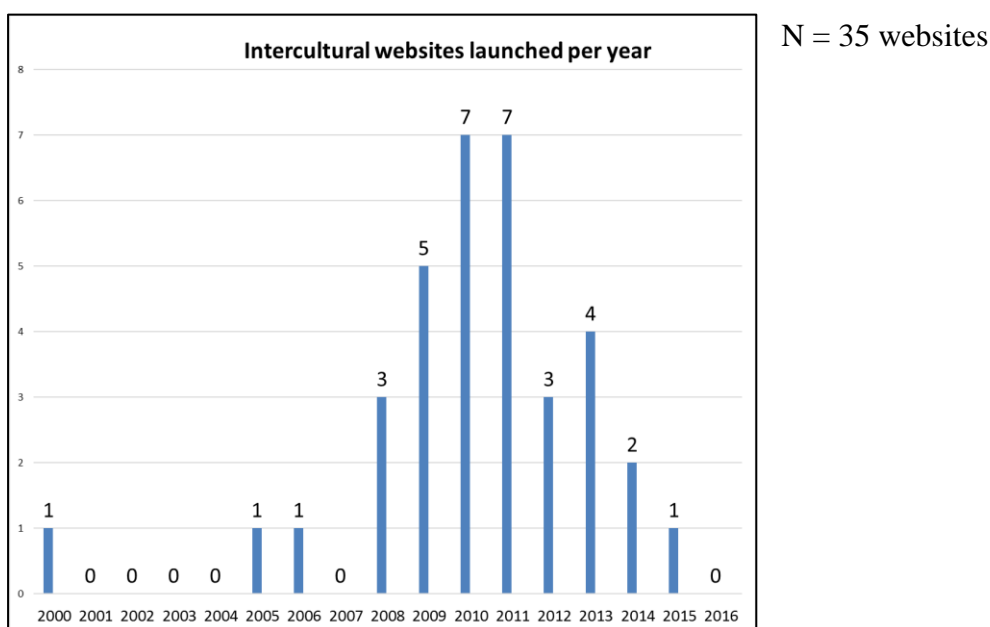


Figure 2 – Number of intercultural websites launched per year from 2000–2015

I contend that the significance of these years (2009–2011) can be ascribed to the following reasons, grounded on some of the socio-cultural and political contextual processes discussed in Chapter 2. In those years, immigration was at the centre of

⁴⁶ *Multicultural Multimedia Channel*, founded in 2000 was a ‘multicultural web radio’ sponsored by COSPE (Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries) an Italian non-profit association active with projects of international cooperation as well as promoting ‘intercultural dialogue’ in Italy and Europe.

public and political debate as a contentious political issue in the agenda of the fourth centre-right Berlusconi government (2008–2011). At the same time, demographic data shows a steady increase in the immigrant resident population and a consequent surge of citizenship applications (ISTAT, 2013).⁴⁷ This means questions of social and juridical integration of long-settled residents of immigrant background were finally gaining some public attention. Immigrant associations and advocacy groups had also become more visible and, in 2011, the grassroots campaign *L'Italia sono anch'io* ('I am Italy, too') was launched by association *Rete G2*, advocating a reform of Italy's citizenship law.

Whilst on the one hand incidental circumstances and motivations of single individuals may have played a role in the establishment of media initiatives, on the other hand it is plausible to argue that a socio-political and cultural climate in which the demands of long-settled immigrants and particularly second-generations gained momentum might have favoured the creation of intercultural media platforms. This may also have been possible through allocation of funding from institutions and organisations (see section 5.3.) committed to the promotion of 'integration' and citizenship rights and an overall more 'positive' or balanced representation of cultural diversity in Italian society.

As it can be observed from Figure 2 above, after 2013, fewer websites were created on an annual basis to the point that to-date I have recorded only one website that launched in the last two years (the platform *Multicoolty*, launched in 2015). In terms of lifespan of the sites, there is great variation across the platforms (as table in Appendix 1 and Gantt chart in Appendix 2 demonstrate) with an average lifespan of four years. The reasons for a decline in number of new platforms being launched in recent years and the relatively short-lived phenomenon of intercultural digital media can be ascribed to various factors including the 'momentum' of debates concerning citizenship rights to long settled immigrants as well as questions of political

⁴⁷ The resident population of non-Italian nationality has grown every year on a regular basis from 2003 to 2011. In particular, a strong growth took place in 2007–2008 with respectively 430,000 and 379,000 more 'foreign' residents (ISTAT, 2013).

economy informing the operation of alternative media platforms – as it will be further examined in Chapter 8 through interview with the practitioners.

5.1.2 Location

Intercultural online media platforms often originate from ‘offline’ experiences and practices grounded in specific local contexts and socio-cultural realities. For instance, the website may have developed as part of the activities of third-sector cultural associations or received funding from a municipality or regional government. Therefore, the geographical location of where the media project was founded is reflected both in the unique history of the initiative as well as in its media ‘agenda’ as I will discuss in the next section. Mapping the geographical location of intercultural digital media enables me to identify patterns of concentration across the national territory. Despite being online platforms, intercultural media initiatives still maintain, in most cases, an offline presence in the form of at a newsroom (or boardroom or ‘meeting room’). In some cases, the newsroom may be located in the headquarters of the association or organisation the initiative is affiliated to or developed from. Figure 3 below shows the presence of intercultural digital media in each individual city.

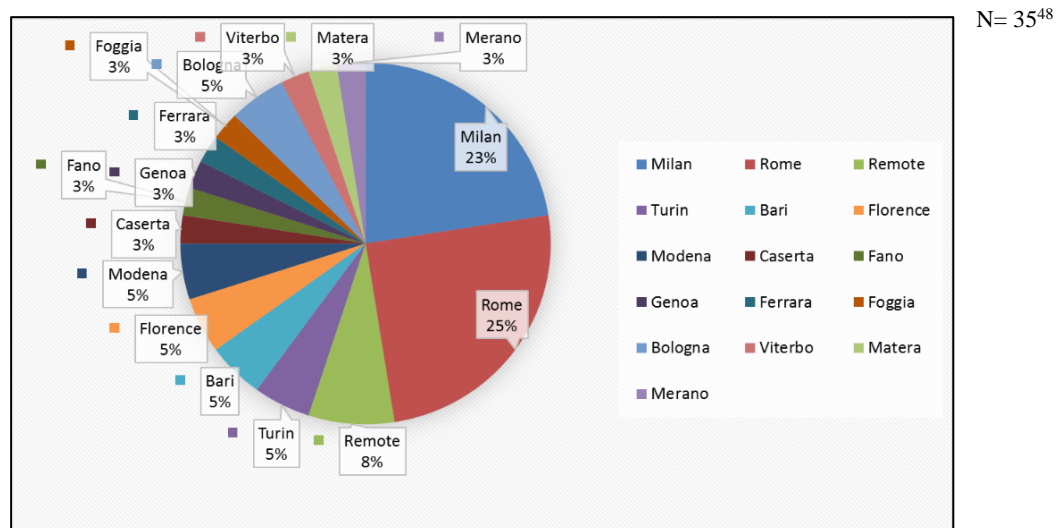


Figure 3 – Territorial distribution of intercultural websites

⁴⁸ Some websites have more than one newsroom locations – so all locations have been considered

Macro-region	N. platforms
North	18 (45%)
Centre	13 (32%)
South	6 (15%)
Virtual	3 (8%)

Figure 4 – Breakdown of macro-regions

Looking at the breakdown of individual cities in Figure 3, it can be observed that Milan and Rome host the majority of the initiatives with 9 platforms having a physical presence in Milan and 10 in Rome. This can be ascribed to three principal factors. Firstly, Rome and Milan are Italy's largest and most populated cities with the largest immigrant population and consequently third-sector immigrant initiatives are numerous. Secondly, the two cities are also important cultural industry centres where publishing, media, and communication services and companies are based.

As Figure 4 illustrate, the majority of the projects are based in Northern cities (45%) and in Central Italy (32%) with only a minor proportion launched in the South (15%), while 8% are operated remotely. These findings are consistent with those of the 2007 study mapping 'multicultural media' in Italy that was discussed in Chapter 3. In their study, Maneri & Meli found a clear North-South divide with regards to geographical distribution of 'multicultural media' (namely, largely 'ethnic minority media') across the Italian regions with Northern Italian regions hosting the majority of the media for an 'immigrant public' (2007).

5.2 Social actors

One of the key characterising feature of intercultural media, as frequently noted in this study, is having a culturally diverse team of contributors largely encompassing residents and citizens of immigrant background but also including Italians of non-immigrant background. Profiles of contributors including a short biography is included in most websites. Generally, contributors are individuals who have been resident in Italy for several years or born in Italy. This may include residents or citizens with a wide spectrum of backgrounds: first or second generation immigrants, naturalised Italian citizens, children of mixed couples. Contributors are generally

individuals with high education background and mastery of the Italian language. In common they have an interest in questions of cultural diversity, progressive politics, immigration and diversity.

The language of publication influences the demographic of the contributors as well as that of the target public. While on the one hand the choice of publishing in Italian as the primary language is instrumental to the intent to address the whole resident population despite their (linguistic / national / cultural) background of origin, on the other it excludes social actors – either practitioners or audiences – who do not master the language, either because they are newly arrived ‘immigrants’ or because based in other countries. Furthermore, as with all digital media outlets, individuals with low computer literacy or Internet access are automatically excluded in accessing web-based media both as audience and contributors (Castells, 2010; Papacharissi, 2010) as discussed in Chapter 3. A ‘like-mindedness’ on the progressive socio-cultural politics of the websites (Deuze, 2007) valuing positive promoting a positive view of cultural diversity is also implied in the construction of the ‘model’ audience. On the whole, an individual who is a long-settled resident in Italy, with a good mastery of Italian language, educated and with a good degree of awareness on themes of cultural diversity, immigration and citizenship rights is implied in the construction of both the model reader and practitioner (Eco, 1979) of intercultural websites.

All platforms considered presents collective teams of contributors as this was one of the criteria for which they were selected (see section 4.2.). Yet, the number of contributors may vary and fluctuate according to the willingness to actively contribute to the media project. Typically, as I will further illustrate in Chapter 8, the editorial operations of the media platforms are coordinated by an ‘editor-in-chief’ (or ‘coordinator’) who is often also one of the founders of the platform and is responsible for the management of the media outlet and its team. Editors-in-chief are either citizens / residents of immigrant background or Italians of non-immigrant background. Of the 35 websites I mapped, 22 (63%) are coordinated by an Italian citizen of single cultural heritage and 13 (37%) by an individual of immigrant background (largely naturalised Italian citizens). These figures indicate that whilst the teams of contributors encompass largely individuals of immigrant background, the top coordinating role is mostly filled by Italian citizens of single cultural heritage. Many of the coordinators

have a background in journalism or in professional communication and share with the contributors the intent and commitment to a project of social change aiming to redress power imbalances in mainstream media coverage as the analysis of interview material in Chapter 8 will demonstrate and discuss further.

5.3 Political economy

As mentioned earlier, intercultural digital media form a heterogeneous landscape of alternative media initiatives originating from different experiences and contexts: some of the platforms were set up as part of the activities of cultural associations committed to the promotion of cultural diversity and citizenship rights; others were created with funding from private foundations or local governments; others were devised by private individuals as collective volunteer-run blogs; others borne as part of the agenda of media groups and may be affiliated to mainstream online newspapers. Data gathered in relation to political economic aspects, show that intercultural digital media embrace different models of economic sustainability.

5.3.1 Sources of funding

By and large, intercultural websites are not-for-profit media outlets. Their aim, as it transpires from the mission statements (see next Chapter 6) is not profit-making but social change through the production and publication of progressive content showing a positive representation of cultural diversity and the inclusion of citizens or residents of immigrant background into the media content production practice.

As with many alternative media outlets, one of the challenge intercultural websites face is to secure reliable and long-lasting funding resources. Regular and consistent sources of funding can be crucial for ensuring the continuity and stability of the projects. Resources can cover website set up costs, training for the content contributors, filming equipment, and salary to practitioners. The organisations or institutions sponsoring the platforms are often acknowledged on the websites and, together with interviews with editors-in-chief, it was possible to identify five principal sources of funding in relation to intercultural digital media:

1. Voluntarist
2. Grant-funded (public/state or private grants)
3. Media group or publisher
4. Third-sector association
5. Private donations

Figure 5 below shows the adoption of the above funding strategies by each mapped intercultural media platform. As it can be observed, many intercultural websites (47%) rely – or have relied during the course of their operation – on financial support from various organisations or institutions.

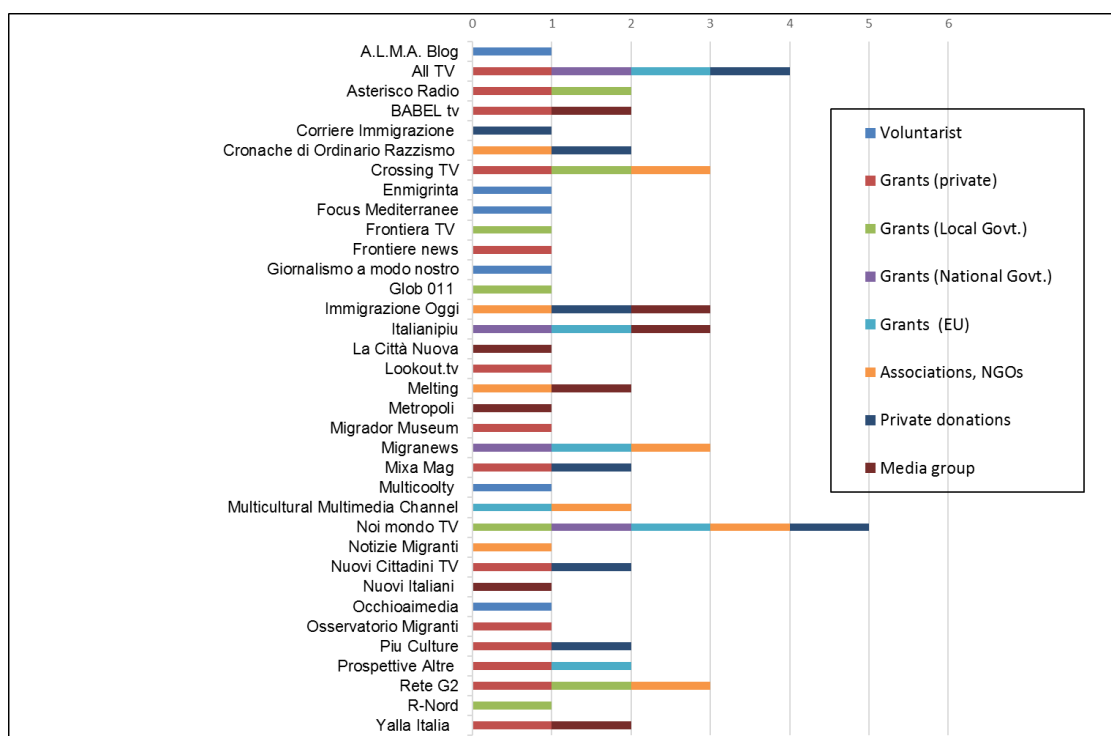


Figure 5 – Sources of funding

Figure 5 shows that only 5 of 35 websites (14%) do not rely on funding from third-party organisations or institutions and operate exclusively thanks to the voluntary work of the contributors. This is the case of *ALMA blog*, a volunteer-run collective blog that, as a text-based blog published on WordPress does not face expenses and relies on the willingness and motivation in posting content voluntarily. On the contrary, funding based on private or public grants offered by various authorities is a common model sought by intercultural media practitioners as Figure 5 shows with 17 of 35 platforms relying on grants of various forms. Grants funding the operation of the platform can

be allocated by a public authority such as municipal, regional, or national government, as part of schemes supporting initiatives for ‘integration’ and equality. For instance, *R-Nord TV* was a platform entirely funded and commissioned by the Modena Municipality with the purpose of creating a collective web TV for a multi-ethnic neighbourhood of the city of Modena. In other cases, the grant can be part of EU funding, such as *Prospettive Altre* a news platform set up with EU funds granted by the European Integration Fund. In other cases, the grant is offered by private institutions or organisations such as foundations which may decide to support, as part of their charitable activities, projects geared towards social development and progressive politics.

A proportion of the platforms in our mapping (25%) receive funding through the activities of the third-sector civic association that established the media platform in the first place. The running of a media platform is, therefore, part of the activities set up by the association. Hence, funding is sought through the channels funding the activities of the association itself and, most often, supplementary grants are also sought.

Some intercultural media platforms (8 in our mapping, that is 22%) receive funding through affiliations with publishing groups or media organizations. This is the case of *Yalla Italia*, a collective blog funded by *Vita*, a publisher specialised in third-sector news and social issues. Similarly, *Italiani.più* was funded by *Stranieri in Italia*, a media group specialised in media outlets and services for the immigrant population. In both cases, the media structures funding the intercultural projects are companies with agenda in social or immigration issues. However, there is also the instance of intercultural collective blogs affiliated to mainstream media organizations. For instance, *La Città Nuova* is a collective blog ‘for the new Italians’ hosted within the online edition of *Il Corriere della Sera*, a national daily newspaper with a liberal political orientation.

Private donations can also secure some funds for the running of the website and figure 5 shows that 8 platforms have turned to this option. The website *Nuovicittadini.tv*, for instance, had a donation feature open to any member of the public. Finally, supplementary forms of funding can include online advertising – generally services of interest to ‘immigrant residents’ – as well as fund-raising events or crowdfunding, the

latter rather rare among intercultural websites (a description of these supplementary funding strategies can be viewed in Appendix 3).

5.3.2 Ownership / Affiliation

The range of funding strategies embraced to secure the operation of the media platforms reflect the complexity of different ownership models and relationships of affiliation with various types of institutions and organisations. In terms of ownership, some initiatives were born out of the activities of local socio-cultural immigrant associations working for the promotion of diversity and inclusivity in society; others are affiliated to publishing groups or news organisations interested in pursuing a progressive agenda; others are independent projects relying on voluntary collaboration between contributors. Figure 6 below illustrates the ties of affiliation – or ownership – of the 35 websites.

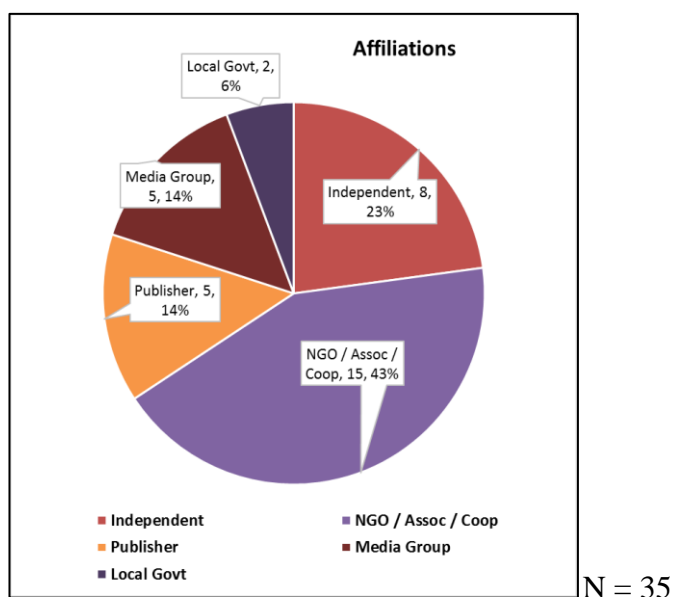


Figure 6 – Affiliations / Ownership

As figure 6 indicates, only 8 out of 35 (23%) websites are completely independent from structures of affiliation, whilst the majority of the websites were set up within the activities of a particular non-for-profit association with an interest in cultural diversity and progressive cultural politics. A proportion of the media initiatives in our mapping (28%) is affiliated to either a publisher or a media group. Only two websites were directly set up as part of a local government scheme funding cultural initiatives aimed at the promotion of ‘integration’.

The examination of funding streams and ownership models has provided a snapshot picture of the complex and varied political economic models of intercultural websites. As an alternative media form facing the challenge to secure enough funding to ensure the operation and editorial organisation of the platform, the large majority intercultural media platforms have resorted to a mix of funding types. This encompasses ties of affiliation and dependencies with various institutions and organisations both public and private, governmental and non-governmental, mainstream and third sectorial, professional and amateur. This seems to confirm what other studies have found with regard to the complex and seemingly contradictory political economy of ‘alternative media’ which most often maintain various forms and degrees of dependencies with mainstream media or state institutions (Bailey, et al, 2007) as discussed in Chapter 3.

5.4 Themes

The agenda of intercultural media covers a wide spectrum of themes and varies according to editorial choices and preferences of each individual platform. The websites offer menu bars with different categories pointing to a variety of thematic interests. These range from news on local events promoting integration or intercultural dialogue to personal stories of immigrant residents in Italy; from commentaries on conflicts in the Middle East to practical information on residency policy in Italy; from opinion pieces on parliamentary debates on citizenship reform to news about asylum seekers in Europe. This is in line with studies and research on ‘ethnic minority media’ which observe that contents present both a local and a transnational dimension reflecting the nature of the migratory experience itself (Georgiou, 2003; 2005a). The categorisation of themes in this work has two main functions. Firstly, to understand and systematically examine the contents and agendas of intercultural digital media. Secondly, to justify the selection of content features for more in depth analysis in the forthcoming analytical chapters. The coding of topic categories was carried out across the population of 35 websites. Twelve themes were identified across the media platforms by manually coding the principal topic categories featuring in the menu bar of each website (coding process has been explained in more detail in methodology section 4.2). Figure 7 below shows the operational definitions of each thematic category identified.

<u>Operational definition of principal topic categories of intercultural websites</u>	
1.	<i>Immigration in Italy</i> Immigration and cultural diversity in Italy: national / regional / local policies and social issues (e.g. economy, employment, residency).
2.	<i>National citizenship</i> Public debates and opinions on citizenship law reform; parliamentary debates; local initiatives (e.g. honorary citizenship granting); grassroots campaigns and proposals for citizenship law reform.
3.	<i>Personal stories</i> Personal stories and experiences of citizens or residents of immigrant background; identity exploration; self-narration and personal reflections.
4.	<i>Integration / interculturalism</i> Local / regional / national events promoting intercultural dialogue and integration (e.g. arts, sport, education as means for social integration; ‘intercultural’ festivals).
5.	<i>Refugees</i> Asylum seekers and refugees in Italy; reception and humanitarian aid; EU ‘refugee crisis’ and EU policy debates; local / national / European and international civic activism for the reception / integration of refugees
6.	<i>International affairs</i> International migration; European and Mediterranean affairs; war and conflicts in the Middle East and Africa; terrorism; peace processes and international cooperation; international politics (e.g. general elections).
7.	<i>Information / advice</i> Practical information on legal / bureaucratic documentation or application processes for residence permit; work permits; citizenship; school system; employment.
8.	<i>Racism / discrimination / anti-racism</i> Stories commenting or reporting on forms of discrimination: largely racism in Italian society; gender inequality; mafia exploitation of immigrant labour; anti-racism civic activism.
9.	<i>Environment</i> Issues relating to environment, ecology, and sustainable living.
10.	<i>Anti-mafia</i> Stories on local initiatives, associations, groups engaged in the promotion of anti-corruption and anti-mafia education.
11.	<i>Religion / spirituality</i> Comment pieces or news commentaries on religions, inter-faith dialogue, or other forms of spirituality.
12.	<i>Health / wellbeing</i> Healthcare in Italy and immigrant residents and citizens (access, services, employment); general wellbeing stories.

Figure 7 – operational definition of thematic categories featuring in intercultural websites.

Figure 8 visualises, in a multiple bar chart, the themes that each of the 35 websites present.

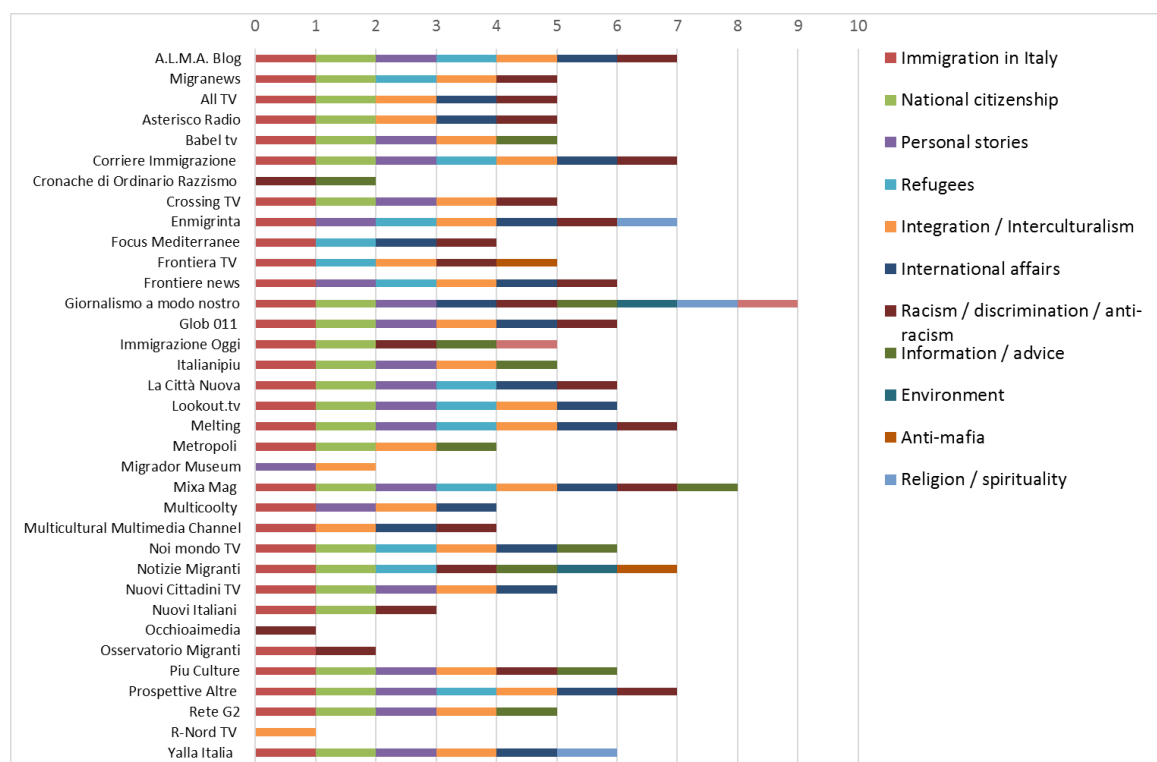


Figure 8 – Visualisation of thematic categories in individual websites

The above Figure 8 shows that most websites feature multiple topic categories with few platforms entirely devoted to the coverage or narration of one single thematic area (for instance, the website *Occhio ai media* largely functions as a watchdog of racism in the press; or *R-Nord TV* is a web TV producing videos geared to the social integration of immigrant residents in a multi-ethnic district of the town of Modena). The large majority of the websites (31 websites, 88%) feature published content centred on aspects concerning immigration in Italy. News and debates on national citizenship, particularly nationality law reform (26, 74%) and integration issues, largely civic initiatives and events (25, 71%) are also themes recurring in the majority of the websites as well as practical information and advice on residency / citizenship policy (11, 31%). National initiatives against racism as well as discussions on discrimination also feature in 68% of the total of websites. Furthermore, 20 websites have devoted sections for the narration of personal stories of residents or citizens in Italy of immigrant background.

This shows the prominence of the national angle of the stories favouring aspects of settled immigration / cultural diversity within the national context of settlement. With regards to international affairs, 19 websites feature categories to the coverage or discussion of news in Europe or in other parts of the world (that is 54% of the websites) and stories about asylum seekers feature in 14 websites (40%). Interestingly, only 3 websites have sections devoted to the discussion of religion, faith and spirituality. This might be due to the ‘sensitive’ nature of these themes from the perspective of an inter-cultural politics pursued by people that might have different faiths and view in a country with strong Catholic heritage and identity as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.3). Furthermore, two platforms set up in Southern Italy – *Notizie Migranti* based in Caserta and *Frontiera TV* based in Foggia – host sections devoted to anti-mafia educational initiatives and events showing the locally-grounded identity of the sites.

It should be noted that the thematic map in Figure 8 is an impressionistic picture that only partially captures the complex spectrum of themes and topics covered by each website. On many occasions, a few of the listed themes may conflate into a single published article or post. For instance, personal stories of residents of immigrant background may include reflections on the citizenship reform debate and questions of integration / inclusion into the national society. Whilst the topic categories are multiple and diverse, on the whole immigration and cultural diversity is the principal lens through which stories are selected, narrated and discussed on the platforms. With a prominent focus on issues and stories concerned with settled immigration in the national Italian context – despite, of course, variations across platforms – these platforms seem to favour an agenda that is particularly concerned with the condition of settlement of migration where issues of residency, citizenship, integration and inclusion are important and discussed in their multiple dimensions. A prominent focus on the national dimension of settlement and citizenship, considerably limited attention to religious / spirituality as potentially ‘sensitive’ issues and the absence of sections specifically devoted to ‘homeland issues’ are features that may arguably point to a different cultural politics to that pursued by ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘diasporic media’.

5.5 Conclusions

This Chapter has presented and examined the main characteristics of intercultural digital media in Italy. Analytical observation and mapping of the websites have enabled me to draw some preliminary findings before investigating some of the content features of a selected number of websites through a more in-depth discourse analysis. The mapping has illustrated that intercultural digital media originated in a specific socio-cultural and political context which had its momentum in those years (2010-2011) where immigration and particularly demands for citizenship law reform gained public and political attention in Italy. Geographical location has confirmed the existence of a North-South divide (Maneri & Meli, 2007) with the majority of platforms being based in Northern regions. The analysis of funding strategies and ownership models of intercultural digital media has illustrated the complexities of the political economy of these platforms: intercultural digital media maintain relationships of affiliations to different civil society, media, and state institutions and organisations which are also reflected in the range of funding strategies sought to secure the running of the media platforms. As for the agenda, I have illustrated that intercultural media publish content spanning a wide range of themes and issues related to the broad theme of (im)migration and cultural diversity in contemporary society. Aspects concerning the dimension of settlement in the national Italian socio-cultural and political context feature prominently in the topic categories of the websites.

Chapter 6 Mission, Values and Discursive interventions

This section aims to explore the representational and ‘political’ strategy of intercultural digital media in relation to their self-represented objectives, values, organisational structure, and identity, and in this, to address the second research question of this study:

RQ2: What is the intent of intercultural digital media platforms and how is it demonstrated?

The question is articulated into two sub-questions:

RQ2a – What is the ‘mission’ and purpose of the sites and how are these articulated in the mission statements?

RQ2b – How do the aesthetics and structure of the homepages express the purpose, agenda, and values of the sites?

The examination of *RQ2a* enables me to investigate how these platforms motivate and legitimate their existence, assert their values and promote their vision or ‘cultural politics’. This is achieved through a Critical Discourse Analysis of the mission statements of five sampled intercultural websites. Subsequently, building on the mission statement analysis, the exploration of *RQ2b* reveals how the provision of published content, its selection, and organisation is predicated upon the goals and values expressed and articulated in the mission texts.

The chapter is structured into two sections. Section 6.1. introduces and discusses the findings emerging from the Critical Discourse Analysis of the mission statements of the five sampled websites (*RQ2a*). Subsequently, section 6.2. explores the homepages of the same websites through a multimodal analytical approach in relation to the structural organisation, visual elements and contents of the homepages (*RQ2b*). The five sampled websites at the centre of the analysis of this chapter and subsequent chapter 7 are: *A.L.M.A. Blog*, *Italiani.più*, *Migrador Museum*, *Prospettive Altre*, and *Yalla Italia*. Sampling criterion for choosing these five websites for the case study was explained in the earlier methodology chapter.

6.1. Mission statements: A Critical Discourse Analysis

As discussed in the methodology chapter (section 4.3.3.1.), the mission statements of the five intercultural media platforms are crucial texts for investigating how these sites motivate and legitimise their existence, how they present and promote their values, and what type of intervention(s) they seek to make. This section presents the main findings from the comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of the mission texts of the five sampled websites. The analysis accords attention to the thematic-level of the discourse to single out common discursive constructions across the five texts. The analysis reveals three recurring discursive strategies deployed by text producers to introduce and promote the motivations, objectives and values of the five sampled intercultural websites:

- (1) Exposing a crisis of representation
- (2) Reclaiming agency and voice
- (3) Constructing a ‘new’ identity politics

At the same time, the analysis examines the micro-linguistic devices emphasising rhetoric differences and emphasis on different issues and purposes across the five texts. This demonstrates how similar intents are variously articulated in line with the specific purposes and emphases of each individual digital media outlet. Hence, the analysis seeks to capture both commonalities and distinctive use of linguistic resources in each individual text. The texts have been retrieved from the ‘about us’ (*chi siamo*) section of the websites. The full mission statements in the original Italian version can be viewed in Appendix 4. The analysis, for concision purposes, is demonstrated utilising extracts from my English translation of the mission statements.

6.1.1. A crisis of representation

The first discursive construction articulated across the five mission statements is a contestation of the ‘dominant regime of representation’ (Hall, 1997b). In the mission texts, the purpose, values and objectives of the websites are presented through a structural opposition with hegemonic representational practices in relation to immigration and cultural diversity in Italian society. Such critique, expressed with similar discursive and rhetorical devices is variously pronounced in the texts.

A.L.M.A. Blog's mission statement starts by offering background information about the 'genesis' of the collective blog. The text, significantly longer than the other four, recounts the experiences that led to the creation of a collective blog run by journalists and writers of immigrant background. A journey of determination, collective effort, and occasional failures led to the successful launch of the collective independent blog. The extract below⁴⁹ describes the motivations that prompted its conception:

In a country where the immigrant population has today reached the 10% mark, immigrants are present in all sectors of social and economic life, **except in those places that matter**. There are **a handful of immigrants in positions of responsibility** such as politics and **their voice in the media is almost non-existent**. As [individuals] living in a country that constantly **points the finger at this or that 'ethnic' group or culture as socially dangerous**, we felt, after our first meeting in Parma, that **it was our duty to try to intervene and raise awareness** among 'all forces of civil society' of an **increasingly intolerable situation**. A first document was written (click here to read the Parma meeting statement), and a first attempt to create a collective blog was made.
(From *A.L.M.A. Blog*'s mission statement)

The text refers to two key issues that prompted the idea of creating a collective blog. Firstly, an issue of *under-representation*: only a 'handful' of immigrants have roles of responsibility within the political and media sphere. Secondly, an issue of *misrepresentation*: the stigmatisation of ethnic minority groups metaphorically lexicalised as 'finger-pointing'. These two key issues are symptoms of a crisis of representation of residents of immigrant background in Italy, which is now to be redressed through *A.L.M.A. Blog*'s collective intervention. The response to this 'crisis of representation' is portrayed as a collective mobilisation to embark on an awareness-raising project. The high degree of modality implicit in these expressions '*it was our duty* to try to intervene and raise awareness' gives a sense of strong socio-moral commitment and responsibility. It emphasises a crisis, lexicalised as 'an increasingly intolerable situation' demanding a collective intervention as a response.

⁴⁹ Words and expressions are highlighted in bold for illustrating word choices and linguistic devices pertinent to the analysis.

Prospettive Altre's mission statement is the most concise of the five mission texts. Again, a critique of hegemonic discourses on cultural diversity serves to introduce the aims and aspirations of the website as the below extract shows:

With the voices of **journalists of foreign origin** in Italy, [we aim] to **go beyond the stereotypical coverage** of immigration in Italian media and **bring to the surface the everyday reality** of our cities and the **challenges** of an **intercultural society under construction**.

(From *Prospettive Altre*'s mission statement)

Mainstream national media coverage of immigration is described as 'stereotypical' to which *Prospettive Altre* objects, and instead offers a more authentic coverage operated by 'journalists of foreign origin'.⁵⁰ Again, a structural opposition between the mission of the website and 'the stereotypical information of Italian media' is constructed in the text. The response to the crisis of representation is here presented through the metaphorical image of an 'everyday reality to be brought to the surface'. This figurative image suggests that mainstream media coverage allegedly operates a camouflage of 'reality' that need to be made visible, or 'brought to the surface'. And it is the 'voices' of immigrant journalists that would redress this epistemological disconnection between 'stereotypical coverage' and 'everyday reality'. Interestingly, the term 'reality' (*realtà*) is here used as a synonym of the term 'society' that would arguably be semantically more appropriate. The term 'reality', however, evoking a sense of 'authenticity' and 'truthfulness', is used across the five mission texts as it is used to emphasise a contrast between the allegedly 'distorted, misrepresented' representations of national media and the 'real' – as authentic and truthful – representations offered by the websites. These rhetoric choices, I argue, serve to emphasise the struggle for more authentic, pluralistic and truthful representations of cultural diversity in Italy that the sites aim to offer.

With similar metaphorical language, the mission text of *Italiani.più* expresses criticism towards a certain attitude of interpreting 'reality':

⁵⁰ The use of the label 'foreign' is discussed in section 6.1.3.

Italiani.più aims to **recount the reality that many do not yet see**, or at which they only take a **superficial glance**. An everyday reality of **cultural encounters**⁵¹, **challenges**, and **prejudices**.
(From *Italiani.più*'s mission statement)

This brief extract shows the lexicalisation of a structural opposition between a 'reality' that the website *Italiani.più* intends to recount (*raccontare*) and the incapacity of 'many' to either see this reality ('the reality that many do not see') or to look at it in-depth ('or at which they only take a superficial glance'). As in *Prospettive Altre*, 'visibility' returns as a metaphoric trope associated to the act of 'making visible' certain representations, stories and perspectives that have been long hidden or silenced.

Similarly to *Prospettive Altre*'s text, the extract highlights the epistemological disconnection between 'reality'-as-a-truthful-dimension and its distorted depiction by an undefined 'many'. Indeed, 'many' is used as a generic aggregator leaving the social actors responsible for this untruthful representation of reality-society unspecified. This seems to suggest a tentative, a careful politics of persuasion that avoids confrontation and 'finger pointing' at the actors and institutions responsible for the 'crisis of representation' in Italy. Further markers of a situation of tension in which *Italiani.più* seeks to intervene are the descriptors used to define this contested 'everyday reality' made 'of cultural encounters, challenges and prejudices'. Whilst 'prejudice' has a clear negative connotation, suggesting a category of people being prejudiced by another group, 'challenge' denotes a proactive response to a 'difficult' situation.

The structural opposition between 'reality-as-truth' and the dominant portrayal of immigration responsible for 'concealing reality' – whereby reality is intended as the

⁵¹ 'Cultural encounters' translates the original Italian *contaminazione*; literally, 'contaminations' but in Italian the term is, at least in this context, devoided of negative connotation. Hence, I opted for translating it with 'cultural encounter'. The term *contaminazioni* in this particular context arguably literally translatable as 'cultural contaminations', has been used in Italian early multicultural discourses as a synonym for 'creolisation' to mean the process of encounter, exchange and fusion between different cultural heritages and traditions (Pompeo, 2000). The choice of this lexis, which clearly semantically embeds a negative connotation - as 'contamination' denotes something that is no longer 'pure' by exposure to or addition of other substances/elements - is used in the text to convey positively the idea of a multi-ethnic society signals the retention in multicultural discourses of a certain 'old-fashioned' terminology used in the early accounts/discourses on immigration.

‘real / authentic’ society – is left to metaphorical language in the last two examples. Both texts imply a ‘model reader’ (Iser, 1974; Eco, 1979) who understands and shares a sentiment of dissatisfaction towards the politics of representation in Italian media and society. The deployment of figurative language, I argue, here performs a ‘political’ function. It serves to criticize and oppose the dominant media and public discourse on immigration in a rather indirect, almost implicit and ‘gentle’ or moderate way: socio-political issues informing this ‘crisis of representation’ are not explicitly disclosed (with the exception of *ALMA blog*), whilst a figurative rhetoric merely hints at those issues in a non-confrontational or non-antagonistic way.

Yalla Italia’s mission text also presents the ‘mission’ of the blog in opposition to a series of negatively connoted representational practices:

We are young people who wish to offer our point of view on a complex reality, without offering **reassuring stereotypes, violent provocations** for their own sake, **absurdities** and **generalisations** that give immediate glory. The only promise we make to you is that we will always try to keep ourselves and you informed through/by adopting a telescopic gaze to observe Italy and the world. We [also] wish to **reassure you** that this is **not a laboratory of pre-packaged answers**, or a ‘**cyber-trendy observatory**’ from which we **pontificate** on the Two Chief World Systems.
(From *Yalla Italia*’s mission statement)

Negative representational practices lexicalised with the expressions: ‘reassuring stereotypes’, ‘violent provocations’, ‘absurdities and generalisations’, ‘pre-packaged answers’, ‘pontifications’ which refer to a situation of tension in which ‘cultural diversity’ appears to be a contentious issue in dominant discourse. These expressions denote *mis-representation* (of cultural diversity/immigration) and are rhetorically used to position *Yalla Italia*’s positive counter- (or alter-)intervention. Earlier on, the text refers to labels used to indicate young citizens of immigrant background – as I will further discuss later – defining them as ‘slow expressions’ that fail to capture the dynamism of the ‘real country’. Again, ‘reality’ – a term employed to denote a truthful depiction of society – is opposed to representation of reality-society:

[These are] **slow expressions, very slow**, which do not capture the **dynamism** and the speed with which Italian society is changing, **the thousands faces that represent its silent fuel, the real country**.
(From *Yalla Italia*'s mission statement)

In the expression 'thousands of faces representing the silent fuel of the country', the descriptor 'silent' associated to 'fuel' is used to evoke under-representation and non-recognition experienced by youth of immigrant background. Yet, this youth, representing 'the real country' – as opposed to the one (mis-)represented in the mainstream media – is presented as a key ingredient in society and a necessary force 'powering' the country.

Similarly, in *Migrador Museum*'s mission text, the issue of *under-representation* in the media and public discourse of citizens with an immigrant background is lexicalised through metaphoric language and bears similarities with *Yalla Italia*'s text. Residents of immigrant background are defined as 'nameless and faceless'.⁵² These descriptors, suggesting 'anonymity' and 'invisibility', are used to refer to a situation of marginality and exclusion of the population of immigrant background from the national representational sphere. Again, criticism of mainstream discourses and practices of representations favours implicit highly figurative references over an informative account of such marginalising discourses and practices.

To conclude, this section has illustrated that a discursive construction exposing a 'crisis of representation' both in terms of *under-representation* and *mis-representation* of residents and citizens of immigrant background recurs across the five mission texts and serves to present the motivation that prompted the establishment of the digital media platforms and their aims. Apart from *ALMA Blog* whereby criticism of mainstream representational practices is explicitly illustrated with factual information, the other texts make use of figurative language in order to create a structural opposition between 'authentic' representation of society-reality that the platforms aim to offer and the untruthful or distorted mainstream representations. Within the spectrum of various

⁵² 'Italy is made of treasures in the form of stories, experiences, languages, ideas, courage, sacrifice, colours, and tastes, skills of thousands of *nameless and faceless people* who have won a big challenge: starting a new life in a different environment, with a different language and different cultural codes' (*Migrador Museum*, mission statement)

degrees of modality, overall, criticism of dominant ways of representing ‘difference’ is instrumental to the promotion of an alternative politics of representation. However, rather than an antagonistic criticism, the mission texts seem to perform a tentative politics that avoids confrontation and ‘pointing the finger’ at specific social actors and institutions responsible for marginalisation and mis-representation of immigrant subjects within the national politics of representation.

5.1.2. *Reclaiming agency and voice*

The criticism of mainstream narratives and practices in the mission statement serves to present, in opposition, the vision, aims and values of the platforms. To redress a situation of under-representation and power imbalance in which ‘new identities’ are placed in a passive and silenced role, intercultural websites include residents of immigrant background in the media space both as ‘subjects’ and ‘producers’ of the stories. This section examines a discourse of a reclaimed ‘subjectivity’ over the allegedly ‘objectifying’ practices of mainstream media and public discourse. The five mission texts all articulate, with various rhetoric devices, an empowerment discourse of agency affirmation.

A.L.M.A. Blog, as we saw previously, presents the under-representation of immigrants in media and politics as a problem of ‘voice’ being marginalised or silenced in those spheres. In response to a situation of exclusion, the idea of the blog was prompted by a collective call for intervention:

A.L.M.A. – acronym for ‘I Raise up My Hand Now’ [*Alzo La Mano Adesso*] – is a collective blog run by writers, journalists, and bloggers of various origins resident in Italy who seek to **intervene in the national debate, raising our hand** and saying: **‘we are here too and we want to have our say’**.
(From *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s mission statement)

The extract shows that the response to a ‘crisis of representation’ is portrayed as a collective act of intervention. Such collective action is figuratively depicted with the image of the gesture of ‘raising a hand’. The gesture symbolises willingness to participate in the national society as ‘legitimate’ citizens. It is also an attention-call-gesture symbolising a call for recognition by residents and citizens of immigrant

background as active and ‘speaking’ subjects in society: ‘we are here too and we want to have our say’. Interestingly, the raising-hand-metaphor is opposed in the text to another figurative construction charged of negative connotation: ‘pointing the finger’ to ethnic minority groups defined as a ‘socially dangerous’ practice as illustrated earlier. *A.L.M.A. Blog* was thus conceived as a platform functioning as a community formed around ‘a common call for acknowledgement’ (Mitra, 2001). Reflecting this aspiration, the personal point of view of the contributors is very much at the centre of the blog’s agenda, as another extract shows:

The concept [of the collective blog] is that of **a container of individual blogs** where **each contributor is free** in terms of time, mode, style, and contents, but in which there should be **a sort of shared strategy** especially in **addressing important themes** and in **offering a viewpoint** on ‘burning’ issues which are imposed on us by current events.
(From *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s mission statement)

Whilst the extract introduces the ‘editorial’ approach of the collective blog which gives contributors independence with regards to the modalities of publication and content-selection, what is meant by ‘a shared strategy’ among the contributors is left unspecified in the mission statement. However, editorial strategies and agenda of the platforms is discussed in Chapter 8 through interviews with their editors-in-chief.

Migrador Museum’s mission text revolves around the idea of offering individuals of immigrant background – metaphorically described as ‘nameless and faceless’ - a platform for sharing their stories and experiences. The discourse of a reclaimed subjectivity versus ‘objectification’ experienced in mainstream narratives is expressed with the following words:

We believe that [our society is changing] for the better. And, to prove it, we rely on the memoirs of the *migradors*, by **giving them a voice, calling them by name, looking at their faces and listening to their stories**.
(From *Migrador Museum*’s mission statement)

Again, figurative rhetoric is used to emphasise the importance of recognising individuals of immigrant background as subjects with an identity (‘calling them by name’) and ‘speaking/agentive power’ (‘giving them a voice’). Moreover, the

expression ‘looking at their faces and listening to their stories’ suggests an invitation to engage or empathise with the experiences of the contributors, that is individuals of immigrant background, re-lexicalised as ‘migradors’. It is important to observe that whilst in *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s mission statement the narrator coincided with the ‘collective of ‘immigrant writers, journalists and bloggers’, *Migrador Museum* maintains an opposition between ‘us’ versus ‘them’. A generic unspecified entity (‘we’) provides the *migradors* (‘them’) with the opportunity to narrate their stories on the platforms. This suggests that a structural hierarchy is in place and maintains a distinction between the devisers/producers of the platform (‘us’) and the contributors as individuals of immigrant background narrating their stories (‘them’).

The structural opposition between the silenced status of immigrant subjects in mainstream narratives and the act of reclaiming voice/agency can be also found in *Yalla Italia*’s mission text. Again, by deployment of figurative language, immigrant youth is described as ‘thousands of faces representing the *silent* fuel of the country’ as saw in the extract earlier. In line with the previous mission texts, agency is reclaimed through the commitment: ‘we will speak out... as new citizens...’. The discourse of reclaiming agency reflects the way the aims of the platform are introduced. Reference to the editorial approach is also made in *Yalla Italia*’s mission text. Contents will have a subjective viewpoint: ‘*we will offer our point of view* on a complex reality, without offering reassuring stereotypes...’. And the various themes will have a self-presentation angle: ‘We will talk about traditions, politics, society, and even cuisine: but without ever losing sight of the wish *to represent ourselves with fun*’.⁵³ Content production is described as a mutual learning process from which both readers – addressed directly – and content-producers will learn: ‘the only promise we make to you is that we will always try *to inform [both] ourselves and you...*’.

Italiani.più presents itself as a space where young citizens of immigrant background are both the object and the subject of the discourse:

⁵³ Original Italian: *autorappresentarci divertendoci* translatable as ‘representing ourselves in a fun light-hearted way’

We will talk about them – the so-called ‘second-generations’, the children of immigrants – and **we will also let them speak**.
(From *Italiani.più*’s mission statement)

Similarly to *Migrador Museum*, in *Italiani.più*’s mission text the binary opposition ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is also present: a collective entity (‘us’), the provider of the platform that *allows* ‘them’ to speak (‘we will let them speak’), positions itself ‘outside’ the ‘new citizens category’. Again, this suggests a non-horizontal structural organisation in which different editorial roles may exist. The identity of this collective ‘us’ implicitly presents itself as the provider of the opportunity for narration and self-representation and it is opposed to ‘them’, the ‘new Italians’ through a process of pronominal ‘othering’ suggesting the existence of two different identity groups, arguably ‘old Italians’, namely Italians of non-immigrant background and ‘new Italians’, namely residents or citizens of immigrant background. This suggests that power relations are at play here between cultural differences and point to the complexity of intercultural politics that may require negotiating different practices, conventions and demands for securing the existence of these media as will be further discussed in Chapter 8. Interestingly, the utilisation of contrasting pronouns in *Italiani.piu*’s mission statement dissolves at the end of the text with the recognition of belonging to the same ‘us’ discursive space: ‘...a new image that would simply talk about *us. Italians*’. Therefore, the conclusion suggests a sense of ‘inter-cultural collectivity’ and shared responsibility bringing together ‘them’, and ‘us’, arguably residents and citizens of immigrant background and ‘Italians’ of single national heritage.

Towards the conclusion, the text offers more details about the platform’s purposes. The platform is presented as an inclusive space where ‘everyone’ – ‘new’ and ‘old’ Italians – is entitled to ‘protagonist’ status:

Italiani.più is a web portal **useful to the new Italians, but also to anyone** who wishes to find out more. A point of reference, information and legal advice, but especially of sharing, **where everyone feels a protagonist**.
(From *Italiani.più*’s mission statement)

Italiani.più presents itself as a platform for the ‘new Italians’ but also for ‘anyone else’, namely the whole resident population. It seeks to restore inclusion and centrality to any subject in the discursive space: ‘where everyone feels like a protagonist’. In addition to being a site for the ‘sharing’ of stories, the website is described as having practical value on residency matters: ‘a point of reference, information and legal advice’.

In line with the other mission texts, albeit more concisely, *Prospettive Altre* introduces itself as a platform seeking to move away from the stereotypical language of mainstream media (as I illustrated earlier in 6.1.1.) and it is ‘the voices of journalists of foreign origin’ that would offer ‘a new perspective’ on the narration of reality as the name of the website suggests.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the mission text introduces the focus of the website which seems to be news-oriented covering themes alongside the local and international spectrum: [‘will offer a] space for local news without overlooking the connections with the rest of the world as well as [offering] analyses and debates on current affairs exploring the changing reality’.

To conclude, a discourse seeking to restore *centrality* to individuals of immigrant background in opposition to their *marginality* in mainstream media narratives recurs across the five mission texts. This discourse deploys terms denoting the reclaiming of agency/voice to emphasise and promote the intervention of the websites as alternative sites for news, stories, and self-narration. Specific description of the aims and agenda of the websites, however, tends to be brief in all the five mission statements. More words are instead devoted to the presentation of the identity politics promoted by the teams behind the creation of the platforms, as I illustrate in the next section.

6.1.3 Towards a ‘new’ identity politics

This section examines the alternative identity politics suggested and promoted in the mission texts. In particular, the analysis focusses on the language through which an ‘alternative’ way of talking about immigration and ‘immigrant subjects’ – both

⁵⁴ *Prospettive Altre* (Italian) is literally translatable with “Other Perspectives”.

protagonists and producers of the stories – is employed in the mission texts. The analysis has revealed two recurring strategies across the websites:

- (a) a positive re-evaluation of culturally diverse Italian society
- (b) a re-lexicalisation of labels attached to residents of immigrant background.

These two discursive strategies are examined in the following sub-sections.

6.1.1.1 *Cultural diversity as ‘change’*

The analysis has revealed that all five mission statements utilise signifiers of ‘change’ to describe Italian contemporary society. The following extract constitutes the opening line of *Italiani.più*’s mission statement:

Italy has **changed** and continues its **rapid transformation through** the **people** who live in it, through their **lifestyle**, with their **stories**, and their **personal and professional journeys**.
(From *Italiani.più*’s mission statement)

The text acknowledges a fast-changing national society through the use of lexical choices denoting change: ‘has changed’; ‘rapid transformation’. Tense is also significant here: the verb forms ‘has changed’, ‘continues to change’ signify pressing and ongoing need to address the ‘crisis in representation’. This discursive configuration of change serves to suggest increasing cultural diversity in contemporary Italian society. The nation ‘Italy’ is the subject of the discourse. It is portrayed as undergoing a transformative process enacted by its people’s lifestyles, stories, and ‘personal and professional journeys’ (the latter an expression re-lexicalising the experience/phenomenon of ‘migration’). The discursive choice and construction of transferring agency and *persona*, through personification, to a collective inanimate entity – in this case the nation/Italy – suggests the idea of the nation as a dynamic changing body whose life and dynamism is injected by its ‘new’ population. The complexity and diversity of a national society is thus metaphorically constructed as a corporeal/organismic and dynamic entity that constitutes a classical rhetoric trope in political discourse (Lakoff, 1996; De Cillia et al. 1999; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Rhetorically, this figurative emphasis on ‘change’ and ‘transformation’ signifies the ground offering the conditions of possibility for a new identity and cultural politics.

The mission text of *Prospettive Altre*, in describing the agenda of the website, similarly explains that the site ‘offer[s] analyses and debates on contemporary issues by exploring a changing reality’. Again, ‘reality’ is a preferred term over the word ‘society’ and the descriptor ‘change’ is attached to it denoting a society under transformation. ‘Change’ is regarded as having a positive connotation and is implicitly used with reference to ‘cultural diversity’: a fast-changing reality means an increasingly culturally diverse society.

Similarly, in *Migrador Museum*’s mission text, the ‘change’ the country is going through is explicitly described as ‘positive’ in the view of the producers:

[Some of our stories] have the capacity to recount **the country as it changes**.
We believe [it is changing] **for the better**.
(From *Migrador Museum*’s mission statement)

Therefore, ‘change’, which is often a source of social fear, is here harnessed to more positive connotations surrounding immigration and cultural diversity. Interestingly, descriptors such as ‘diverse’, ‘multicultural’, or ‘multi-ethnic’ are hardly mentioned in the five mission texts in favour of this trope of ‘change’. This suggests the intention to omit terms that may retain politically charged connotations in favour of a positive re-evaluation of the more generic signifier ‘change’.

As we saw earlier, *Yalla Italia* builds a pronounced opposition between mainstream media narratives and the types of contents that the collective blog offers. A second metaphorical layer of this structural opposition opposes the ‘slow-ness’ of certain superimposed categories with the sense of ‘speed/dynamism’ of the ‘real’ country:

...[these are] **slow expressions, very slow**, which do not capture the **dynamism** and the **speed** with which Italian society is **changing**, the thousands faces that represent its **silent fuel**, the **real country**.
(From *Yalla Italia*’s mission statement)

The ‘slow-ness’ quality attached to super-imposed labels used to describe cultural diversity works as a metaphor for ‘fixity’, ‘essentialism’, a language anchored to ‘pre-packaged’ definitions and stereotypical language. In contrast, opposing sets of words are used to describe the ‘Italian society’: ‘dynamism’, ‘speed’, ‘changing’ –

lexis associated with and used to define the ‘real country’. Once again, ‘change’, ‘speed’, and ‘transformation’ have a positive connotation, whilst ‘slow-ness’ is metaphorically associated with the fixity/essentialism of dominant discourses on cultural diversity. This introduces a temporal dimension in the discourse according to which dominant representations are ‘outdated’, ‘backward’, ‘old’ to which is opposed a discourse emphasising ‘new-ness’: the ‘new Italians’, as I illustrate in the next paragraph.

6.1.1.2 *Re-categorisations: ‘immigrants’, ‘new citizens’, ‘new Italians’, or ‘migradors’?*

This sub-section examines the specific lexical choices used to define individuals of immigrant backgrounds across the five mission statements. The analysis has revealed that three of the mission texts, in particular, make some specific lexical choices to distance themselves from politically charged categories used to indicate ‘immigrants’ in Italy who represent both the ‘protagonists’ of many of the stories published on the sites as well as their producers. Preferred labels and terminological choices are indicators of a specific identity politics of positive re-evaluation of immigration proposed new ways for talking about cultural diversity.

Italiani.più embraces the label ‘new Italians’ to define young citizens of immigrant background:

We will talk about them – the **so-called ‘second-generations’**, the children of immigrants – and we will also let them speak. Young adults born or raised in Italy who **feel solidly Italian**, but who are equally proud of their origins. Each of them in their own way. *Italiani.più* is a web portal **useful to new Italians**, but **also to anyone** who wishes to find out more. A point of reference, information and legal advice, but especially of sharing, where **everyone feels like a protagonist. Children of the new Italy** of today and tomorrow. Children of a **new message** and a **new image** that simply talks **about us: Italians**.

(From *Italiani.più*’s mission statement)

A lexical analysis of the text immediately reveals the abundant use of toponymical collectives denoting national belonging: ‘Italy’, ‘Italian’, ‘Italians’, and the name of the website itself ‘*Italiani.più*’ (Eng: ‘Italians plus’) are widely used in the text. They are also emphasised by being prominently located at the start of the sentences. The

aforementioned terms appear eight times throughout the eight sentences⁵⁵ of the text (with an average of one *Ital*-prefixed word per sentence). This over-lexicalization consisting of repetitious, derivative terms denoting national belonging, gives a sense of emphatic persuasion (Teo, 2000) towards national belonging. The overuse of particular words often indicates that something is problematic or of ideological contention (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this case, I contend that the lexical choices made in the central paragraphs are key indicators of a sentiment of anxiety in relation to the (unsolved) issue of national citizenship to residents of immigrant background.

The central paragraphs of the mission text introduce the core mission of the website: ‘a web portal for the so-called second generations’ who, however, ‘solidly’ ‘feel Italian’. The scare quote ‘so-called’ indicates that ‘second-generations’ is a super-imposed label ‘belonging to an outside voice’ (Fairclough, 1992: 120) to which strong sense of belonging (‘who feel solidly Italian’) is opposed. The adverb ‘solidly’ is used to emphasise the feeling of national belonging and an aspired recognition: the recognition of Italian identity to young residents or citizens of immigrant background (‘second-generations’) which has been often contested in public, media and political debate as discussed in chapters 2 and 3. At the same time, besides the strongly affirmed Italian-ness, children of immigrants ‘are equally proud of their origins’. The cultural origins are therefore not concealed in favour of the ‘new Italian identity’ but elevated both as ‘pride’ and ‘added value’ as the name itself of the websites suggest (‘Italians *plus*’).

‘Italian-ness’ is strongly emphasised throughout the text and further re-affirmed in the closing sentence: ‘*children of the new Italy* of today and tomorrow. Children of a *new message* and a *new image* that simply talks about us: *Italians*.’ The concluding line places a particular emphasis on the descriptor ‘new’. It suggests an attempted subversion of conservative, ‘old’ ideologies embedded in discourses on immigration. Youth of immigrant background is here portrayed as part of a future-oriented project, bearer of ‘change’, of ‘representational transformation’ (‘a new image’; ‘a new message’), in line with the previously examined rhetoric of ‘change’. This last sentence

⁵⁵ In the original Italian text: Italy (three times); Italiani+ (twice); Italians (pl n.) (three); total length of the text: 148 words.

adopts an emphatic tone in line with classic nationalistic rhetoric where citizens are framed as ‘children of the nation’. The conceptual metaphor of the ‘nation state as a parental figure’ is a frequent rhetorical trope in political discourse that has been examined particularly within the cognitive linguistics paradigm (Lakoff, 1996; Musolff, 2004). In this case, Italy as a maternal/nurturing entity is a metaphoric cliché embedded in Italian nationalistic rhetoric: the national anthem itself (‘Mameli’s hymn’⁵⁶) is addressed to the ‘brothers of Italy’ and the nation state’s maternal role is made even more explicit when Italian citizens are referred to as ‘children of Italy’ in the final stanza of the anthem. The discursive construction of the nation as a corporeal entity evokes the image of the country as an *agency-receiver* (often in the form of ‘change’, dynamism and persona) through its ‘new’ citizens (e.g. ‘citizens as fuel of the country’ in *Yalla Italia*; ‘children of a new Italy’ or ‘Italy has changed’ in *Italiani.più*) according to an agency-transfer process that emphasises the embeddeness of the ‘new citizens’ into the national space.

In *Italiani.più*’s mission text the employment of figurative language reminiscent of classic nationalist rhetoric functions as a persuasive rhetoric strategy utilized to argue the legitimacy of a ‘new Italian’ identity and citizenship. Within a socio-cultural and political context in which the ‘Italian-ness’ of young citizens with an immigrant background is often questioned, contested and under-recognised, the site promotes a ‘new’ identity/cultural politics that places emphasis on the sentiment of national belonging as a discursive and political strategy seeking to subvert ‘othering’ discourses on immigration and cultural diversity.

The challenge of finding the most appropriate language for talking about cultural diversity is clearly expressed in *Yalla Italia*’s mission text. The opening of *Yalla Italia*’s mission statement expresses dissatisfaction with labelling practices ‘imposed on’ youth of immigrant background:

⁵⁶ *Il Canto degli Italiani* (‘The Song of the Italians’) is the national anthem of Italy. It is best known among Italians as *Inno di Mameli*, (‘Mameli’s Hymn’), after the name of the author of the lyrics, or as *Fratelli d’Italia*, (‘Brothers of Italy’), from its opening line. The lyrics of the national anthem reflects the Risorgimento’s patriotic ideology aiming at raising awareness of/constructing a shared cultural and national identity in view to the project of the political unification of the peninsula in the 19th century.

Yalla Italia is a meeting platform for those young people who **no one has yet found a way to define**: second generations, new Italians, 1.5 generation, children of immigrants, **blah blah blah**... Slow expressions, very slow, which do not capture the dynamism and the speed with which Italian society is changing, the thousands of faces that represent its silent fuel, the real country. **Young adults, students and workers, non-religious or religious**... We are all young people who offer our point of view upon a complex reality ... But we will speak out. Not just as Italians, Arabs, or Euro-centrics: **as new citizens** who simultaneously **belong to two worlds** and enjoy capturing the most interesting, contradictory, ambiguous, problematic, and why not, provocative aspects of both.

(From *Yalla Italia*'s mission statement)

A series of super-imposed categories used to describe young people born to immigrant parents⁵⁷ – ‘second generations, new Italians, 1.5 generation, children of immigrants’ – are dismissed as ‘slow expressions’.⁵⁸ As I discussed earlier, the metaphor of ‘slow-ness’ emphasised by the interjection ‘blah blah blah’ connotes a sense of boredom and impatience with a language that is perceived as narrow, essentialist, old. Interestingly, as in contrast with *Italiani.piu*, categorisation based on nationality is here rejected. The contestation involves broad geographical/cultural categories of belonging: ‘we will speak out *not as Italians, or Arabs, or Euro-centrics*’. This explains why the label ‘new Italian’ was rejected earlier: it implies the adoption of a singular fixed cultural/geographical perspective. Instead, the term ‘new citizens’ is favoured. The term is devoid of nation-centric references – unlike ‘new Italians’ – and keeps open the possibility for double-belonging: ‘who simultaneously belong to two worlds’. It is also inclusive of diverse civic identities – ‘young adults, students and workers, non-religious, religious...’, rather than ethno-cultural or nationalistic.

A third strategy for moving away from negatively connotated labels is the creative invention of novel terms. *Migrador Museum* introduces a novel term coined through creative re-nominalisation: the ‘immigrant’ becomes the ‘*migrador*’:

⁵⁷ This is an issue that – albeit with less emphasis – was present in *Italiani.piu*, marked with the expression ‘the *so called* second generation’

⁵⁸ Interesting, though, the sub-heading of the site says: ‘Yalla Italia. The blog for the *second-generations*’

Italy has an unknown heritage. It is made of **treasures in the form of stories, experiences, languages, ideas, courage, sacrifice, colours, and tastes, skills** of thousands of nameless and faceless people who won a big challenge: starting **a new life in a different place**, with a **different language and different cultural codes**. Some of the stories and experiences **exceed our imagination**. Others have the capacity to narrate the country as it changes. We believe [it's changing] for the better. And we rely on the memoirs of the *migradors* to prove it, by giving them a voice, calling them by name, looking at their faces and listening to what they have to narrate.
(From *Migrador Museum*'s mission statement)

The experience of immigration is here metaphorically constructed as a *personal journey* of 'courage', 'sacrifice' and a 'challenge' to be 'won', leading to a new life in a 'different place', with 'a different language' and 'different cultural codes'. The over-lexicalization of the term 'different' signals the challenge-oriented narrative, which places emphasis on the personal dimension of the experience of migration. According to the text, the *migradors* have the capacity to narrate a changing country through their incredible stories that even 'exceed the imagination'. The text operates a suppression (Fairclough, 2003) of labelling or classifying words such as immigrants, new citizens, second generations, individuals of foreign origins. Instead, the text introduces a new term: the 'migrador'. The word *migrador* has the same prefix as the Italian word *migrante* ('migrant'), and it is arguably used in this text with a very similar meaning. However, it is not a word pertaining either to the Italian vocabulary, or to any other language. Yet, the ending in *-dor* suggests action and agency, someone who makes things happen (e.g., *conquistador*, or *matador* in Spanish) and therefore retains a kind of romantic or adventurous – hence arguably 'Orientalistic' (Said, 1978) – connotation. This re-categorisation clearly serves to shift away from the politically and ideologically charged vocabulary of immigration by proposing an ad-hoc term.

Furthermore, the choice of *Migrador Museum* of discursively constructing its mission around the metaphoric narrative of [the endeavours of] the *migradors* as 'national heritage' which needs to be made visible, preserved (in a 'virtual museum', i.e. the website) and narrated, is once again, a response to the contested practice of positioning young citizens of immigrant background at the margins of the mainstream representational sphere. The intervention of *Migrador Museum*, suggests a 're-

integration’ of the ‘migradors’ inside the national space by choosing for this purpose – with a similar strategy adopted by *Italiani.piu* – a patriotic rhetoric that serves to persuade of the ‘Italian-ness’ of the new citizens.

Prospettive Altre’s mission text utilises the expressions ‘intercultural society’ and ‘plural Italy’ to denote cultural diversity. Interestingly, the term ‘intercultural’ is chosen/favoured over ‘multicultural’. Yet, the adjective ‘foreign’ (*straniero*) is used in the opening sentence: ‘with the voices of journalists of *foreign* origins...’ Although the term *straniero* is semantically an ‘othering descriptor’⁵⁹ as discussed in Chapter 2, here most likely intended devoid of negative connotations.

Similarly, *A.L.M.A. Blog* does not operate – at the mission statement level – any particular re-categorisation strategy aimed at emphasising the national identity or citizenship of residents of immigrant background as in *Italiani.piu*, *Yalla Italia*, and *Migrador Museum*, although with different discursive strategies. Instead, contributors are defined in *Prospettive Altre*’s mission text by their professional qualifications: ‘writers, journalists and bloggers of various origins and resident in Italy’. While the word ‘immigrant’ (Italian: *immigrat-o/i*) is used to define to the immigrant resident population in Italy in generic terms. The expression ‘new Italians’, however, does feature in the *A.L.M.A.* mission statement referring to the title of a magazine’s column which represented the seminal ideal of the collective blog.⁶⁰

6.1.4. Conclusions

The analysis of the mission statements of the five sampled websites has identified and examined the purposes and aims of the sites and the way these are articulated through discursive and lexical resources. The analysis, employing tools from Critical Discourse Analysis, has revealed an overall commonality of intents embraced by the five sites and even similar rhetoric strategies adopted to present their aim of offering alternative accounts to dominant discourses on immigration. At the same time, each mission text also adopts individual stylistic and discursive choices and places emphasis

⁵⁹ The term *straniero* (‘foreigner’) has the prefix -extra and derives from the Latin *extraneus*, meaning a stranger, an outsider.

⁶⁰ ‘At the end of 2011, the Italian writer of Somali origin Igiaba Scego drew the group's attention on the growing necessity to have a space of shared expression, especially since in the meantime the new page *Nuovi Italiani* had disappeared.’ (see *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s mission text)

on slightly different themes, values and demands. The findings of the analysis can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, I illustrated how the mission texts share a common sentiment of dissatisfaction with dominant discourses on immigration, responsible for a ‘crisis of representation’ that the platforms seek to redress. Such criticism is carried out through structural opposition between the mission of the site and hegemonic representational practices. Nevertheless, the deployment of figurative language in drawing this opposition and the avoidance of explicit confrontation with institutions and actors responsible of misrepresentation and under-representation suggests the performance of a careful, tentative political strategy that chooses to avoid overt antagonism with mainstream institutions or social actors.

Secondly, I demonstrated that the mission texts propose a representational politics based on the idea of restoring agentic power. In particular, emphasis is placed on the intent of restoring ‘voice’ to residents of immigrant background who can finally be ‘authors’ and ‘protagonists’ of their own stories. Yet in two cases (*Italiani.più*, *Migrador Museum*) the use of pronouns reveals the existence of vertical power dynamics in the organisation and production of the site whereby an ‘us’-entity appears to be the dispenser of the opportunity to become contributors (‘them’) of the website. Thirdly, specific aims and objectives such as agenda of the websites are described in brief. In three instances (namely *Italiani.più*; *Yalla Italia*; *Migrador Museum*) the mission texts devote more attention to the kind of ‘inter-cultural/identity politics’ the sites promote through a discourse that performs a positive re-evaluation of cultural diversity and reflects the intention to find labels free of negative connotations to define long settled immigrants in Italy. Some lexical choices favour national identity (‘new Italians’) or citizenship (‘new citizens’) or opt for the rebranding of the ‘immigrant’ subject as ‘migrador’ with an emphasis on their ‘journey’ and the acquisition of valuable life experiences.

The next section builds upon the analysis of the mission statements presented in this section and the specific themes, values, interests and ideas identified as the ‘mission’ of the sites to investigate how these are demonstrated in the construction and organisation of the platforms themselves, particularly in relation to the agenda, aesthetics and structure manifested in the homepages.

6.2 A Multimodal Analysis of homepages

This section explores the second part of Question 2 focussing on the way the mission of the sites previously examined is demonstrated and expressed in the homepages with regards to their visual, content and structural features:

RQ2a – How do the aesthetics, content features, and structure of the homepages express the purpose, agenda, and values of the sites?

Adopting a multimodal approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, the exploration of this question lays on the assumption that the choices of text-producers are vehicles for conveying certain kinds of ideas, concepts and values in relation to their purposes, interests and self-represented identity (Kress, 2010; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Websites are composite texts embedding different communicative purposes and functions with meaning being generated through a combination of various modes as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.2.). As online-based media outlets, the agenda and overall purpose and values of intercultural websites are expressed through various types of contents and features serving – and variously interpreting and emphasising – the multiple communicative aims and purposes of the websites.

A multimodal comparative analysis of the five selected websites has revealed emphasis on three macro-communicative modes or *genres* that underpin the agenda, the aesthetic and layout features and the overall organisational composition of the websites. Generally, the categorisation of media content under different genres is as complex as the very notion of ‘genre’ (see Fairclough, 2003). Websites are highly intertextual platforms since they assemble multiple texts with different styles and communicative purposes. Consequently, a clear-cut typology of genres is particularly challenging and can only be operational. For the purpose of this analysis, I use the concept of genre as a broad operational tool borrowing from the framework of Social Semiotics. According to Theo Van Leeuwen ‘genres are ways of achieving communicative goals (or *functions*) such as telling a story, persuading people to do or believe things, instructing people in some task, and so on’ (2005: 123).

On the basis of the ‘communicative goals or function’ that the websites construct with various degrees of emphasis and hybridisation across various communicative purposes, I have identified three principal ‘genres’ whose function is achieved through

the selection of content and overall structural and aesthetic organisation of the websites:

- (1) Journalism
- (2) Self-representation
- (3) Citizenship advocacy

As it can be noted, these three categories are clearly not conventional ‘media genres’. In particular, one might argue that ‘citizenship advocacy’ is a civic/political campaigning *practice* rather than strictly a ‘genre’. However, the above typology considers these three fields as ways of achieving certain communicative goals adhering to the kind of cultural-political strategies implemented by the communities producing the websites. As the analysis of the five homepages will demonstrate, this is an operational, fluid, hybridised typology of key discursive areas of intervention communicated at the various levels of the websites: thematic, organisational/structural and visual/aesthetic.

The following three sub-sections analyse and illustrate with examples retrieved largely from the homepages of the sites, the three aforementioned categories identified across the five selected platforms. Each section accords particular attention to those websites that emphasise the ‘genre’ in question most prominently.

6.2.1. *Journalism*

As I showed in the previous section, mission statements articulate a criticism of national mainstream media coverage of immigration. The narrative practices of intercultural websites are offered as an alternative to the ‘ordinary’ or ‘dominant’ discourses and practices of mainstream journalism with regards to immigration and cultural diversity in Italy. An aspiration to journalism – although intended as a better/alternative and more ‘truthful’ type of journalism benefiting from greater diversity in the production teams – is often expressed in intercultural websites. ‘News’ sections regularly feature in intercultural media platforms. With different emphases and styles, all five websites devote attention to the provision – yet, most often ‘commentary’ – of ‘news’. The analysis of this first category favours examination of

the organisational features of the websites, and in particular categorisation of content and writing style.

6.2.1.1 'News' or 'perspectives'?

The journalistic vocation of *Prospettive Altre* was already introduced in the mission text, where the platform presented itself as a 'space for local *news*, – without overlooking the rest of the world – *analyses* and *debates* on *current issues*...' narrated 'with the voices of *journalists* of foreign origins in Italy'.

By examining the framing and layout features of *Prospettive Altre*'s homepage (see Figure 7), it can be noted that articles are indexed as squarely shaped 'bites' (Knox, 2009). Each newsbite features the story's headline, the article's opening sentence and often a photographic thumbnail image according to conventional ways of arranging content in online news media outlets. The neat homepage with light blue colour theme conveys a feel of professionalism and organisation. Items are categorised through framing and arranged into three vertical columns: the left-hand one is the largest and features items arranged horizontally under the categories: *Notizie dal territorio* ('local news'), *Nazionale e Internazionale* ('national and international'), *Voci dai Media Multiculturali* ('voices from multicultural media'), *Latest*. The centre vertical one-item column categorises items under the sections *Politica* ('politics') and *Società* ('society') categories. The leading story occupies the top section of the page with changing images alternating recent lead stories. Therefore, the framing layout features and overall aesthetics of the homepage of *Prospettive Altre* recalls the macro-genre of a news-focussed websites.



Figure 9 – Screenshot of *Prospettive Altre*'s homepage

Some of the topic categories (or sections) featuring in the homepage recall the standard news sections: 'Local News', 'Politics', 'Society', 'National and International affairs'. Yet, it is worth noting that 'national' and 'international' affairs are here merged into one single category signalling equal weighting of both national and international issues. On the contrary, 'local news' is the most salient category within the arrangement of content on the homepage. Yet, looking at the stories published under the 'local news' category, it can be observed that this section titled 'local news'

features stories concerning both local/municipal and regional communities as well as the national community at large. This suggests a blurring of the boundaries of what constitute the local, the national and the international reflecting the ‘transnationalism’ of the migratory experience (Nedelcu, 2012; Georgiou, 2005a). Other sections of the site, such as *Voci dai media multiculturali* ‘voices from multicultural media’ or a small cartoon section titled *Risate anti-razziste* (‘anti-racism jokes’) signal the cultural politics of the sites promoting cultural diversity and equality.

A close look at the headlines and the brief preview of the stories published reveals that the articles featuring under each section are selected for their relevance to issues of migration, cultural diversity, and rights equality. For instance, under the topic category *Politica*, stories well go beyond the boundaries of ‘parliamentary (or party) politics’ to embrace a wide range of civic expressions. For instance, content range from reports investigating the political participation of EU (non-Italian) residents in Italy’s local election to initiatives of immigrant associations advocating citizenship rights, from interviews with activists of migratory background to the ordeals of asylum seekers and human rights abuses in the world. This suggests categories are rather broad and reflective of the specific interests, concerns and demands of the community producing the website. While the published stories embrace different ‘journalistic genres’, including interviews and opinion pieces, very rarely does the story embrace an ‘objective journalistic style’. Even when the articles revolve around some ‘news events’, these are likely to be narrated from a subjective view point. For instance, in the piece *Incendio in fabbrica a Prato: testimonianza e riflessione* (‘Prato factory fire: testimony and reflections’), the author combines first-hand witnessing of a fire at a garment Chinese-owned factory in the Italian city of Prato which cost the lives of seven Chinese workers with personal reflections on being an Italian citizen of Chinese heritage.⁶¹

The name of the website *Prospettive Altre* (‘other perspectives’) embodies the intention to provide a different insight into the events narrated in mainstream news. The masthead of *Prospettive Altre* (see Figure 9 above) metaphorically plays with the concept of ‘geometrical perspective’ by simulating a two-point perspective through

⁶¹ The story can be retrieved from web page <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/2013/12/incendio-in-fabbrica-a-prato-testimonianza-e-riflessione/>

the orientation of the rectangular shapes framing the website's name. The concept of 'alternative perspectives' is achieved: firstly, *thematically*, immigration is the lens through which stories are selected and posted; and secondly, *stylistically*, through the employment of subjectivity and self-reflectivity in the narration of the stories.

The images relating to news stories allow us to examine what iconographic choices text-producers make. By looking at the thumbnail images of the stories previewed in the homepage, it can be noted that images are largely chosen for their symbolic, iconic, or metaphoric value. As an example of a symbolic/metaphoric image, the image previewing the lead story titled *Storie di nuovi migranti: giovani italiani nel mondo* ('Stories of new migrants: young Italians in the World') (see Figure 9 above) is the generic photo (yet-professionally shot) of a railway station devoid of front-facing recognisable social actors. The photo suggests wide applicability/universality of 'migration-as-a-journey' that Italians themselves may experience today.

To conclude, whilst *Prospettive Altre* introduces itself as a 'news' platform in its mission statement, the analysis of content, layout and aesthetic features of the homepage has revealed that the platform favours a broad definition of 'news' whereby a number of values, interests and political/civic endeavours converge. While *Prospettive Altre* is almost entirely devoted to the presentation or rather, discussion of current events, the four other websites incorporate other genres and features. However, an interest in discussing current news and debates related to aspects of immigration and cultural diversity is common across the five websites as is demonstrated in the below sub-sections.

6.2.1.2 Other examples: *Italiani.più*, *Yalla Italia*, *A.L.M.A. Blog*

Italiani.più is a multi-function web-portal incorporating various genres and formats. A news section features in the menu bar alongside other sections, including those titled 'citizenship guide', 'school guide', individual 'blogs', 'portraits' 'how-to-do', 'point of view'. Each of these website sections point to a different communicative purpose of the platform: informing, helping, sharing (stories, viewpoints). The journalistic vocation of *Italiani.più* is manifest in the 'news' sections (Figure 10) featuring largely national news mainly related to Italian citizenship reform, including parliamentary debates, civic/political campaigning, testimonies of 'new Italians'. Unlike *Prospettive*

Altre, stories categorised under the ‘news’ section tend to have an objective journalistic style with little subjective opinion or commentary. Indeed, opinion pieces feature in other sections of the sites explicitly stating their subjectivity such as *Punti di vista* (‘viewpoints’) and the multiple ‘individual blogs’ sections.

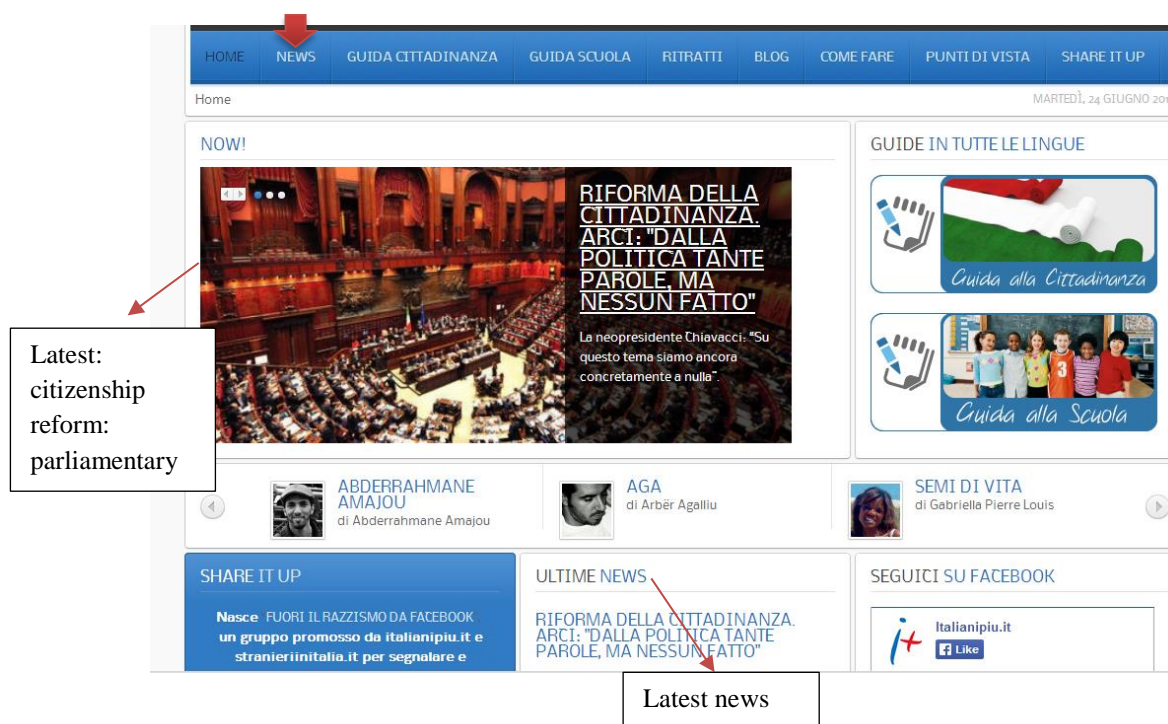


Figure 10 – *Italiani.piu* – portion of homepage showing the ‘news sections’

The collective blog *Yalla Italia* also features news-oriented categories: the section titled *Yallabreak* (Figure 11) hosts stories on a wide range of issues: from cultural events promoting intercultural dialogue to news about asylum seekers, from conflicts in the Middle-East, to positive stories of integration. The category *Yallaleaks* primarily host stories reflecting upon international issues concerning Islam and women, Middle-East politics and traditions, asylum rights, etc. These *Yalla Italia*’s ‘news sections’, however, and similarly to *Prospettive Altre*, must be intended as ‘journalism’ in a ‘non-traditional’ sense. In fact, only a few of these articles are ‘original’ news stories. Instead, published content largely presents a subjective take on current news / affairs, as articles largely consist of critical commentaries, opinion pieces, and interviews.



Figure 11 – Yalla Italia, screenshot of Yallabreak section

Interestingly, the collective blog *A.L.M.A.* is the only platform in the sample that does not offer sections explicitly devoted to ‘news’ (or news commentary). The website, as the list of topic categories indicates, is conceived as a container of personal reflections and opinions on potentially any topic of interest to the bloggers (editorial strategy of the sites is further explored in chapter 8). Yet, opinions and reflections on current affairs are present, in coherence with one of the goals expressed in the mission texts: ‘...we seek to intervene in the national debate’. The voice of the bloggers/contributors is generally very strong in *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s posts. For instance, in the story *La lezione del vucumprà* (‘The street-vendor’s lesson’)⁶², the author offers his personal insights into the story of Rachid, a former street-vendor in Italy of Moroccan origin, who after obtaining an Engineering degree, the Italian citizenship and even some popularity, turned down the offer to participate as a contestant on a famous TV reality show, with

⁶² The story can be retrieved at the address <https://collettivoalma.wordpress.com/2013/11/08/la-lezione-del-vucumpra/>

a letter explaining how the programme did not correspond to his values. The incipit of the article is as follow:

I am not a fan of resuming the over-reported stories of the mainstream press. And Rachid's story hit the [local] headlines for days... But this time, **I really want to comment on this one**. The latest action of this self-titled 'street-vendor' **warmed my heart**. It is a real lesson in human dignity.

Despite distancing himself from the perceived obsession of mainstream media for human interest stories particularly when featuring some gestures of solidarity or 'heroic behaviours' of immigrants, the author of the story admits his interest in giving his own reading of this over-reported story. Furthermore, *A.L.M.A. Blog* features a few posts of 'fiction journalism'. In the piece *Fermiamo il massacro della popolazione di Trebbiano Serio* ('Let's stop the massacre of the population of Trebbiano Serio'), for instance, the Syrian war is, through narrative displacement, transposed in the Italian context as the author imagines how the conflict would affect the population of *Trebbiano Serio*, a fictional village in Northern Italy.

6.2.1.3 Conclusions

To conclude, the analysis has shown how different websites express their journalistic aspiration that was articulated in the mission texts. Different interpretations of what constitute 'news' and 'journalism' are present, reflecting the identity of the websites and their various interests and intents. Various expressing the mission of the website, the content classified as 'news' covers a wide range of genres, styles and modes of telling events in society. Even though many intercultural websites define themselves as 'journalistic' projects (see, for instance, self-definition statements in Table 1), often news commentaries and opinions account for most published content in most of the outlets rather than original news gathered by the contributors. Alongside news-related content, a proportion of published pieces have more amateur or personal style and belong to various narrative genres such as literary forms of writing: personal stories, fictional stories or creative writing: poetry, personal thoughts and experiences on certain issues or on personal stories (self-confession writing). Journalism is represented here as a broad spectrum that comprises cultural (artistic, literary) practices as well as journalistic practices (Atton, 2002: 63) which, however, largely include opinion-based pieces. Overall, intercultural media, although different emphases exist across the platforms, seem to favour a hybridised, broad and flexible

notion of journalism characterised by a continuum between the narration of news and personal opinion. Furthermore, stories seem to be selected according to the adherence of the values of the community producing the site and their cultural politics of positive promotion of cultural diversity and rights equality.

6.2.2. *Self-representation*

In the mission texts, I demonstrated that emphasis is also placed upon the intent to restore agency and voice of residents of immigrant background through participation in the content production of intercultural websites. The idea of redressing the power imbalance present in mainstream media by re-affirming the ‘voice’ of residents and citizens of immigrant background through self-representation and personal narrative practices is manifest in the subjective writing style of some of the websites. Emphasis on self-expression and self-narration through personal narrative is a common mode of expression of intercultural sites. In particular, *Migrador Museum* has its whole website aesthetic and structural architecture designed to metaphorically represent itself as a virtual museum hosting the personal stories of the ‘*migradors*’.

6.2.1.4 *Migrador Museum: a virtual museum for the stories of the ‘migradors’*

Narration of personal stories in its multiple forms and genres is a crucial dimension of intercultural websites. The blog format is particularly apt for self-disclosure and subjective writing. In the sample, *Migrador Museum* is the website that most prominently operates visual choices aimed at emphasising the importance of personal stories of residents of immigrant background: the ‘*migradors*’. *Migrador Museum*’s homepage aesthetically plays with the symbolism of Italian classical heritage by constructing a metaphor of Italy-as-a-museum where ‘the stories of the *migradors*’ are so important and valuable that they are ‘stored’ and ‘safeguarded’ as ‘national treasures’.

As can be seen in Figure 12 below, the content of the homepage is foregrounded against the background theme, namely the photographic image of a monumental hallway in bright and white tonalities evoking representations of neoclassical architecture. The background theme oversteps considerably the homepage content window as if the content of the homepage was ‘stored’ inside the neoclassical building

symbolising a ‘virtual’ museum. The upper section of the background theme shows a vaulted ceiling whilst the lower section represents a marble floor of *black and white* tiles laid in a diamond pattern line. Engaged columns ‘embrace’ the homepage from both sides and visually link to the logo chosen for the website *Migrador Museum* placed at the top of the homepage.

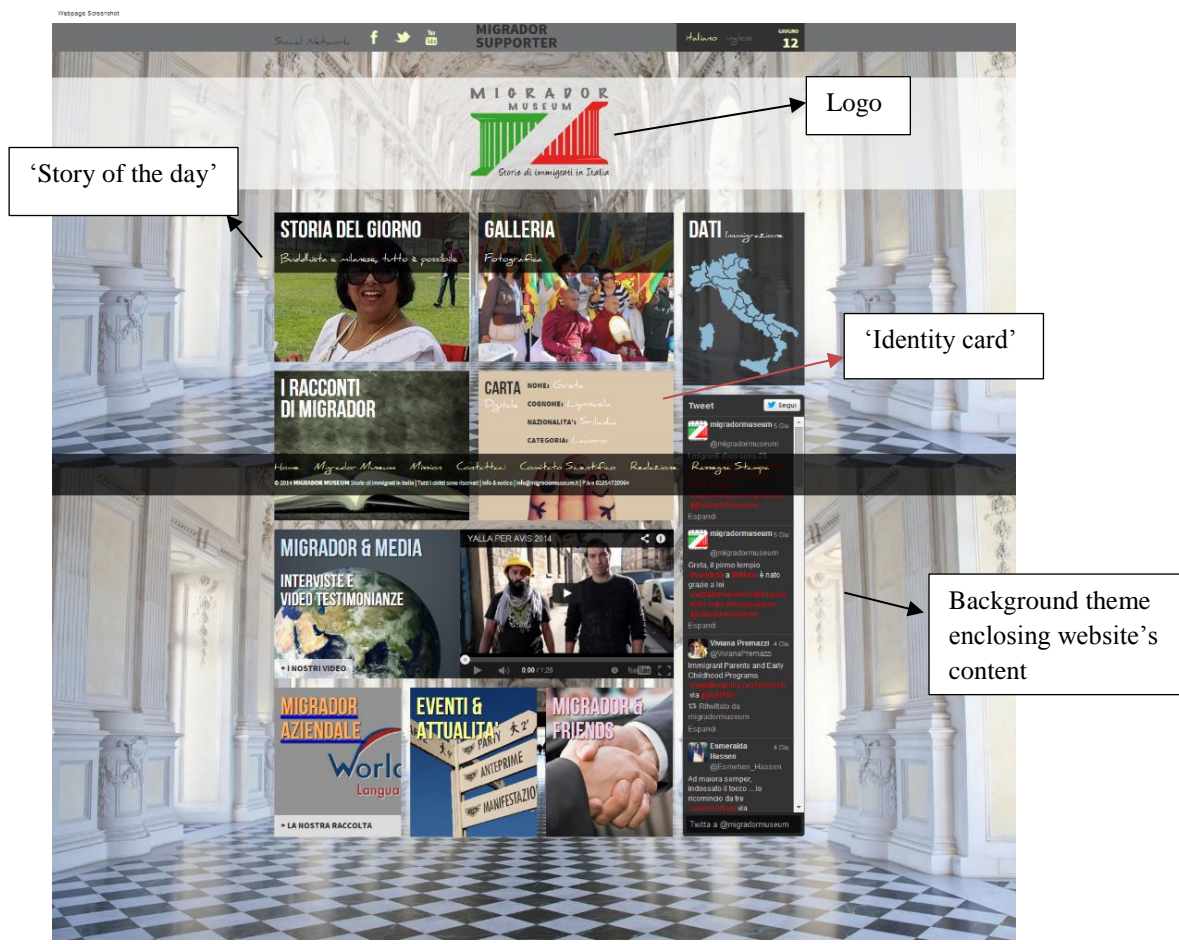


Figure 12 – Migrador Museum – screenshot of homepage

The semiotic resources chosen for construing the homepage of the website as a (virtual) museum interpreted as a majestic neo-classical building draw on Italy's ancient and rich artistic/historical heritage. The colours of the Italian flag – working as a national signifier – are utilised in the logo chosen to represent the website (see Figure 12 above) placed in a salient position at the top centre of the homepage. The temple-shaped logo image functions as a conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) between two key visual elements at the core of the aesthetics of the website itself: the museum and the *Tricolore* (the national flag of Italy). The sub-heading under the logo, introduces the websites as follow: *Migrador Museum. Storie di*

immigrati in Italia ('stories of immigrants in Italy'). Indeed, the whole structure of the website is designed to graphically reproduce the aesthetics of a neoclassic building evoking a 'museum' as a site-repository where the stories of immigrants in Italy are stored. The website is effectively a platform whose principal aim is to host biographical stories of the *migradors*, label that we discussed in the previous section. Chosen to convey the website's identity, the signifier of the 'museum' becomes a symbol of the nation itself by blending with the colour of national flag in the aesthetics of the logo.

The latest story published on the website is normally previewed in the top horizontal band under the header area. It features the opening sentences of the article and, next to it, some details of the protagonist of the story are summarised: *nome* ('name') / *cognomen* ('surname') / *paese d'origine* ('country of origin') / *ragione del viaggio* ('reason of the journey'). Interesting the word *viaggio* ('journey') is used instead of 'migration' suggesting the 'ordinarity' of the migration experience-as-a-journey. This preview box of the story is titled *Carta di identità* ('identity card'). Interestingly, this emphasis on 'passport details' reinstates importance to the concept of nationality as 'legal membership' to a nation state.

This emphasis on the narration of personal stories inscribed within a visual context that reframes and values the life experiences of immigrants in Italy as national heritage embeds a demand for recognition as 'legitimate' citizens of the nation. The metaphor of citizens with an immigrant background as 'national patrimony' that the mission text verbally articulated is here visually constructed in the homepage through the choice of the background theme representing neoclassical architecture. The aesthetic and organisational elements of the website reinforce the re-categorisation of immigrants as a valuable human and cultural resource whose stories are metaphorically stored and looked after in this virtual 'museum' – the website itself – symbolically signifying the Italian nation.

6.2.1.5 ALMA blog, Yalla Italia, Prospettive Altre, Italiani.più

Self-representation is also a key communicative mode practiced by the websites *Yalla Italia* and *ALMA blog*. Yet, these two platforms differ from the highly visual homepage architecture of *Migrador Museum* as they present a typical vertically oriented structure and a two-column layout (see Figure 13 below). As both ‘collective blogs’ *ALMA Blog* and *Yalla Italia*’s writing style range reflect the genre of personal narrative typical of weblog platforms as typically blogging connect with the genres of diary and personal journal (Puschmann, 2010).

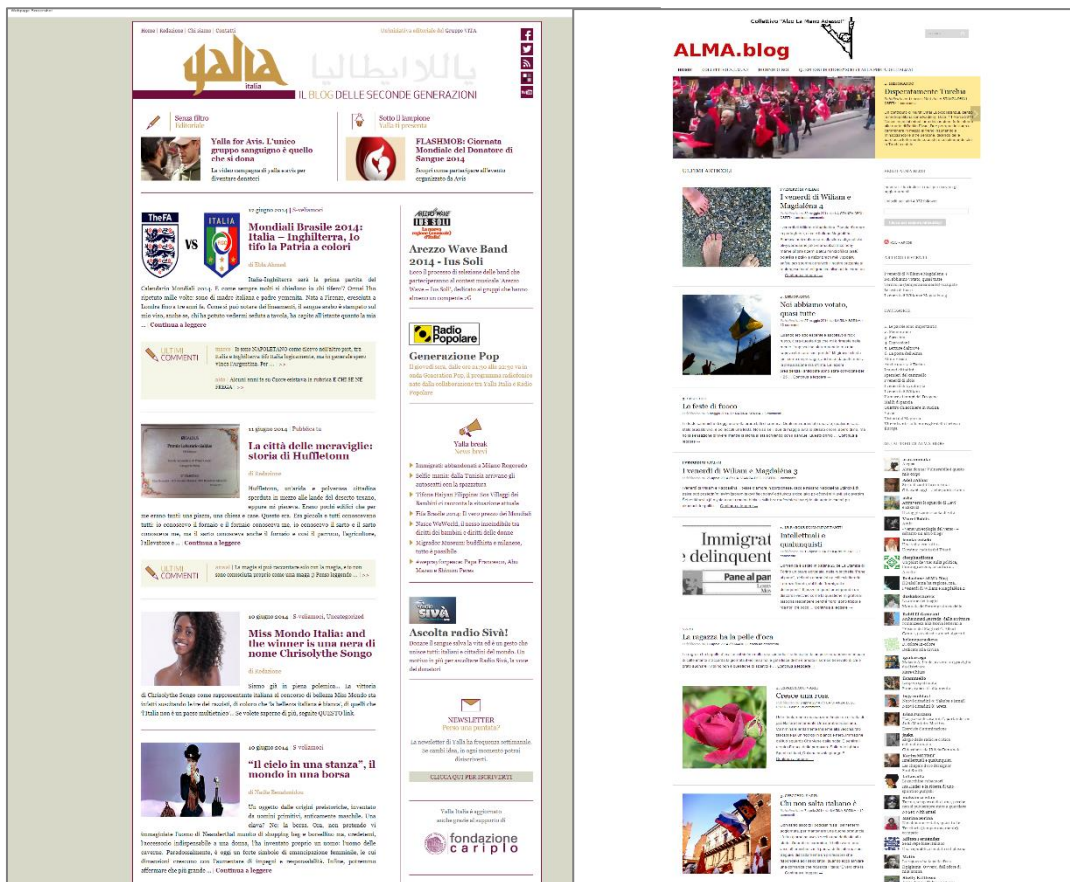


Figure 13 – Screenshots of *Yalla Italia* and *A.L.M.A. blog*’s homepages

As a collective blog, the dominant content feature of *A.L.M.A. Blog* is the subjectivity of viewpoints in the form of personal commentaries on national and global news and issues, opinions, self-reflection pieces, and even creative writing in the form of fictional stories, poetry, and even ‘narrative journalism’.

The title and brief introduction to some of the blog sections, listed in the right side column of the homepage, illustrate the self-reflective nature of the themes covered in the post:

Le parole sono importanti ('words are important') [is a section about:] Opinions, reflections, open letters, chats, etc. Here we consider national and international news and we take action /a stance or we reflect upon.

Memorando ('remembering'): History, memoirs, colonialisms of yesterday and of today... Here [in this section] we reflect on history, on the remembering of past and present injustices, on the colonial past and on the decolonization of the collective subconscious.⁶³

Specchio ('mirror'): Interviews, portraits, reviews ... A mirror of a cultural world in constant change.

La posta dell'Alma ('Agony Alma') This is the place where we talk about relationships in a 'multi' perspective: multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-national, multi-religious ... multi-everything.
(A.L.M.A. Blog sections' descriptions)

The description of these categories immediately draws attention to the self-disclosure intent of the collective blog. A wide range of issues including national and international news, colonialism and 'multiculturalism' are to be discussed through a variety of modes of expression: letters, opinions, interviews, personal reflections, reviews. Furthermore, a section titled *Nuovi Cittadini* ('new citizens') is entirely devoted to the narration of fictional stories recounting the life experience of residents of immigrant background in Italy as the category's description explains:

I Nuovi Cittadini ('The new citizens') is a section of short stories edited by Ingy Mubyayi. They recount the life, dreams, joys and struggles of those who arrived in Italy in search of a better life. Men, women, boys, and girls: human beings in search of normality.

Series of photographic images used to illustrate the 'Stories of New Citizens'



Figure 14 – *Nuovi Cittadini*'s section - images

⁶³

Italian: *immaginario*, literally translatable with 'imaginary', intended as

The images associated to the stories of new citizens are photographic images, symbolically anchoring the meanings explored in the stories. For instance, the roots of a tree (Figure, 14) metaphorically symbolise cultural ‘origins’ as the story explores the ties and tension between national origins and cultural belonging to the community of residency through the story of Jessica, a young woman born in Rome to Nigerian parents.

Similarly to *A.L.M.A. Blog*, *Yalla Italia* is another collective blog that encourages self-disclosure and personal testimonies by its contributors. *Oggi ce l’ho con* (‘today I’m mad at’) is a section where contributors can post about their frustration against racism and intolerance in society. Whilst *S-veliamoci*, (‘let’s *un-veil* ourselves’), is a section featuring blog posts on self-disclosure and personal reflections on the theme of cultural identity. The section titled *Doppia Vita* (‘double life’) features the chronicles of Scheherazade, a young woman living a ‘double life’ as an Italian Moroccan in Italy. The stories use irony to recount the everyday challenges of the protagonist to conciliate two ‘irreconcilable worlds’. Interestingly, the thumbnail images associated to the stories in this section are cartoon images, namely images retrieved from well-known animation films or TV series of different genres. The choice of avoiding photographic images of real-life subjects suggest, again, the intent to avoid representation of specific subjects and favouring the iconic or symbolic connections with universal themes and concepts.

Prospettive altre does not have sections specifically devoted to personal narrative or opinion. However, the category *Società* (‘society’) hosts stories about the individual experiences of residents of immigrant background. Although *Prospettive Altre* presents itself as a news-oriented platform, the content of the stories embraces an opinion-based approach to news narration, as we showed in the previous section.

Italiani.più is a multi-purpose web-portal with a range of topic categories as I mentioned earlier. Alongside a *news* section and sections devoted to practical information on residency in Italy that will be examined in the next sub-section, the menu bar of the site displays three sections devoted to personal narrative (as Figure 15 below indicates) such as: *Ritratti* (‘portraits’) hosting biographical stories of ‘new Italians’, *Punti di Vista* (‘points of view’), featuring opinion pieces on a wide range of

issues and a *Blog section* encompassing ten individual blog columns, each ran by a practitioner of immigrant background.

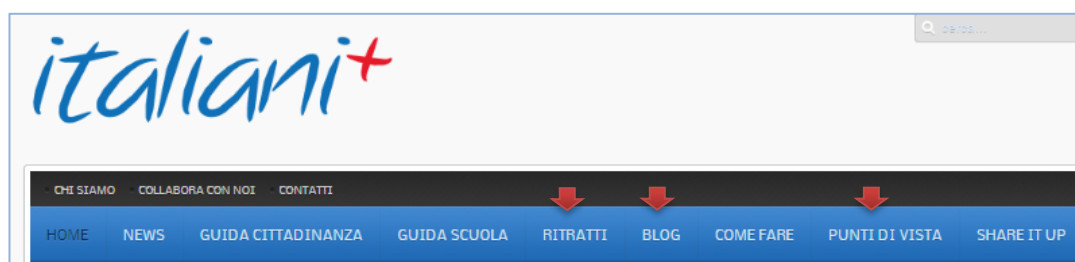


Figure 15 – *Italiani.piu*'s menu bar. Red arrows indicate sections devoted to personal narrative.

To conclude, self-narration and the narration of personal life stories is a common feature across the five websites. Most prominently, the founders and producers of *Migrador Museum* have devised the whole platform in a way that it evokes, through semiotic resources, a repository of stories in the aesthetic form of a virtual museum. Other websites, given the format of the collective blog (*Yalla Italia* and *A.L.M.A. Blog*) most always favour a highly subjective and introspective type of writing. The specific features of this mode of expression (or 'genre') will be explored in-depth in the next chapter. A subjective and introspective mode of narration seeking to restore centrality to 'new' voices as a way to redress perceived marginality and restore agency to subjects who are normally 'objects' in other people's stories, represents, I contend, a discursive site where an alternative representation of 'immigration' in Italy may be practiced.

6.2.3. Citizenship advocacy

In this sub-section, I examine the way the websites' homepages place emphasis on the sphere of citizenship in its various articulations. The analysis demonstrates that there are two interpretations of citizenship embedded in the websites: citizenship as 'national belonging' and citizenship as 'performed intervention'. Both these dimensions advocate for recognition of residents of immigrant background as 'citizens'.

6.2.1.6 *Citizenship as national belonging*

Italiani più is a composite website serving various purposes. In addition to a ‘news’ section and sections devoted to personal narrative and opinions as illustrated earlier, it has a few sections devoted to the provision of practical information concerning the various aspects of residency and citizenship in Italy. This is shown in the display of *multilingual guides* with information on citizenship application and on the education system in Italy and in a ‘how-to’ section with personalised support and tips from ‘the expert’. Furthermore, I contend the overall organisational structure and aesthetics of the website places emphasis on the notion of ‘national citizenship’ as it is below demonstrated.

The masthead (or header area) often reveals significant symbolic choices conveying the identity of a website. In a blue and white-themed homepage, the red plus-sign of the title of the header area, ‘Italiani+’, stands out as a highly salient element (see Figure 16 below). The meaning orchestrated through the symbolic signifier plus (‘+’) serves to signify an ‘added value’ in addition to ‘Italian-ness’. Hence, the sign ‘+’ seems to visually translate the sentence in the mission text defining residents of immigrant background (i.e. ‘new Italians’) as individuals who ‘feel *solidly Italian* but are *equally proud* of their origins’. Hence, having a non-Italian origin does not detract from Italian-ness but actually *adds extra value to it*: Italian with a plus factor.



Figure 16 – Italiani.piu'’s homepage

As also demonstrated in the mapping presented in previous Chapter 5, intercultural websites cover a range of themes and embed various functions. In addition to offering stories centred on the complex dynamics of migration and cultural diversity in society, some of the platforms offer contents or services of practical utility to resident immigrants. Defining itself also as a ‘point of reference, information and legal advice’ in its mission statement, *Italiani.piu'* offers a few sections devoted to information and advice. On the right side of the homepage, there is a squarely-framed box titled *Guide in tutte le lingue* (‘multi-lingual guides’) previewing two sections of the web portal: one offering information about citizenship application and one introducing the Italian school system, both sections translated into eleven languages. The ‘Guide to citizenship’ consists of two pages of information per language: ‘How to apply for

citizenship from 18th to 19th birthday’ (at the *Municipio* [‘City hall’]). And ‘How to apply after the 19th birthday (in prefecture)’. Each page includes links to the legislation and sample application forms. The ‘Guide to school’ section instead offers an introduction to the Italian education system, enrolment process, documentation, and support services for immigrant schoolchildren. There is also an ‘ask the expert’ feature for further and more personalised support via e-mail.

The thumbnail image chosen to depict the ‘Guide to citizenship’ section represents the Italian flag as a set of three fabric rolls (green, white and red) in the process of being unrolled. The choice to represent the national flag as three separate fabric rolls in the process of being unrolled conveys a sense of action, dynamism, movement, and the idea of ‘work-in-progress’: citizenship-in-the making (see Figure 16 in previous page). The thumbnail image chosen to preview the ‘Guide to school’ in the homepage is a photograph of a group of young [social] actors of different ‘ethnic’ backgrounds standing by a blackboard, an element denoting them as schoolchildren. These children appear smiley and happy, evoking a sense of joyfulness suggesting promotion of a culturally diverse learning environment. Images – some of these stock images – representing social actors of various ‘ethnic’ backgrounds are used to preview the stories published on the website. They largely convey happiness, joy and togetherness and are selected to promote a positive representation of cultural diversity. Emphasis on national belonging is a common feature of *Italiani.piu* also at the content level. The below screenshot (Figure 17) shows a lead story about the parliamentary debates on the citizenship law reform visualised with a stock photo of the Italian Parliament



Figure 17 – *Italiani più* homepage

Similarly, the lead story in the previous screenshot (Figure 16) also focusses on the issue of citizenship reform by discussing the initiative taken by the Milan City Council to grant honorary citizenship to children of immigrant parents in support of the reform. The preview of the story features another stock image presenting a ‘multi-ethnic’ group of children conveying a sense of ‘joyfulness’ and ‘togetherness’.

To conclude, the aesthetic choices, as well as content and organisational features of *Italiani.più* resonate with its mission statement, placing emphasis on a ‘new Italian’ identity. ‘National belonging’ is a prominent feature of the website which manifests its support for the process of citizenship acquisition through the provision of practical information and advice on issues of residency and civic integration. Furthermore, similarly to the aesthetic strategy of *Migrador Museum* examined earlier in section 6.2.2., *Italiani.più* make significant use of national signifiers such as the use of the Italian flag in its homepage and the very name of the website.

6.2.1.7 *Yalla Italia: double-belonging and citizenship advocacy*

Yalla Italia is a collective blog featuring a very simple layout: a vertically oriented structure (in line with most standard blog structures) with a two-column layout. The most prominent visual element is the header area which includes the title of the blog *Yalla Italia* (‘Go, Italy’) with the word ‘Yalla’ (Arabic for the hortative locution ‘go!’) written in lower-case light-brown bold font simulating ‘Arabic writing’ with the Roman alphabet. The non-capitalised word ‘italia’ is written in a much smaller lower-case purple font and positioned below the ‘Yalla’ icon-word. The choice of a ‘bilingual’ name denotes a hyphenated Arabic-Italian identity which seemingly differs from the ‘Italian national’ identity embraced and emphasise by *Italiani.più* and to an extent by *Migrador Museum*. Yet, this ‘Arabic feel’ of *Yalla Italia* blog reflects the history of the website as an initiative that originated from a group of Muslim female students in Milan. Yet, subsequently the project opened to young immigrants of any gender and background.



Figure 18 – Yalla Italia, top area of the homepage

Yalla Italia also features a section devoted to citizenship application support titled *Info Cittadinanza* ('Citizenship info') hosting articles focussing on citizenship or visa related issues and information, including: how to obtain a student or work visa; how to apply for citizenship; updates on parliamentary debates on the citizenship reform, and so forth. In April 2014, *Yalla Italia* also published an infographic on 'Four proposals for a citizenship reform' presenting four key suggestions for changing the constitutional law on the granting of Italian citizenship. In the thematic mapping discussed in chapter 5, it is possible to see that the provision of how-to information and advice is a common feature in intercultural websites. In particular, national citizenship and its restricted access, receives substantial attention as an issue that lies at the heart of the social and political exclusion of residents of immigrant background.

6.2.1.8 *Citizenship as performed intervention*

The very existence of intercultural websites represents a form of intervention into the hegemonic domains of media practices, discourses and interpretations in relation to cultural identity and diversity. *A.L.M.A. Blog* visually articulates the intent of performing an intervention into the national debate – as expressed in its mission statement – through a set of semiotic choices surrounding the visuals of the masthead of the blog platform.

A.L.M.A.'s acronymic name (*Alzo la Mano Adesso* – I Rise up my Hand Now) is itself a call for visibility, recognition, and action/intervention. As we saw in section 6.1., the

mission text explained the blog was prompted by the need to stand up against an ‘unbearable situation’ of under-representation and exclusion of citizens with an immigrant background from the media, public and political sphere.

The header area of Alma Blog contains the title of the blog ‘*A.L.M.A.*’ in bold red highly salient fonts and the word ‘blog’ in non-capitalised fonts. Next to the blog’s title we find a drawing simulating a handmade sketch of a human figure leaning out of some sort of barrier/door. This image (Figure 19) chosen to iconically represent the blog’s identity, has a very low articulation of detail and background is absent. The image is chosen to represents visually and in abstraction the essence of the raised hand-metaphor according to an ‘amateur aesthetics’ denoting informality, immediacy, and personalisation.



Figure 19 - ALMA Blog’s masthead 1

When visiting the blog’s sections, a different drawing ‘appears’ in the header area. Five versions of the drawing alternate: two of these portray an individual figure, highly abstracted, with their hand raised, and exaggerated by size, making them a salient trait. The other three images show a crowd striking the same pose and action. The figures are collectivised through sameness of pose: the action of raising a hand. Two of the three ‘collective images’ are in colour (Figures 20 and 21): while the faces of the figures forming the crowd are abstract, individuality is achieved with different colours of their garments. In one coloured image (Figure 21) the crowd take on the role of demonstrators or protesters as figures are depicted confronting police forces lined up in front of them. The action is thus portrayed in the moment of facing opposition represented by the police forces and assumes the connotation of a highly confrontational situation. The semiotic resources chosen for this set of images positioned in the header area of *A.L.M.A Blog* construct symbolic images denoting action, call for agency, and even antagonism.



Figure 20 – ALMA Blog’s masthead 2



Figure 21 – *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s masthead 3

This creates an interesting contrast to the visual strategy of *Migrador Museum*, suggesting and promoting socio-cultural integration of immigrants within the national culture and society. Emphasis here on is on signifiers of nation-state as power/sovereignty rather than on the national culture. The visual signifier of the ‘raised hand’ as a salient element emphasised through both visual and verbal resources, signifies a call for visibility, recognition, and action. However, the action called for and performed by ‘A.L.M.A. activists’ with the establishment of the collective blog can be interpreted as a ‘discursive intervention’ rather than a confrontational mobilisation, despite what some of the visual elements suggest. A distinctive feature of *A.L.M.A. blog* is experimentation with multiple narrative genres: journalism, opinion journalism, fiction (short stories), interviews, book reviews, poetry, narrative journalism, personal stories and reflections. It is thus within an independent space that enables critical and subjective writing on a wide range of themes and issues that *A.L.M.A Blog* constructs its space of digital citizenship.

As well as performing a type of intervention through the setting up of the platform itself with the aim of restoring ‘centrality’ to residents of immigrant background both as protagonists of the stories and as content-producers, intercultural websites show support for various causes. Alongside fully embraced advocacy for the citizenship law reform, the sites may also give visibility to other campaigning civic initiatives. For instance, some websites show commitment to anti-racism: *Italiani.più* draws attention, in its homepage, to an anti-racism campaign (Figure 16), while *Prospettive Altre* has published a set of reports on hate speech in the press. *Yalla Italia* produced a video promoting blood donation among immigrant youth because ‘when the example comes from the second-generations, the message is even more universal’.

It is also worth noting here that participation in the production of the website is generally open to anyone and encouraged by all the websites in our sample which all present a ‘collaborate with us’ feature with contact details for sending collaboration

requests. However, in order to become regular contributors and be included in the editorial team a few further steps may be required such as the submission of a few pieces and adherence to the editorial policy of the websites (which will be discussed in Chapter 8).

To conclude, emphasis on citizenship is present across the five websites. However, whilst some projects (*Italiani.più* and *Migrador Museum*) places emphasis on national belonging through the employment of national signifiers (e.g. national flags), other projects articulate other possibilities of belonging such as ‘double belonging’ (*Yalla Italia*) or emphasis on the idea of performing an intervention as a ‘collective’ devoid of national connotations (*A.L.M.A. Blog*). This seems to reflect two visions of citizenship: the definition of citizenship as a legal status or belonging to a national community and the definition of citizenship embraced by theorists of digital citizenship (see Chapter 3) as actively ‘intervening in and transforming the established mediascape’ (Rodriguez 2001: 22).

6.3. Conclusions

This chapter has examined the multiple intents and discursive modes of intervention of intercultural digital media and how these are performed in the platforms. To answer the second question of the study, I firstly analysed the mission statements of five sampled sites (*RQ2a*) and secondly explored the way the intents and aims are expressed in the aesthetics, organisation and agenda of the sites (*RQ2b*). The analysis has revealed a diversity of strategies built around a shared set of ideals articulated in the mission statements. Prompted by dissatisfaction with the dominant regime of representation, intercultural websites embrace the mission to redress misrepresentation and under-representation of residents and citizens of immigrant background by restoring centrality to their voices, interests, concerns, and perspectives. This common purpose is variously articulated across the mission texts through specific discursive emphases, styles and lexical strategies reflecting the individuality of the platforms in interpreting and expressing the vision, interests and values of the communities producing the sites.

The analysis of the homepages, building on and exemplifying the examination of the mission texts has revealed the following main points. Firstly, an aspiration to journalism and the featuring of on news-oriented sections is common across the sampled websites. This responds to the need to offer alternative insights into current affairs and debates largely related to immigration and cultural diversity. However, overall, ‘journalism’ is mainly interpreted as a subjective or opinion-based perspective on a various range of matters whereby the viewpoint of the narrator is often very prominent.

This leads to the second point, which discusses emphasis on self-representational narrative in the websites in line with the references in the mission texts to the intent of restoring agency and voice to the contributors. *Migrador Museum* is an example of a site whose aesthetics and organisational structure are designed to metaphorically represent a virtual museum where the ‘personal life stories’ of the *migradors* are safeguarded as ‘national treasures’. While *Migrador Museum* is entirely devoted to the publication of stories and experiences of residents and citizens of immigrant background in Italy, emphasis on self-narration, reflection and introspective writing is also common across all websites in various modes.

Thirdly, I have argued that intercultural websites promote, with different emphases and through different discursive/semiotic strategies, a cultural politics that seek to construct and propose an alternative representation of ‘immigrants’ in Italy. Some mission statements strongly highlight national belonging to persuade us of the ‘Italian identity’ (or ‘Italian-ness’) of residents or citizens of immigrant background. Through visual resources, national identity is also stressed through the deployment of national signifiers in the homepages (e.g. the colours of the Italian flag utilised in *Italiani.piu* or *Migrador Museum*). Furthermore, the featuring of sections providing advice and practical information on various aspects of residency such as citizenship application, suggest advocacy for citizenship recognition to ‘immigrant residents’ and inclusion into the national-civic community. While national belonging is emphasised and instrumental to citizenship reform advocacy, some sites favour other identity discourses such as double-belonging (*Yalla Italia*) or an emphasis on ‘performative citizenship’ stressing the collective dimension of action and intervention (*A.L.M.A. Blog*).

The next Chapter focusses on a specific feature identified across the five sampled sites, which is personal/self-representation as a key communicative mode embraced by all the platforms. The analysis discusses key discourses, narratives and styles underpinning the construction of ‘the new citizen’s story’.

Chapter 7 Stories of ‘New Citizens’

This Chapter explores the third research question of this study which examines the kind of discourses and narratives of immigration and ‘new citizenship’ articulated and promoted by intercultural digital media. Through Critical Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis, the chapter analyses a selection of stories published on the five sampled websites at the centre of the analysis in the previous chapter. As demonstrated in both Chapter 5 and 6, self-representation constitutes a key communicative mode of these websites. The existence of sections devoted to the life stories of residents of immigrant background – or ‘new citizens’ – responds to the intentions expressed in the mission texts of the sites in relation to the provision of opportunities for reclaiming ‘voice’ and agentic power through personal narration and subjective writing. Stories narrated by those who are normally the ‘object’ of other people’s stories provide a discursive ground for empowerment and for redressing a sense of lack of recognition as ‘citizens’ in today’s increasingly culturally diverse Italy.

This chapter explores this self-representational mode of expression in more detail by focussing on stories recounting the life and experiences of the ‘new citizens’. The exploration of this content feature, common across the five sampled websites enables me to critically examine the construction of an alternative portrayal of long-settled ‘immigrants’ in Italy and to assess whether and/or to what extent such representations subvert, challenge or broaden the spectrum of dominant representation of immigration and ‘immigrant subjects’ in Italy. The discourse analysis of a sample of stories reveals four key discourses which, however, should not be considered categorically distinct as more than one can be found entwined in the same story:

- a) The enterprising citizen
- b) Everyday struggles for recognition
- c) To feel, yet not to be (Italian)
- d) The Other in Us, the Self in the Other.

Each discourse is analysed in each of the following sections and illustrated with extracts from the stories published on the respective websites.

7.1 The enterprising citizen

The first discourse emerging from the analysis of 20 stories focussed on the personal endeavours of ‘new Italians’, places emphasis on the individual career paths of residents or citizens of immigrant background. Embracing the narrative of the ‘success story’, after a challenging journey, the protagonist secures the accomplishment of a career goal. As such, the pursuit of personal dreams and aspirations connected to economic labour and individual self-reliance is a central theme of a number of stories in our sample, retrieved from sections devoted to personal narrative or testimonies (see section 4.3.3.3. on sampling criteria).

The story of young rapper Lil Wiser, posted in *A.L.M.A. Blog*, is written in the third person by a contributor of immigrant background, as the name suggests, and draws on an interview with the protagonist of the story. The story is immediately introduced in contrast to dominant and ‘predictable’ representations of immigrant subjects:

Young Rapper Lil Wiser: ‘The pursuit of our dream keeps us afloat’

Well, this time the story you are about to hear **neither tastes salty** or has the **smell of a rubber dinghy**. It is the story of an **ordinary victory**, the **dream** of a fifteen-year-old who **left his native Nigeria** to follow his mother and, as well, **his dream**. His name is Micheal Efe, aka Lil Wiser, and when, ten years ago, **he boarded a plane** to reach the [Italian] Peninsula, he was already longing to become a musician.

The deployment of figurative language serves to create a contrast with hegemonic representations of immigration largely associated with sea-arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers to Italy’s Southern coasts: the ‘smell of a rubber dinghy’ and ‘salty taste’ metaphorically evoke sensationalised images of overcrowded boats attempting a sea-crossing. In contrast, Michael’s story is presented as an ‘ordinary’ story: a young man arriving in the country via the ‘legal’ route (‘he boarded a plane’) with his mother to pursue his professional dream. The expression ‘ordinary victory’, however, signals the tension between ‘normality’ and ‘exceptionality’ since ‘victory’ is typically an exceptional achievement.

The story continues focussing on settlement in Italy emphasising the ‘hard work’, ‘commitment’ and ‘determination’ of the protagonist in the pursuit of his lifelong dream career:

Often, young people become enthusiastic about ideals that will then soon vanish like darkness engulfed by dawn. However, **this is not the case with Michael**. In Italy, he attended high school, wishing to **master his Italian to perfection**. And he succeeded. As soon as he turned sixteen he **started working hard, very hard**. He took up unskilled jobs as a manual labourer. But despite the hard work, Michael **never abandoned his dream**. He would write lyrics during his lunch break and move his foot to the beat, creating new harmonies while at work. **With commitment and determination**, he managed to make himself known **in the Italian music scene**. He opened a few concerts of *Fabri Fibra*⁶⁴ and released a record. **Life began smiling on him**.

(Published on ALMA blog, 12/03/2013 ⁶⁵)

The protagonist of the story is presented as a distinctive individual who, unlike others (‘however, this is not the case with Michael’) – expression used to denote a subject standing apart from the crowd – has never lost motivation towards his goal. Commitment towards one’s lifelong dream, hard work and determination are viewed as key ingredients for an entirely self-made success. Lastly, admittance to ‘the Italian music scene’ symbolises achieved inclusion into the ‘national’ professional-public sphere.

Fulfilment of personal career goals is rhetorically framed as ‘victory’ in other ‘success stories’ of ‘new citizens’. The trope of ‘victory’ denoting goal-achieving and suggesting enfranchisement from a past ‘subaltern condition’ is a recurrent rhetoric device. The intention of altering the representations of immigrant subjects in Italy is also present in the story of Nashy published in *Italiani.più*.

“Fuori piove, dentro pure. Passo a prenderti”. Amore e razzismo ai tempi di Facebook”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.italianipiu.it/index.php/personaggi/963-fuori-piove-dentro-pure-passo-a-prenderti>

⁶⁶ Title of the novel published by the protagonist of the story. Translation: ‘It’s raining outside. Inside as well. Shall I come to pick you up? Love and racism at the times of Facebook’.

...Through my novel I wanted to **get out of the box of prejudices** in which **they had enclosed me** and I did so **by breaking a pattern**: rather than **writing only about racism or immigration**, I talked about love, a complicated relationship because of my origins, but still a love story...

Today, being able **to achieve a goal**, for us **children of this new Italy**, is **doubly difficult** because of the stereotypes that are attached to us. It is like **being a step behind** compared to your peers. With the publication of my first novel **I felt like having climbed the podium**.

(Published on *Italiani.più* on 17/11/2014 ⁶⁷)

The story, similarly to the style of the previous story, is written in the third person but includes extracts from an interview with the protagonist of the story (such as in the above extract) – a young writer of Congolese origins who has just published his first novel. The publication of a novel about a romantic relationship manifests the intent to disrupt a dominant discourse ('break a pattern') of superimposed narratives and expectations ('a box full of prejudices in which *they* had enclosed me'). The achieved career goal, namely the publication of a novel, is positioned to contrast the contested recognition of immigrant youth as active citizen-subjects with a plurality of interests, aspirations, and talents that goes beyond the immigration condition ('...rather than writing only about racism and immigration'). The career achievement is metaphorically described as the action of 'climbing a podium', an act signifying 'victory'. Career achievements framed as 'victories' secure double recognition for the 'new citizen'-Nashy in the same way as the journey towards his goal was lexicalised as 'doubly difficult'. The first level of recognition derives from the achievement of the career goal itself; the second level of recognition is symbolic and relates to the achieved inclusion in the national socio-political space as a 'citizen' and showcases emancipation from a 'subaltern' condition lexicalised as 'being a step backward compared to your peers'.

In both stories, I contend, the new citizen is presented as an active enterprising subject seeking to actively design and manage ('enterprise') their own life (du Gay, 1996). Individual self-fulfilment often coinciding with the achievement of a career dream is regarded as the highest aspiration and underpins the narrative of the stories. Furthermore, I contend that the deployment of a rhetoric of 'victory' signifies

⁶⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.italianipiu.it/index.php/personaggi/963-fuori-piove-dentro-pure-passo-a-prenderti>

emancipation from a 'subaltern'/marginalised condition. Such enfranchisement symbolically suggests aspiration to inclusion and recognition of the individual as 'citizen' of the national society.

However, difficult challenges towards the achievement of aspired career goals are also acknowledged and often play a crucial role within the narrative of stories. The 'pre-migration past' or broadly the 'immigrant background' is often self-reflected upon and reframed as a source of opportunities. Jamal, a fashion entrepreneur of Moroccan origin living and working in Milan reflects upon his tough 'pre-migration' background and experiences.

My success is not a revenge ⁶⁸

My **biggest good fortune?** Coming from a **poor background. Very poor.** I should also mention two further disadvantages: **I was exploited and underrated.** In Italy all this has changed. What it hasn't changed is **my attitude towards life.** [...] You see, **despite the hard times, I have always smiled, even when I wanted to shout with rage;** I would always **offer a helping hand** to my co-workers **without ever asking for anything** in return; **I have always given and never asked.** My parents, despite being poor, taught me to be humble with dignity and **to make the best of a bad situation. I'm not a complainer.** Even in the moments where I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown with no prospects, **I never felt unlucky.**
(Published on *Migrador Museum* on 16/08/2014) ⁶⁹

As with all the stories published on *Migrador Museum*, Jamal's story is narrated in the first person. The story draws upon an interview with Jamal conducted by a contributor who also edits the interview so that it is published as a first-person narrative.

In the story, the difficult challenges originating from a disadvantaged background ('I was poor. Very poor') are positively re-evaluated as 'good fortune'. Past experiences of labour exploitation and marginalisation are positively re-evaluated as constructive experiences and serve to rhetorically emphasise qualities of determination, dedication, generosity and a generally optimistic attitude towards life and its adversities of the

⁶⁸ Original Italian: *Il mio riscatto non è una rivincita*. I chose to translate 'riscatto' with 'success' as I could not find a one-word English equivalent for 'riscatto'. With *riscatto* it is meant, in this particular context, 'achieved emancipation from hardship or poverty'. For concision purposes I have chosen the above solution ('success')

⁶⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.migradormuseum.it/2014/08/16/il-mio-riscatto-non-e-una-rivincita/>

protagonist. Career achievements are, once again, metaphorically framed as ‘conquered victories’ in line with the ‘victory rhetoric’ of the previous story. The story then moves on to recall a condition of struggle and frustration (‘... when I wanted to shout with rage’) in relation to Jamal’s past experiences in his country of origin. However, hardship is defined against the protagonist’s positive attitude and strength of character (‘I’ve always smiled’) and generous, altruistic nature (‘I would always offer a helping hand’, ‘I’ve always given and never asked’).

The discourse of hardship is therefore intricately linked to the narrative of success. Success stories often acknowledge difficult challenges towards goal achievement; however, adversities are faced with a positive attitude and re-evaluated as constructive learning experiences. Such positive re-evaluation, I contend, functions as a rhetoric/pedagogical intent emphasising the outstanding qualities of character of the ‘new citizen’. Such positive self-evaluation (‘I’m not a complainer’, ‘I never felt unlucky’), seems to serve to reject self-victimising narratives (Berrocal, 2010) embedded in solidaristic pro-immigration discourses framing immigrants as subaltern, marginalised subjects in need of care or material support as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.4.).

7.1.1 Optimism, dedication and ‘intercultural capacity’

The new citizen is presented as a subject *exhibiting agency*. The fulfilment of personal aspirations or career dreams is entirely self-made and achieved through hard work, resilience to adversity and dedication. Good use of coincidental factors is also a key ingredient to personal success. The migratory experience is often framed and relexicalized as a ‘journey’ in which coincidental factors coupled with strong determination and positive attitude play a key role in the achievement of ‘professional endeavours’.

In Jamal’s story, despite Italy not being a preferred destination, the protagonist embraces with enthusiasm the opportunity that is presented to him.

I had **never either thought or attempted** to come to Italy. My **plan** was to migrate to France or to the US. However, the French consulate rejected my visa application three times. [...] Then one day at a trade show in Casablanca, **I bumped into** an Italian fashion entrepreneur. He saw some potential in me and decided to take me onboard. To him, I was the right person to help him

expand his business within an **increasingly globalized world** where **languages** and **networking skills** count a lot. [...] **On paper, I did not have the experience required for the job.** I just tend to be **sociable, helpful, and proactive.** What struck him was **my attitude.** [...] I had no particular expectations. I was just throwing myself into a **new adventure.** I was feeling **calm, positive, determined to give my best.**

(Published on *Migrador Museum* on 16/08/2014)

Positive attitude, flexibility of skills and dedication ('I was determined to give my best') are regarded as key values in the pursuit of a new life and career in another country. The protagonist seizes the opportunity – lexicalised as 'new adventure' – offered by the 'Italian entrepreneur' met in Casablanca with enthusiasm and dedication.

Alina's story, posted in *Yalla Italia*, tells the career of a young singer of Romanian origin. Similarly to the previous story, the extract reported below emphasises the *coincidental factors* determining the destination of the protagonist's migration journey.

A Popstar called I.Am.Alina

[...] **Fate wanted my new life to be here** [in Italy] and I have to admit, looking back, I think that was **the best thing that could have ever happened to me.** When **my journey deviated from the original plan,** I was feeling confused but at the same time **full of excitement.**

(Published on *Yalla Italia* on 18/09/2014 ⁷⁰)

The two above examples show a protagonist embarking on a migratory journey by chance, after receiving a 'call to adventure' (Campbell, 1949). In Alina's story, the protagonist is portrayed as passive agent *acted upon* by 'fate' ('destiny wanted my life to be here') almost 'at the mercy of events'. Through personification, the agent of the migration choice is 'Fate'. However, agency is 'restored' and fully embraced when committing with dedication and hard work to the new professional 'adventure'.

Jamal's story, previously examined, further shows that the 'disadvantaged' background is viewed as a repository of formative experiences as well as a source of *intercultural skills* carrying career potential: 'multilingualism' and the 'networking skills in a globalised world' can be understood as 'intercultural competence' (Barrett,

⁷⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.yallaitalia.it/2014/09/una-popstar-chiamata-iamalina/>

2013). The immigrant background is therefore re-framed as a professionally useful resource, a fundamental cosmopolitan capacity in an ‘increasingly globalised’ world. The following extract shows another example of a positive evaluation of cultural ‘difference’. Malindu Perera is a young food entrepreneur of Sri Lankan origin. The story is published in *Italiani più*.

Malindu Perera, Ambassador of ‘Made in Italy’ in Sri Lanka

The young Milanese, at the head of a company with his father, in addition to exporting the gastronomic produce of the *Belpaese* [Italy], is also committed to **promoting his cultural origins**. “I was **lucky** enough to **grow up in-between two cultures** and this can only be an **advantage** for **both countries to which I belong**.”

(Published on *Italiani.piu* on 03/04/2014 ⁷¹)

The hyphenated identity of the protagonist as ‘Italian Sri Lankan’ is lexicalised as ‘luck’ and an ‘advantage’ for the chosen professional career in Italian food export. Indeed, the cultural ‘in-between-ness’ of Malindu Perera is presented as a strength for his position as ambassador of Italian cuisine in Sri Lanka. In contrast to discourses that stigmatise the diversity of background as a ‘subaltern status’, in the new citizen story, ‘non-Italian’ origins signify an ‘added value’ and even career potential. The story also connects with the Made-in-Italy discourse (Viscusi, 2007) valuing entrepreneurial activities that relate to ‘traditionally Italian’ vocations such as arts, cuisine, and fashion.

A science fiction story published on *Migrador Museum* offers a further example of value placed upon the intercultural capacity of residents/citizens of immigrant background. The story envisions the future Italian population in the 2030s. A national survey is being carried out to measure the population’s levels of ‘internationalisation’. Results show that those who scored higher in the survey were the children of immigrants:

⁷¹ Retrieved from <http://www.italianipiu.it/index.php/personaggi/848-malindu-perera-ambasciatore-del-made-in-italy-in-sri-lanka>

'Daje Italia', the app measuring love for the *Tricolore*⁷²

The **most active, multi-lingual, cross-border individuals** were identified among the children of foreign nationals. It is difficult to find one who did not have **contacts in at least three continents, in multiple languages**⁷³ and best 'supplier' of information about our country, often coming up with the most **innovative and original ideas for solving problems**. [...] All **those who argued** that the **children of immigrants must integrate** (despite being born and bred in Italy), **had to change their mind**, or at least accept the outcome of the app *Daje Italy*: the children of immigrants born in this country **feel 100% Italian, love their country** and **would fight to protect it**.

(Published on *Migrador Museum* on 31/03/2014 ⁷⁴)

Within this utopian future, 'activeness', 'multilingualism', 'cross-cultural thinking', 'global contacts and relations', 'innovation', 'problem-solving skills' are key qualities characterising children of immigrant parents. Interestingly, assimilationist ideologies are criticised ('those who argued that children of immigrants must integrate...') with the persuasive argument stressing the fully embraced 'feeling of national belonging' by second-generation immigrants ('[they] *feel* 100% Italian...') and even evoking patriotic rhetoric ('[they] love their country and *would fight to protect it*').

'New Italians' are thus represented as self-enterprising individuals possessing exceptional qualities: they are driven, committed, and positive, they have 'intercultural capacity' and often an entrepreneurial vision. This shows that 'success stories' of new citizens positively value a certain type of attitude towards life choices and career paths that can be understood as the articulation of the 'entrepreneur of the self'- discourse (du Gay, 1996; Moore, 2013). According to du Gay, the entrepreneur of the self is an individual engaged 'in a project to shape his or her life as autonomous, choosing individual driven by the desire to optimise the worth of its own existence – no matter what hand circumstance may have dealt a person' (1996: 157). The idea of 'life as enterprise' manifested in individuals committed to the optimisation of their own

⁷² Slang/Rome's dialect for 'Go Italy' *Tricolore* (Tricolour flag) is the National Italian flag

⁷³ Italian: *alfabeti* (alphabets).

⁷⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.migradormuseum.it/2014/03/31/daje-italia-lapp-che-misura-lamore-verso-il-tricolore/>

existence and capacities underpins the success narrative of many stories of new citizens.

7.1.2 *Entrepreneurial vision*

A number of new citizens' stories attribute desirability to entrepreneurial careers. 'New citizens' that – after facing difficult challenges – succeeded in entrepreneurial activities is quite a common thematic thread of positive successful stories of new citizens. This story, narrated in the first person, recount the upward career path of a young entrepreneur of Philippine origins.

Chua Christine: how I became 'foreign entrepreneur' of the Year

I started as an industrial worker. I was in the assembly department. **Then, one day, they needed someone who could speak English with a customer** on the phone and they asked me if I could do it. **Thanks to that unexpected performance** I was promoted to the role of receptionist [...]. Time went by and I made progress in the company. I get promoted to the sales office to support customers in China and other international customers. In 2008, at age 26, I decided to **put myself forward**. I wanted to try something new, without routine, although I really liked the work I was doing. I said to myself, if I do not do it now, I will never do it again. [...] **I would say that I am devoting most of my daily life to this activity.** In the morning I am in contact with the Chinese who are ahead by six hours and in the evening with the US who are 6 hours behind. I work between 10–12 hours a day. The work gives me great satisfaction. I know that only a few are able to find **the job of their life. I feel very privileged to have found it** and it also gives me the opportunity to see the world. Because our major clients are all based abroad, this allows me to travel a lot. Travelling is my passion. **I've never sought the support of trade unions or any form of protection. I was motivated and determined.** I always thought that if you are capable and productive, the company you work for will never want to get rid of you. Indeed, they will do all possible to keep you. I hope that this logic is embraced by all the enterprises in the country with regards to **all the committed immigrants who work hard** [in Italy] and **make sacrifices.** (Published on *Yalla Italia* on 10/09/2014 ⁷⁵)

Christine's story is a story of social mobility in which the ability to make good use of coincidental factors ('Then, one day, they needed someone who could speak English with a client...') and opportunities combined with hard-work and dedication led to

⁷⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.migradormuseum.it/2014/03/31/daje-italia-lapp-che-misura-lamore-verso-il-tricolore/>

finding ‘the job of her dreams’. Again, motivation, determination and enterprising spirit are key factors determining an entirely self-made success. The protagonist is a subject exhibiting agency and in control of her choices. As a self-governing individual Christine refuses any form of support from institutions (‘I’ve never sought the support of trade union or any form of protection’). Almost opposing collective action/solidarity as unnecessary, the market is a meritocracy in this discourse. Similarly to previously examined stories, the protagonist is also risk-taking facing challenges and failures with a constructive approach. The story concludes with an enthusiastic self-evaluation of the protagonist’s current work routine and career. In the closing lines, Christine advocates fair inclusion into a ‘meritocratic’ employment market of driven, hard-working immigrants who deserve job stability and opportunities as much as ‘native’ Italian citizens.

Christine’s story resonates with many other positive stories of ‘new citizens’ in which the protagonists have accomplished career goals after a journey of hard-work, dedication and commitment towards their aspirations. Bridget Foundam, a ‘new citizen’ of Cameroonian origin, was awarded the title ‘Immigrant of the year 2014’ for her entrepreneurial merits. Her story is published by *Prospettive Altre*:

Bridget Fomundam: Immigrant of the Year 2014

A life of **sacrifices**, but also showing the **tenacity** of not being willing to give in to **the idea that, as an immigrant woman, she could and should be just a carer or a cleaning lady**. After working for several years as an English teacher at some private institutions in the province, twelve years ago, she founded a Language Center for teaching children and teenagers English called *The Rainbow*. With **her business, which employs** five English language teachers from the US, Canada, England and Italy, Bridget was able to **fulfil her dream**.

(Published by *Prospettive Altre*, on 22/01/2014 ⁷⁶)

Bridget’s story is another story of ‘upward social mobility’ from ‘a life of sacrifices’ to her ‘dream’ career. The rejection of stereotypical job prospects for an immigrant woman (‘the idea that, as an immigrant woman, she could and should be *just* a carer or a cleaning lady’) stresses the determination of the protagonist of the story to be in

⁷⁶ Retrieved from <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/2014/01/bridget-fomundam-immigrata-dellanno-2014-della-provincia-di-pisa/>

control of her professional choices. Thanks to hard work (a busy and long-hours working routine), perseverance and good utilisation of her intercultural capacity (e.g. multilingualism), the protagonist builds her dream career. Bridget also demonstrated strong determination despite adversities and challenges, vision, courage and leadership.

7.1.3. *The altruistic entrepreneur*

The motivation underpinning success in new citizens' stories is primarily passion and commitment to a chosen career. The drive to success is not material wealth or individual ambition but rather 'career dreams' or passion for work. The term *ambizione* ('ambition') is omitted from the stories, in favour of lexis denoting 'passion', 'determination', 'enthusiasm', 'commitment'. Success is thus intimately connected with 'passion' and entrepreneurial spirit emptied of ambition.

A story published in *Italiani.più*, recounts the success of the owner of a small bakery business and focusses on the altruistic personality of the protagonist:

*Pane, Amore e Fantasia*⁷⁷. The everyday generosity of Lulzim Vulashi

Generous, optimistic and full of life. These traits describe the personality of Lulzim Vulashi that one immediately notices when starting to talk to him. Lulzim is 35 years old, was born in Shkodra in Albania and has lived in Florence since 1996. Today he is the baker and owner of the bakery business *Pane, Amore e Fantasia* ran with the family, and where, in addition to bread, one can have hot dishes and good wine. However, Lulzim **does not forget what he went through himself**. And now that things are going in the right direction, he wishes to **lend others a hand**: he **offers free bread** to all new mothers, until their children are 6 months old.

(Published by *Italiani.piu* on 04/04/2014 ⁷⁸)

Lulzim, a 'new citizen' of Albanian origin, is an altruistic individual (lexicalised as 'generous') and sympathetic with Italian citizens struggling in a time of financial

⁷⁷ Title of an Italian romantic film comedy of 1953 representative of 'pink neorealism'. Title can be translated as "Story of poverty, bread and romance".

⁷⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/2014/01/bridget-fomundam-immigrata-dell'anno-2014-della-provincia-di-pisa/>

crisis. The success of his business, thanks to his hard work and dedication, puts him in the position to ‘afford’ philanthropic acts for the local community. Such a sympathetic and altruistic approach, however, derives from a past difficult background of hardship and challenges that, I suggest, is viewed as embedded in the ‘immigrant condition’.

In the previous stories, I illustrated that ‘subalterneity’ related to the immigrant background discursively enhances the significance of a strong entrepreneurial spirit. While in stories emphasising the aspect of ‘altruism’, the acknowledgement of a past difficult immigrant background serves to mitigate traits of ‘individualism’ and ‘ruthless ambition’ attached to the popular image of the successful entrepreneur.

The discourse valuing wealth in relation to entrepreneurial careers is largely omitted. Financial profit is not the main objective and extrinsic rewards such as wealth or social prestige are very rarely mentioned in stories of new citizens. Instead, it is the pursuit of a career path coherent with personal values and aspirations that is conceived as the ‘highest value’ such as in the story of Lifang Dong, an Italian Chinese lawyer.

Lifang Dong: first female Italian Chinese lawyer

‘Seeing the **hard work** and **sacrifices that my parents made**, certainly helped me to have an **entrepreneurial spirit and DIY attitude more strongly than normal people**.” [...] She now **returns part of this wealth** by engaging in **activities of social utility**: “For example I offer legal advice through 7 Italian-Chinese associations which I’m a representative of. I have **not studied and worked only for myself** but also for my family and for **many immigrants who have not been as lucky**. As a lawyer, I try to help them enforce their rights.’

(Published by *Yalla Italia* on 23/09/2014 ⁷⁹)

In the full version of the story, the ‘new citizen’ is once again subject-positioned as a ‘distinctive individual’ possessing an exceptional entrepreneurial spirit that sets her apart from the crowd (‘an entrepreneurial spirit and DIY attitude more strongly than normal people’). It is, once again the ‘immigrant background’ – or more precisely the hardship that her immigrant parents went through (‘Seeing the hard work and the efforts that my parents made’) – that constitutes the drive towards her career goals as

⁷⁹ Retrieved from <http://www.yallaitalia.it/2014/09/lifang-dong-primo-avvocato-donna-italo-cinese/>

a way to do ‘justice’ to the parental sacrifices. The protagonist of the story adopts a ‘do-it-yourself’ approach in order to achieve her career goals. Lifang Dong’s success, however, is not motivated by individualistic self-interest (‘not intended solely for myself’) but by both familistic/intergenerational (‘for family’) and ‘intercultural’ (‘[for] other immigrant individuals who haven’t been as lucky’) *solidarity*. Interestingly, the expression ‘returning her wealth’, where ‘wealth’ is metaphorically intended as acquired knowledge and skills – suggests that the opportunities she had were somehow ‘lent’ or given as a concession implying an asymmetrical power relation between her and the ‘host society’.

The construction of ‘altruistic entrepreneurship’ views certain traits attached to the construction of entrepreneurship such as the search for autonomy, freedom of choice, hard-work, dedication, and self-fulfilment through self-employment as positive and legitimate qualities, whilst it rejects those traits connoting individualistic values such as the ambitious search ‘for personal interest’ (‘I haven’t studied just for my own personal interest’). Achievement of career goals for individualistic purposes is therefore regarded as negative. Accomplishment of career goals leading to self-fulfilment is the legitimate reward for hard-work, dedication and goal-commitment which, however, the new citizen feels compelled to ‘share’ or ‘return’ in the form of philanthropic actions towards their community. This can be the national (Italian)/local community as an *act of gratitude* (in Lulzim’s story) or the immigrant community as an *act of solidarity* (in Lifang Dong’s story).

Against the popular discourse of entrepreneurship as ‘purely individualistic practice’, success stories of ‘new citizens’ value the social responsibility of entrepreneurs towards society acting in the interest of their community (either ‘ethnic’ or ‘national’). The representation of the ‘altruistic entrepreneur’ suggests a form of ‘tempered individualism’ that focusses equally on personal and public utility’ (Radu & Redien-Collot, 2008: 277). The neoliberal imagery of the ‘individualistic, narcissistic entrepreneur’ is rejected in favour of a successful entrepreneur who is, nevertheless, community-oriented and exhibits the altruistic value of caring for others through self-identification. The stories build upon the assumption that there is a portrayal of entrepreneurial personality or in the pursuit of success that is negative and unacceptable: excessive individualism, excessive ambition, self-interest over public-

interest are associated to a negatively connoted representation of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, entrepreneurship is presented as a socially desirable career that offers opportunities for exercising agency as independent self-choosing individuals and full dedication to personal interests and dream career.

I contend that the discourse of the ‘enterprising *new citizen*’ discursively mobilises and promotes a *strategy for inclusion and recognition* of immigrants within the national representational and ‘political’ space. The construction of the new citizen as an ‘enterprising subject’ symbolises the affirmation of ‘agentic power’ as opposed to dominant hegemonic representations in which agency is suppressed and the voice and story of residents/citizens of immigrant background is unheard or marginalised. The ‘new citizen’ is thus positionally constructed against discourses representing the immigrant as a ‘subaltern subject’, low-skilled and in need of support by the ‘host society’. This type of stories, while attempting to challenge dominant representations, seems to draw on established ideologies. The discourse of the new citizen as an enterprising/entrepreneurial subject, I contend, connects with both neoliberal ideologies valuing entrepreneurship as a desirable career choice signifying self-reliance and hegemonic pro-immigration discourses promoting acceptance of immigration on the basis of the economic contribution of immigrants to society (Ambrosini, 2011). Such twofold rhetoric, I argue, is embedded in the narrative of new citizens’ success stories with the intent to perform a persuasive discourse of ‘political and civic legitimacy’ of ‘immigrants’ as individuals ‘worthy’ of recognition and inclusion in the national socio-political sphere as ‘legitimate Italian citizens’.

7.2 Struggling for recognition

As I have illustrated, in a number of stories focussing on the successful endeavours of ‘new citizens’, difficult challenges are positively re-evaluated as learning experiences and opportunities. However, other stories highlight the tension between the ‘immigrant/foreign status’ still representing a hindrance to full participation in society and the personal aspirations of the individual. Seemingly in contrast with the narrative of success previously examined, these are stories that carve deeper into the emotional dimension of the new citizen’s quotidian life and cultural as well as personal identity.

The section '*Nuovi Cittadini*' in *A.L.M.A. Blog* hosts fictional stories of 'new citizens' facing everyday issues and challenges. The stories are realistic, yet their fictional nature points to a pedagogical intent. Their aim is to recount aspects of the everyday life of 'new citizens' in Italy. *Viorica, anzi Viola* is the story of a woman from an unspecified country in Eastern Europe, outside the EU. Her non-EU national status, however, is limiting her work choices and leaves her with a feeling of non-recognition and exclusion from full and equal participation in Italian society.

'Viorica', or rather 'Viola'

Viorica calls herself Viola, because she does not like the **stares, the smiles and the jokes** that arise **anytime she introduces herself**. [...] **The Western world** is not what she had imagined. Viorica/Viola **was convinced** it was enough to be competent and have the qualifications to demonstrate it, even if not recognized. She thought that **prejudices, narrow-mindedness, stereotypes**, belonged only to the first generation of immigration, of ten, fifteen years ago. She thought that **Europe had finally accepted all Europeans**. Meanwhile, time was going by and the necessity to find employment was increasing.

(Published by *ALMA Blog* on 04/07/2014 ⁸⁰)

The text immediately draws attention to the choice of the protagonist to conceal her origin by preferring the Italian translation of her name ('Viola') free of indicators of her non-Italian background. The choice of presenting herself with the Italian version of her name indicates 'aspired inclusion' performed according to an assimilationist perspective. The text conveys a sentiment of frustration deriving from the tension between the expectations of the protagonist in starting a new life in Italy and her struggles. The non-recognition of educational/professional qualifications and prejudices attached to Europeans of non-EU status – 'she thought that Europe had finally accepted all Europeans' – are framed as obstacles to social inclusion through access to citizenship.

Viorica/Viola is depicted as stuck in a precarious life in which the immigrant / non-EU 'status' constitutes an impediment to full participation in society and access to opportunities for employment commensurate with personal aspirations and

⁸⁰ Retrieved from <https://collettivoalma.wordpress.com/2014/07/04/nuovi-cittadini-10-viorica-anzi-viola/>

qualifications, having to make do with low-paid jobs. This type of narrative is seemingly in contrast with ‘success stories’ in which challenges were re-interpreted as learning opportunities and the new citizen stood out as a talented and successful individual who has fulfilled their career dreams. However, similarly to success stories, in the story of Viola/Viorica, a strong emphasis is placed upon the pursuit of personal aspirations and good employment opportunities. The denial of access to equal opportunities for employment raises the sentiment of disillusion and frustration of the protagonist that the story conveys.

On the one hand, many stories of new citizens, by valuing entrepreneurial success encourage individuals to become ‘enterprising-selves’ without depending on state help or welfare to succeed in the labour market. On the other hand, limited opportunities for social inclusion available to immigrant citizens reveals the existence of a tension between immigrants’ demands/struggles for full participation in society and restrictive policies granting equal opportunities for participation and citizenship path. Viola/Viorica’s story draws attention to the issue of non-recognition leading to failed professional realisation for citizens of non-EU countries. However, the story ends on a positive note of hope with the protagonist feeling ‘an intimate, indescribable satisfaction’ in being able to pay the mortgage on a newly bought house’: despite frustration, achievement of personal goals and aspirations may be obtained through hard work, perseverance, determination - values also present in the success stories.

The same rhetoric of precarious existence in Viola/Viorica’s story is also present in Abe Kayn’s story. A life in-between ‘conflicting’ cultural worlds which is metaphorically framed as an ‘everyday battle’ is at the centre of the interview-story of Abe Kayn, a ‘new Italian’ of Senegalese origin launching his latest music single.

“Savana Boy” Abe Kayn: each day I fight”

Savana Boy was launched online today, the latest single by Abe Kayn. The Ligurian singer of Senegalese origin portrays **a precarious reality in-between two cultures and identities**, but encourages everyone to **be determined**, and keep **focused on their goals**. “The Savannah boys are all those young people coming from **a difficult background** who hoped to leave their past behind, but in reality they are living in a Savannah here too.” Abe Kayn marks the **similarities of the two realities** that belong to him.

“They are seemingly distant, **Africa and Europe**, but in some respects they have many things in common. The Savannah boy / girl could mean a whole generation who every day is **called to face their origins**. This term also means to be a provocation, **I see that things are changing**, I am confident. The lyrics are more of a wake-up-call, a signal of hope, in the sense that even here **we live in a sort of Savannah**, where in order to survive one has to fight every day. From this point of view, the distances are reduced.”
(Published by *Italiani.piu* on 04/06/2014 ⁸¹)

The theme of ‘life as everyday struggle’ is at the centre of the song’s lyrics and Abe’s personal view of life as a ‘new citizen’ living ‘in-between two cultures and two identities’. Such in-between-ness is connoted as a challenging, difficult condition (‘difficult reality’) metaphorically framed as ‘Savannah’ in the lyrics of Abe Kayn’s songs as a geographical environment traditionally associated to the discourse of ‘struggle for survival’. The ‘Savannah’ functions as a connecting term between two ‘seemingly different’ worlds: the country of origin (Senegal) and the country of residence (Italy). The two ‘worlds’ are both ‘savannahs’ in the sense that they are both, according to Abe, ‘difficult realities’ to live in. Young generations ‘struggle every day for survival’ in both contexts albeit for different reasons: on the one hand there is the struggle for material resources and opportunities (in Africa’s ‘Savannah’), on the other hand it is the struggle for inclusion and recognition (in Italy’s ‘Savannah’). The otherness associated with the diverse cultural/ethnic/racial backgrounds of the ‘new citizens’ is a reason of contention leading to the rhetorical trope of life as a struggle, expressing a sentiment of frustration deriving from non-recognition as ‘equal citizens’. However, the protagonist of the story concludes the interview by sending a message of hope, expressing optimism for a better future for immigrant youth in Italy: ‘I can see things are changing, I have faith’. However, such change will only be possible with the ‘determination’ and a goals-oriented attitude: ‘[Abe] encourages everyone to be determined, and stay focused on their goals’ – in consonance with the self-enterprising optimistic rhetoric of the success stories.

The following extract is from a story posted in *Yalla Italia* written in the first person by Oumayma, a young Milanese woman of Moroccan origin. The extract emphasises

⁸¹ Retrieved from at <http://www.italianipiu.it/index.php/personaggi/951-abe-kayn-e-il-savannah-boy-ogni-giorno-e-una-lotta>)

the ‘doubleness’ and ‘in-between-ness’ felt by the protagonist-narrator manifesting an unsolved tension between two conflicting worlds:

Manzoni wears 2G⁸²

I have always defined my **double identity** as a **double-edged sword**, though I think I have now found a balance **between those two often conflicting worlds** in which I found myself living"⁸³.
(Published by *Yalla Italia* on 25/07/2014⁸⁴)

The protagonist-narrator of the story metaphorically presents her hyphenated identity (‘double identity’) as Italian Moroccan as a ‘double-edged sword’. The double-belonging is interpreted both as a ‘resource’ and as a motive of ‘struggle’, bearing connection with both the discourse of struggle in which the immigrant background is conceived as an obstacle and the discourse of success in which it is framed as a resource.

These stories emphasising an unsolved tension between the ‘immigrant background’ and the everyday life in the country of residence, convey a sense of precarious equilibrium, a quotidian, ongoing sentiment of struggle for recognition. The discursive construction of ‘in-between-ness as everyday struggles’ manifests an unsolved tension between the new citizen’s background (field of obstacles) and individual choices as self-choosing individuals. This narrative is seemingly partly in contrast with success stories of ‘enterprising citizens’. However, I contend that stories emphasising everyday struggles towards recognition manifest the intent of drawing attention to situations of social inequality for citizens from an immigrant background because of restricted access to citizenship rights and/or racializing practices in society. Nevertheless, these are hardly negative or pessimistic stories: despite expressing sentiments of frustration, the stories examined still portray individuals exhibiting agency, self-capacity and willingness to optimise the worth of their existence.

⁸² References in the title si to: Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), Italian poet, novelist and patriot. His novel *I Promessi Sposi* (‘The Betrothed’) is considered the most famous and widely read novel in Italian literature; 2G stands for Second Generation immigrants.

⁸⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.yallaitalia.it/2014/07/manzoni-veste-2g/>

7.3 Too feel, yet not to be (Italian)

As I illustrated with the discourse of ‘struggle’, a number of stories recounting the endeavours of new citizens take the opportunity to reflect upon the complexities, ambivalences and challenges that the immigrant condition embeds with regards to identity.

A story published on *Prospettive Altre*, is based on extracts from an interview with a young film-maker who made a short documentary titled ‘*Essere o non essere*’ Italiani (‘To be, or not to be’ Italian). The choice of filming a documentary about immigrant youth by a young ‘new citizen’ of Bangladeshi origin carries a self-reflective perspective when exploring questions of cultural identity and belonging:

‘To be, or not to be’ Italian. A young video-maker recounts his *Tor Pignattara*⁸⁵

I find that **this issue of citizenship is a denied right**. This is well expressed by one of the two youths who I interview in my documentary: one of them says that despite being born and raised here and **feeling Italian, documents identify him as a foreigner**. Not to mention the **difficulties** arising from having to renew the [temporary] residence permit, in the absence of a national passport. I myself have applied for citizenship recently, on my eighteenth birthday, and I’m still waiting **to finally be recognized Italian in all respects**. As for identity I often wonder about issues related to our identity, this is inevitable: **I feel Italian, but at the same time I care a lot about my origin**. Sometimes I feel I am also **something else, something indefinable, inexplicable, probably a sort of synthesis between the two** [identities].
(Published on *Prospettive Altre* on 20/11/2013 ⁸⁶)

The discourse of identity self-exploration is intimately connected to the unsolved question of the Italian citizenship. Access to national citizenship is framed as a ‘denied right’ for young individuals born and bred in the country who *feel* Italian but according to the legal system, they *are* foreigners (*stranieri*). This youth’s identity is fractured between a fully embraced *sentiment of belonging* (to *feel* Italian, ‘*sentirsi Italiani*’) and a lack of recognition by legal institutions (‘documents [still] identify him as a foreigner’). The sentiment of belonging to a national community or ‘affective

⁸⁵ Multi-ethnic neighbourhood in the outskirts of Rome.

⁸⁶ Retrieved from at <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/2013/11/essere-o-non-essere-italiani-phaim-giovane-videomaker-racconta-la-sua-tor-pignattara/>

citizenship’ (Coleman, 2009) clashes with the lack of legal status that can only be recognised through the granting of legal citizenship. This tension between *feeling* (Italian) and *not-being* (recognised as citizen of the nation-state) opens up a series of material ‘difficulties’ (e.g. lengthy bureaucratic processes for visa renewal, etc.) as well as a condition of emotional and social precariousness.

These stories reflecting upon questions of identity, belonging and citizenship are often narrated by a young generation of immigrant youth, the so-called second-generations (see section 2.3.2.), and suggest a preferred approach to the conception of national identity: that legal citizenship status should correspond to the sentiment of belonging (feeling, therefore being Italians). At the same time, ‘Italian-ness’ should be inclusive of a diversity of cultural origins, traditions, and backgrounds: ‘I feel Italian but at the same time *I care a lot about my origin*’. Italian identity is fully embraced by the protagonists of this type of stories but with the caveat that their origins are equally important as well as resourceful. I suggest that a discourse emphasising the importance of ‘cultural origins’, aims at contesting an assimilationist approach to diversity: embracing Italian-ness (feeling Italian) and at the same time ‘caring about one’s origins’ are not mutually exclusive terms. This is showed when the protagonist/interviewee of the story defines himself as an in-between subject, ‘a synthesis’ between two cultural worlds and identities.

Below is an extract from another story also exploring issues of cultural and national identity narrated in the first-person by a young ‘Milanese’ of Sri Lankan origin.

I feel, I am, and I would like to be

I learned Italian in about a year and just as quickly **I forgot my native language**, complicit with the teachers who had **categorically forbidden me to talk to my mother in Sinhala** [my native language]. I came to know Sri Lanka the first time seven years after my arrival in Italy, in a summer that I still remember as one of the most beautiful of my life, entirely devoted **to the search for the roots** of the language, the culture that I had lost along the way, the discovery of a land that I could not feel mine, but I knew it was. In conclusion, **I feel deeply Italian, but I am not. I feel Milanese, but perhaps it would be more accurate and simple to say that I am foreign** [*straniera*]. I do not know if I feel a second-generation, but surely I must be so. I have relatives in Sri Lanka whom I do not consider related to; I have

Italian friends that I chose as a family for myself. My life has always been - and probably will always be - **an eternal conflict between the person I feel and who I am**; today, at the dawn of my twenty-one years, I'm just surrendering to **this bipolarity** that forever divides me.
(Published by *Yalla Italia* on 29/05/2014 ⁸⁷)

This extract shows that an 'assimilationist' pressure that took place at school during the early stage of the settling phase ('I forgot my native language, complicit with the teachers...'). However, at a certain point a process of self-discovery and self-awareness prompted a journey searching for 'roots'. Similarly to the previous story, this story acknowledges an identity split between *sentirsi* (to feel) Italian and *essere* (to be) Italian. Whilst identifying themselves as 'Italians', the Italian-ness of citizens of immigrant background can only remain a *sentiment* of belonging (*sentirsi Italiani*, 'feeling Italian') intended as *affective citizenship* (Coleman, 2009) and not an ontological/legal status (being Italian [*by law*]) as confessed in the statement: '*I feel* profoundly Italian, but *I am not*. [...]' The split in identity between 'feeling' and 'being' is resonant of a 'conflictual' tension between a fully embraced sentiment of belonging to the national community and the non-corresponding legal recognition as national citizen.⁸⁸

7.3.1 Reclaiming 'roots'

As I showed with the previous examples, a discourse acknowledging the importance of 'rediscovering' one's own cultural origin suggests a critique, articulated more or less explicitly, of an assimilationist approach towards 'difference' operating in the context of the society of settlement. Karima's story places emphasis upon the importance of her cultural origin, metaphorically lexicalised as 'roots', rediscovered through music:

⁸⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.yallaitalia.it/2014/05/mi-sento-sono-e-vorrei-essere/#sthash.aXkongT9.dpuf>

⁸⁸ As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, children of non-EU immigrant parents, even if born and bred in Italy are not immediately recognized Italian citizens by law. To obtain Italian citizenship, they have to go through a lengthy and complicated application process and they can do so only after they have turned 18 years old – a process that does not always end positively for the applicant, resulting in serious and unavoidable problems of social inclusion and identity. Italian citizenship is primarily based on *jus sanguinis* (Latin for 'right of blood'), according to which citizenship is not determined by place of birth (that would be *jus soli*, right of soil) but by having a parent or an ancestor who is a national or citizen of the state.

Karima: Through music I found my roots. They are all are 'in 2G'

Rome – April 18, 2014 – Her name is Karima and her debut album *2G*⁸⁹ summarises **her introspective journey leading to the rediscovery of her cultural roots**. “**At the call of my origin, I responded with music.**” Born in Rome in 1980 to Liberian parents, Karima, born Anna Maria Gehnyei, is an all-round artist. Dancer, singer, author of her lyrics and music is also the founder of the record label Soupu Music. “I worked for major Italian clubs with renowned national and international DJs (...). But at some point, in my career as a vocalist I felt the need to belong to another context, I was not recognizing myself in that situation. **I felt the call of my roots**. And I could not ignore that call, I had to listen to it and find some answers. I treated myself to two years of **deep soul searching** in which I was able to re-interpret the world around me with a more critical and conscious outlook, but in this course the music has always been a key component.”

(Published on *Italiani.più* on 18/04/2014 ⁹⁰)

In the extract, various expressions describe a personal journey of self-rediscovery in which the protagonist embarks on a journey to reconnect with her cultural origin (‘call of my origin’/ ‘roots’, ‘deep soul searching’). This emphasis on the act of rediscovering and ‘reclaiming’ one’s own cultural background suggests the existence of an assimilationist pressure that Karima had previously experienced. And yet, ‘difference’ as one’s own cultural/‘ethnic’ heritage can co-exist with a fully professed Italian identity:

In her songs there is politics, culture, identity and intervention, but above all there is a call: “I am convinced that the second generations can make it, **they are capable of achieving important results here**, but **they should not deny their origins**, because these are the **cornerstones of their success**. And even if **I am not a citizen of this country** by law yet, **I define myself an Italian singer of African descent.**”

In the extract Karima also highlights the importance of one’s own cultural origin as a ‘career potential’ (origins as ‘the cornerstones of success’) in line with the rhetoric of success of previous stories (section 7.1). While urging second-generation immigrants to ‘not deny’ their origins, the sentiment of belonging to the national community of

⁸⁹ Acronym for *Seconde (2) Generazioni (G)*

⁹⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.italianipiu.it/index.php/personaggi/908-karima-con-la-musica-ho-ritrovato-le-mie-radici-sono-tutte-in-2g>

settlement is also fully embraced. However, this can only remain a self-defining act (*'I define myself an Italian singer with African origins'*) given the lack of legal citizenship status: *'... even if I am not a citizen of this country by law yet'*. Furthermore, Karima calls on the second-generations to abandon a self-victimising attitude and stresses the importance of achieving goals 'here' [in Italy] in coherence with the rhetoric of self-realisation of the 'success story':

"In [my album] '2G' there is my whole journey, there is awareness and in particular **a message to the second generations: stop self-victimizing yourselves**. A verse of the song says: **"Do not blame the colour of your skin"**. For too long **we have experienced the legacy of colonialism** and the people have felt entitled to abuse, but now **it is time to put an end to victimization, to react peacefully and to feel citizens"**.

Again, self-victimising attitudes are frowned upon as in the narratives of success stories advocating self-dependency, self-determination and proactive attitudes as key values characterising the 'new citizen' as a self-enterprising individual. Karima urges the 'second generations' to move away from a self-perceived position of 'post-colonial' subalterneity and enact citizenship ('to feel citizens'). Interestingly, the chosen expression *'to feel citizens'* (*sentirsi cittadini*) suggests a performative act of citizenship enacted by individuals who may not be citizens by law (yet) (Isin, 2013) as discussed in Chapter 3.

This third section has illustrated some of the complexities underpinning stories highlighting the aspired recognition of young long-settled immigrants as 'citizens'. When formal citizenship is not recognised for those who *'feel Italian'*, yet by law they *are not*, a sense of identity precariousness is expressed. At the same time, some stories also highlight the importance of valuing cultural difference through a discourse of 'reclaiming cultural origin/roots'. Yet, 'difference', interpreted as a 'resource' of skills, opportunities and creativity is hardly viewed as problematic or conflicting with the strongly affirmed 'Italian identity'.

7.4 The Other in Us, the Self in The Other

The final discourse illustrated by some of the stories in our sample aims at ‘bringing together’ and drawing a similarity between ‘immigrants in Italy’ and ‘Italians (of single Italian heritage) as ‘emigrants’ in the world. This discursive construction is particularly explored by *Prospettive Altre*, which has two sections devoted to the idea of ‘bringing together’ stories of Italian emigrants and immigrants in Italy.

The first example is the section titled ‘Foreign entrepreneurs in Calabria (Italy) / Foreign entrepreneurs in Bulgaria’ intending to build a comparison between *Italian emigration* abroad and *immigration in Italy*. The stories are largely success stories of ‘immigrant entrepreneurs’ who achieved their goals in two different contexts which allegedly have slow economic development in common: the Italian Southern region of Calabria and the EU country of Bulgaria. The stories aim at bringing economic immigration in Italy and that in Bulgaria to the same comparative grounds, with the intent to show the dedication and determination of immigrant workers in contexts that are not traditionally referred to as immigrant-receiving regions/countries. The stories under those sections largely fall within the discourse of the ‘enterprising citizen’ whereby adversity and hardship are turned into achievements thanks to dedication, hard work and self-reliance. *Prospettive Altre* has also a section entitled ‘Stories of new migrants: young Italians in the world’ featuring stories of Italians (largely of single national heritage) who migrated to other countries in search of better opportunities. This section is introduced by providing figures of Italian nationals resident abroad.

Stories of new migrants: young Italians in the world

Not a day goes by without hearing the news of young people leaving the *Bel paese* [Italy]. According to the Anief report⁹¹, over the last decade, **the number of people under-35 emigrating abroad has more than doubled**, rising from 50,000 to 106,000. Low wages, inattentive politics, gerontocracy, unemployment and the lack of reward after years of study, appear to be the

main causes of the departures. It looks like **‘mamma Italia’ is no longer able to breastfeed her children**. The 2014 Istat report states that, in the past five years, almost 100,000 young people, precisely 94,000, have chosen to emigrate. **I myself personally know some of them**. People with whom, in some way, **I shared a part of my journey or who have crossed my path**, with whom I shared both happy and sad moments, work experiences and a sense of political affiliation. This must be the reason for why – **having had first-hand experience myself of leaving my country and all my loved ones – I am here to talk about them** [...]. However, once they have become emigrants, what do these young people do in the country they arrive in? Do they **succeed in fulfilling their dreams**? How to find a new job abroad? Are they pleased with their choice? Do they dream day and night to return to Italy the day when “the conditions will improve”? (Published on *Prospettive Altre*, 25/06/2014 ⁹²)

The narrator of this piece, a resident/citizen in Italy of immigrant background, empathises with the experiences and life of those who left Italy to migrate elsewhere (‘having had first-hand experience myself of leaving my country...’). Through self-identification, the section’s intent is to draw attention to *sameness* of dreams, hopes, expectations, challenges of ‘native Italians’ as emigrants abroad and immigrants in Italy. The extract presents Italy as a country failing to offer opportunities and resources for good job prospects. Metaphorical language typical of nationalist rhetoric as already found in the mission statement analysis (section 6.1.) is utilised to define Italy – through personification as *‘the mother [...] who is not any longer able to breastfeed her children’*. Far from the positive tone of ‘success stories’, this time Italy is portrayed as a country doomed to financial struggle as affected by several social issues (‘low wages’, ‘inattentive politics’, and so forth). Migration is thus re-presented as a global experience that increasingly involves young ‘native Italian’ citizens as emigrants in parts of the world that offer more career opportunities.

Alessandra’s story is one of the ‘Stories of new migrants’ and recounts a journey of ‘struggle’ and ‘success’, two key themes also characterising stories of ‘new citizens’ in Italy as previously examined:

⁹² Retrieved from <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/2014/06/storie-di-nuovi-migranti-i-giovani-italiani-nel-mondo-parte-1/>

Alessandra

[After] a degree in Architecture, [Alessandra] did a one-year internship, without contract and paid in cash. In 2013 she decided **to leave [Italy] for China**. Today Alessandra is working in her field after landing the job by applying for a post on the Internet. **Despite initial difficulties**, Alessandra talks about **her new life as a fascinating experience**: “From the contract, financial, professional and personal point of view, my choice has turned out to be **most rewarding one I had ever imagined**”. Alessandra does not think of returning to Italy for the moment.

(Published by Prospettive Altre on 25/06/2014 ⁹³)

Migration is planned and motivated by dissatisfaction with work prospects in the homeland. The same narrative structure of success stories of ‘new citizens’ in Italy is embedded in Alessandra’s story: initial struggle (‘initial difficulties’); reward for commitment and dedication; final positive evaluation expressing satisfaction with life/career choice. Interestingly, if comparing these stories, we have two conflicting perspectives on the same country: in the new citizen story the subject fulfils their career aspirations in Italy; in stories of Italians as immigrants abroad, Italy is not offering enough satisfactory work opportunities, hence the decision to migrate elsewhere.

The story of E* features in a section of *A.L.M.A. Blog* titled *Nuovi Cittadini* (‘new citizens’) devoted to stories ‘new citizens’ in Italy. Because of the section the story is hosted in, there is an expectation that the protagonist is a citizen of immigrant background resident in Italy. However, it is only in the last paragraph of the story that the nationality of the mysterious protagonist that the author anonymises as ‘E*’⁹⁴ is revealed and the story takes on a whole different meaning.

New citizens: the story of E*

E* lives in a city that is not her own. **She moved there to work**, after travelling through many countries. She left just before her thirties after an excellent university preparation. E* lives a good life well in the city that welcomed her. Its people are kind, and she has never suffered discrimination

⁹³ Retrieved from <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/2014/06/storie-di-nuovi-migranti-i-giovani-italiani-nel-mondo-parte-2/>

⁹⁴ Original Italian is *La storia di I*. However, in order to not create confusing with the first singular personal pronoun ‘I’, another letter was chosen.

despite her clearly **different features**. However, **E* keeps missing her home town**. Every so often she comes back, but the travel costs do not allow more than one visit per year. E* only thinks about **her job** because this is **the reason why she ended up in this remote city**. Then one day she found love, this time the real one, and E* now feels even more connected to this country. Yet she cannot forget her own [country], and so this year she has returned home to spend a few months with family and friends. I can confess that E* really needed this. **E* was born in a neighborhood north of Rome** and for many years has lived in Latin America. E* is one of the 4.2 million Italians living abroad registered in the registry office. Almost 7% of the Italian population. Almost as many as the immigrants living in Italy. The descendants of Italians abroad are estimated equal to the figure of the population currently living in Italy. **If you were to send them all back home, this could be a big problem**. And not just for a question of space. (Published by ALMA blog on 07/02/2014 ⁹⁵)

The story – in line with *A.L.M.A. Blog*'s new citizen's stories (as we saw in *Viola / Viorica* story, for instance) – carves deep into the emotional dimension of immigrant life. The issue of dealing with 'homesickness' is at the centre of the story and represents a 'universal' challenge faced by immigrants despite their origin and country of settlement. Interestingly, 'homesickness' is hardly mentioned in success stories of 'new citizens' in Italy such as those examined in previous sections. The intent of the story is again to draw a similarity between native Italians as emigrants in the world and residents/citizens of immigrant background as immigrants in Italy. Such 'similarity' is reinforced by figures pointing at factual evidence ('almost 7% of the Italian population live abroad...') showing the large number of Italians – and their descendants - living outside Italy. Therefore, the story offers a cosmopolitan perspective on the migration phenomenon drawing attention to the many Italians-as-immigrants in the world, a narrative that often remains marginal in dominant narratives of 'migration'.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Retrieved from at <https://collettivoalma.wordpress.com/2014/02/07/nuovi-cittadini-6-la-storia-di-i/>

⁹⁶ The Italian diaspora as a large-scale migration of Italians away from their country between the 19th and 20th century has been often referred to as Italy's own social amnesia (King and Mai, 2013:121).

Migrador Museum has published a few fictional stories of new citizens. The story titled *Saverio Xkey* is set in a science fiction world in which immigration is ‘displaced’ both in time and space and becomes an inter-planetary phenomenon. *Saverio Xkey* is a ‘fictional *migrador*’, a 28-year-old born on the planet Earth by ‘alien’ parents who left their planet *Bastrax* and migrated to the Earth in search of work opportunities. As an Earth-born by extra-terrestrial parents, Saverio faces non-recognition by the terrestrial population.

We shall name him *Mondo*⁹⁷

Subsequently they decided to live on planet Earth, because in Bastrax there are **not many jobs**. The country is tiny; I’d dare say microscopic and almost imperceptible. There lives about twenty thousand souls. It is not easy to live, it is always cold, ranging from minus forty degrees in the winter, to minus ten degrees in the summer. Then – not a small problem – there is very little work, and this little, is already taken. This is why **my parents did not hesitate too much to move to Earth, precisely in EuropAfrica**. Then I arrived. **I was born on the planet Earth, and therefore I consider myself a terrestrial in all respects**. However, on occasion, terrestrials waste no time to **point out that I am not 100% terrestrial for the reason that both my father and my mother are aliens**. This makes me a Q.S., namely: **a Quasi-Terrestrial**”

(Published on *Migrador Museum*, 15/04/2014⁹⁸)

This allegorical narrative clearly draws a figurative association between the contested ‘terrestrial identity’ in the story and the issues of non-recognition faced by children with immigrant parents in Italy. The text producer operates a displacement of the story by placing the narrative in a science fiction world. Displaced in a fictional/fantastic setting, the stories of residents/citizens of immigrant background are projected into a *universal* dimension in which geographical, cultural, ‘ethnic’ connotations are neutralised in virtue of the extra-terrestrial figurative and allegorical discourse. Immigration is thus re-interpreted and represented as a phenomenon that goes beyond the reference to specific countries and nationalities assuming a universal meaning and importance.

⁹⁷ *Mondo* is Italian for ‘world’. Yet, in this context is used to mean the planet ‘earth’.

⁹⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.migradormuseum.it/2014/05/15/per-ora-noi-lo-chiameremo-mondo/>

Stories aiming at broadening the representational spectrum of the ‘immigrant subject’ such as stories of Italians (of single national heritage) as immigrants themselves draw attention to migration as a two-way phenomenon by reversing the conventional perspectives of migration as an inward movement. These stories invite a global and cosmopolitan perspective on immigration that includes Italian citizens leaving their homeland in search of better opportunities in other countries (and not necessarily Western). I therefore contend that a self-reflexive discourse of Otherness in *Us and Self in the Other* (Berrocal, 2011) underpins these stories according to a discursive strategy of *sameness* of intents, expectations, values, and emotions shared amongst economic migrants in the contemporary globalised world. This also suggests intercultural and cosmopolitan solidarity among human beings sharing similar values and in search of similar prospects.

7.5 Conclusions

By critically examining a sample of published/posted articles, the chapter explored some of the discourses and narratives underpinning stories focussing on the life, experiences and personal reflections of residents or citizens of immigrant background in Italy. The analysis served to explore the possibility of constructing and proposing alternative representations of immigration and cultural diversity in Italy enabled by opportunities for self-representation and personal narrative offered by intercultural media platforms. The analysis has revealed the following key points.

Some stories emphasise the ‘success’ of professional endeavours of residents/citizens of immigrant background who are portrayed as dedicated, independent, hard-working, optimistic, vision-driven and community-oriented individuals. I have contended that the mobilisation of a set of representations celebrating the professional endeavours and self-enterprising qualities of the new citizens signifies emancipation from ‘othering’ discourses such as viewing ‘the immigrants’ as low-skilled workforce and marginalised subjects. Furthermore, success stories of new citizens – or new Italians – are expressions of a strategic discursive move seeking to persuade the reader of the recognition of ‘immigrants’ as ‘legitimate citizens’ of the national society. Borrowing from Stuart Hall, this can be viewed as an ‘integrationist tactic’ entailing that the ‘marginalised subject’ is granted entry to the national representational space but only

at the cost of adapting to dominant neoliberal ideals of ‘good citizenship’ assimilating established norms of style, looks and behaviours (Hall, 1997b: 270). Therefore, I have argued that the representation of the ‘new citizen’ as a self-enterprising subject (du Gay, 1996) draws firstly on hegemonic pro-immigration discourses in Italy advocating the value of immigration as a resource for the national economy. Secondly, it draws on neoliberal ideologies regarding entrepreneurship as a desirable career choice, highlighting qualities of self-determination and self-reliance of the new citizen. This contrasts with representations in which the immigrant is a vulnerable, low-skilled subject dependent on acts of solidarity.

While maintaining a focus on individual professional endeavours, some stories discursively emphasise an unresolved tension between *demands for inclusion* such as recognition as ‘citizen-subject’ and *everyday experiences of exclusion* from the fundamental structures of society. The immigrant background (as well as symbolising ‘resource’ in the success story) still embodies ‘impediment’, denied access to inclusion. Race, ethnicity, and the non-EU status still constitute concrete impediments to full participation in society and full recognition as ‘Italian citizens’. The experience of non-recognition is metaphorically lexicalised in the stories as ‘everyday struggle’ (*lotta*) ‘battle’ (*battaglia*) that the ‘new citizen’ face with ‘resilience’, ‘determination’, and hope for the prospect of a better and fairer future.

Stories exploring the sphere of ‘identity’ of the new citizen point to a fracture between ‘*the feeling of national belonging*’ (‘feeling Italian’) and ‘*being Italian*’. This *feeling* versus *being* incongruity or ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994) signifies, I have argued, ‘affective identification’ as Italian citizens which is dis-anchored by the legal citizenship status (‘*I feel* deeply Italian, but [by law] *I am not*’). Stories exploring this unsettling dualism (and the precariousness of identity) affecting the second-generation immigrants embed a critique of the current citizenship law based on *ius sanguinis* (right of blood) rather than on a more inclusive *jus soli* (birth right). Italian-ness is professed as a ‘sentiment of belonging’ but origins are important too: the ‘moment of rediscovery or search for roots’ (Hall, 1997) is acknowledged in the stories suggesting a critique of assimilationist stances. Interestingly, however, whilst on the one hand assimilationism is contested, the discourse of the ‘entrepreneurial citizen’ draws on

neoliberal ideologies and legitimate representations of ‘good citizenship’ as a form of ‘strategic assimilationism’.

Finally, a discourse drawing a similarity between ‘immigrants’ in Italy and ‘Italians’ as immigrants abroad is also explored in some of the stories. By featuring stories of Italians migrating to other countries for work prospects, the narratives of these stories seek, though empathy and ‘sameness’ of aspirations, to construct a ‘cosmopolitan’ representation of the migratory experience. The intent is part of the goal in adopting a change of perspective on the narration of ‘immigration’ as professed in some of the mission statements, particularly that of *Prospettive Altre*.

Overall, these stories manifest the effort to move away from ‘othering’ discourses on immigration that have long informed representations of immigrants in Italy. The stories examined are informed by the intent to persuade of the ‘Italian-ness’ and, consequently of the ‘worthiness’ of residents of immigrant background as legitimate citizens of Italian society. With a focus on positive stories emphasising individual successes, personal experiences, and feelings of identity and belonging these narratives favour individual expression and self-exploration side-lining other possible routes towards recognition such as more collective discursive interventions, intercultural action and solidarity, or more subversive and radical narratives as alternatives to a careful tactic for negotiating inclusion and recognition through strategic integrationism (Hall, 1997b).

Chapter 8 The Context of Practice: experiences and reflections

This chapter aims at offering further and conclusive critical insights into Italy’s intercultural digital media from the perspective of those who manage / coordinate the running of the platforms and contribute to their contents. By examining ten semi-structured interviews with practitioners of intercultural media platforms, this chapter seeks to explore the final Research Question of this study:

RQ4: What are the editors’ organisational and production practices and their experiences of running and maintaining an intercultural digital media platform?

Seeking to supplement and expand on the findings of the previous chapters focussed on the content features and discourses articulated in and enabled by the sites, this question explores how the websites operate in practice. Drawing on interview material, I illustrate and discuss the kinds of practices in play and the ideas and discourses associated with those practices. This includes, as already discussed in the methodology chapter (section 4.4.) questions concerning: the context and conditions of production, including organisational and editorial strategies; the socio-political and cultural issues – or ‘cultural politics’ – that the websites engage with; what role interculturalism-in-practice plays and how it is defined; issues and challenges for the economic sustainability of the sites. The critical examination and discussion of these key areas in this chapter allows me to supplement the content-based findings of the previous chapters with accounts of first-hand experiences of those who founded, managed and contributed to the operation and production of the platforms. This also enables me to draw conclusions on the significance, potential, and limitations of the sites with regards to the possibilities for the construction and performance of an intercultural politics enabled by and performed through digital media platforms.

8.1 Editorial practices and values

The interviews with practitioners of intercultural digital media provided insight into the organisational and production practices from the perspective of those coordinating and contributing to the sites. The examination of the practitioners' accounts of production and editorial strategies reveals whether and to what extent intercultural media platforms offer an 'alternative' 'intercultural' model of media practices coherent with the purposes and ideas of inclusion, empowerment and diversity of voices expressed in the mission statements (see section 6.1.).

Responses to the question about the role of the interviewee as chief editor and overall organisation of the platform, suggested similar patterns in the organisation of the site. All the ten websites in the interview sample are managed by an 'editor-in-chief' (*caporedattore*) – or 'coordinator' (*coordinatore*), depending on their self-definition – who is often also one of the founding members of the project. As already mentioned in Chapter 5, the editor-in-chief / coordinator of an intercultural website supervises and manages the operation of the website by undertaking various tasks. These might include: keeping contact with contributors (recruiting; training; team management); organising the publishing schedule; liaising and keeping contact with the organisation of affiliation; writing, editing, posting content on the website; seeking funding sources; general management of the website.⁹⁹

Despite individual characteristics, intercultural platforms tend to have similar organisational structures. In terms of decision-making power, responsibilities are with the editor-in-chief of the website. If the website is affiliated to a partner organisation, the chief editor's decision-making authority is constrained by the organization of affiliation (e.g. a publishing company) which hosts/publishes and/or funds the project (see chapter 5). Whilst a range of roles conflate in the figure of the editor / coordinator as described above, contributors are mainly responsible for content-making. Indeed, in terms of 'content-making participation' (Carpentier, 2011) pieces tend to be single

⁹⁹ In cases of declining interest in contributing to the project by content contributors, the editor-in-chief may step in and become the main (or one of the few regular) content-producer for the website.

authored and the communication exchange is predominantly a bi-univocal relation between content contributor and editor-in-chief / coordinator. Therefore, a degree of organisational hierarchy is maintained in most cases and seems to reflect the top-down organisational structure of the traditional newsroom.

Nevertheless, the degree of ‘editorial control’ over the selection of stories varies among the websites. *A.L.M.A. Blog* is an independent voluntary-contributed collective blog and its coordinator places emphasis, in the interview, on the editorial freedom that characterises the platform. Contributors have their own blog account and seemingly a vast degree of autonomy in the choice of topics to write about. Therefore, the role of coordinator largely involves organisation of the publishing schedule:

A.L.M.A.'s operation is **very simple. Each blogger is free to write whatever and whenever they want and as much as they want.** The only rule we have, as a matter of rationalization of the publishing schedule, is that **one does not publish directly.** After writing a piece, one posts it in the draft folder [of the blog]. Then **two of us manage the publishing schedule** and decide when to post each piece. Usually it is in chronological order of entry in the draft folder. We make exceptions if a piece is more urgent or tied to a specific current event.

From the extract, it emerges that whilst a degree of moderation is present, *A.L.M.A. Blog* favours a ‘horizontal’ or networked organisation characterised by a high degree of individual freedom in terms of content selection. *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s coordinator further reflects in the interview upon the lack of a ‘news agenda’ in the blog platform and the subsequent challenges derived from such freedom. Whilst open-ness to diversity of opinions can be an ‘asset’ to the ethics of the website, from an organisational point of view it can hamper the longevity of an autonomous independent blog which relies on the willingness and motivation of the individual contributors in regularly posting content.

A.L.M.A., as you may have noticed, **does not have a rigidly-defined agenda:** one can post about poetry, news, book reviews, short stories, **basically whatever they like...** Yet, I think that **this total freedom has on occasion left the contributors a bit lost,** unable to decide what to write about, **as if one could not do it without an editor-in-chief** who tells you:

‘why don’t you write me a piece about the drowned [Syrian] boy in Turkey?’

(A.L.M.A. Blog’s coordinator)

However, when the website is affiliated to an organisation, the decision-power of editors in chief and contributors can be influenced by the vision and decisions underpinning such infrastructure. In terms of the agenda of the platform, some editors-in-chief reveal preferred editorial strategies and values underpinning the selection and publication of content on the platforms.

The editor-in-chief of *PiuCulture*, an ‘intercultural online newspaper’, explains the multiple normative values of the platform including the provision of news and information that has informative and ‘practical’ value for the readership. Preference for ‘positive’ accounts of immigration is also expressed, yet without overlooking ‘negative’ aspects, namely problem-focussed stories relating to the narration of immigration and diversity:

[We would talk about] these communities, their life and traditions **in a positive way, yet at the same without a ‘bleeding heart’ attitude**¹⁰⁰... so if there were **any negative things to say, we would also talk about these as well** because we do not [want to] produce opinion, **we want our readers to form an opinion** after reading our stories – we mainly tell stories and we also give **practical information**, when news comes out that can be of interest, for instance info about entry quotas...we summarise the policy in brief news items that can be **a useful tool for those who need** [this information].

(*PiuCulture*’s editor-in-chief)

Yalla Italia’s editor in chief stresses the importance of a plurality and diversity of opinions within the collective blog’s (virtual) newsroom. ‘Differences’ of opinion are lexicalised as an ‘asset’ in the editor’s vision of the inter-cultural politics of the blog:

It is important to understand that **a newsroom with several contributors cannot have a shared view on everything. Differences** [of opinion] in the newsroom **are a vital asset**. The strength of *Yalla Italia* is sharing and expressing **diverse and opposite points of views**.

¹⁰⁰ Italian: *buonista*, ‘bleeding hearted’, ‘do-gooding’ rhetoric

Yet, later in the interview, *Yalla Italia*'s editor-in-chief reveals preference for an editorial line that favours and encourages 'positive stories':

Those stories featuring the word 'racism' in the headline, or 'xenophobia', all these terms that communicate something negative, I think no one is really interested in them. For instance, sometimes I visit [the website] *CorriereMigrazione.it*...it's all about xenophobia, racism, intolerance.. It does not make me want to read it. Instead, **one of my goals** – I know it's going to be difficult but we are heading towards it – is to receive suggestions and input from the contributors **mainly about positive stories**. I do not want to read 'act of racism', we have to report it [to the authorities]. I'm not interested in this, **there are already the newspapers that do that**. On the other hand, **I wouldn't want a good-news-only-website** because then I would be naive ... **It is difficult...**you also have to consider that our contributors are quite young, so it may be **easier for them to use the blog for venting their frustrations**, writing about something that really annoyed them.

(*Yalla Italia*'s editor-in-chief)

The extract shows that a preferred editorial line that favours the publication of 'positive stories' about immigration and diversity might influence the production of the articles posted in the blog. This approach derives from the intent to distance the blog from mainstream journalism allegedly focussing substantially on negative stories such as episodes of racism and xenophobia, as expressed in the above extract by *Yalla Italia*'s editor-in-chief. On the other hand, the interviewee recognises the difficulty and 'naiveté' in pursuing a 'positive stories'-only-website. Indeed, this poses the challenge of striking the balance between freedom of expression of the contributors and the top-down vision of the editors / coordinators. The extract shows the efforts of ensuring diversity of opinion, but also strong ideological orientation towards exploring the 'positive' side of immigration and cultural diversity in order to offer an alternative to mainstream news as it was also expressed in the mission statements of the sites (Chapter 6.1)

In a similar vein, the coordinator of *Italiani.più* stresses the need to go beyond self-victimism and seek 'positive' and 'original' content:

The idea was to publish **positive stories**. There are **already too many people who feel sorry for themselves**. And **the second-generations** know already too well what their problems are. But **perhaps they struggle**

to see how to break out, in an original way, of this Italy which is a little bit **backward**... The idea was to find **original readings** of Italy, of those **Italians who have something ‘more’** than the usual: what is the **added ingredient** in this *Italy-daughter-of-immigration*? What can immigration **add to Italy**?

(*Italiani.piu*’s coordinator)

Rejection of discourses and attitudes of victimhood (‘there are already too many people who feel sorry for themselves’) was an intention already embedded in the stories of ‘new citizens’ analysed in the previous Chapter 7 as a strategy aimed at emphasising the self-enterprising qualities and value of ‘new citizens’ particularly prominent in *Italiani.piu*’s stories. Similarly, here, the website’s coordinator re-emphasises the mission of the platform which was¹⁰¹ to explore the ‘added’ (‘plus’) value of immigration and cultural diversity to the Italian society.

The interview materials have revealed that there exists ‘a mild form of editorial control’ (Domingo et al, 2008) exercised by the editors-in-chief / coordinators of the platforms as many of them disclose adherence to specific values and editorial strategies. Yet, there is some variation in the forms of editorial control and interpretations of what that power entails within production routines. As shown in the interview extracts, while some websites such as *A.L.M.A Blog*, tend to privilege the ethic of the process (i.e. freedom of contributors and an open agenda) over editorial control, others favour an editorial line that privileges positive stories at the expense of personal preferences and choices. The aspired focus on positive stories embraced by some of the practitioners serves to promote inclusion of residents and citizens of immigrant background into the national cultural-political space. This suggests the adherence of the practitioners to a specific cultural politics that advocates inclusion and highlights the ‘positive’ value of immigration and cultural diversity. Consequently, the voice of contributors whose views express criticism towards such cultural politics or would be considered too negative or radical might not find a place in the editorial board of these projects.

¹⁰¹ At the time of the interview the website was no longer active.

8.2 Motivations and cultural politics

As discussed Chapter 3, alternative media are often set up for the pursuit of social change and progressive politics as they express ‘an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, perspectives’ (Downing, 2001: v). Their emergence is linked to demands for the democratic inclusion of ‘voices and perspectives that its practitioners believe have been left behind by mainstream media’ (Atton & Hamilton, 2008: 79). In line with these definitions, the analysis of mission statements highlighted that a perceived crisis of representation – articulated as both ‘mis-representation’ and ‘under-representation’ of residents and citizens of immigrant background in mainstream media – was the main catalyst prompting the establishment of intercultural digital media initiatives from the early 2000s. In order to supplement the findings from the mission statement analysis – as well as from the mapping of the platforms which highlighted a temporal ‘momentum’ of the websites (see 5.1.1) – interviews with the practitioners explored the disclosed motivations underpinning the foundation of intercultural websites. What is repeatedly emphasised by many of the interviewees is the specific role that advocacy for the citizenship law reform (see section 2.3.2) had on the foundation of intercultural platforms. *Prospettive Altre*’s coordinator explains that the ‘citizenship advocacy discourse’ situated in the Italian socio-political context of the past few years (arguably 2011–2014) has been instrumental to the establishment of this type of media initiative:

These projects were **borne out of the context of those years** – when those **debates were stronger**... there were **struggles for citizenship rights** pursued by the ‘G2 movement’.... the **issue of citizenship for the second-generations**, alongside **even more pressing demands** including changing **the status of immigrant workers** – indeed, in Italy we remain ‘foreign workers’ till we die, like the German *Gastarbeiter*¹⁰² – **the struggles for the regularisation of undocumented immigrants**... Issues that **have disappeared** [from the national public discourse] because **immigration figures in Italy are no longer rising**, people are actually leaving the country, and **there are other issues now: employment, economic security, the issue of asylum rights**... these tragic images of **people seeking shelter dying at sea**... **have backgrounded all the other issues**.

¹⁰² *Gastarbeiter* is German for ‘guest worker’. It refers to foreign / immigrant workers, particularly those who had moved to West Germany throughout the 1960s and 1970s, seeking employment prospects as part of a formal ‘guest worker programme’ (*Gastarbeiterprogramm*)

However, it is not that we no longer have anything to say, quite the opposite in fact: **the rise of racism**, for example... **there is still so much to talk about.**

(*Prospettive Altre*'s editor-in-chief)

According to the interviewee, the interest for citizenship reform had its particular 'momentum' which also defined the 'longevity' of intercultural websites: as soon as the political-media interest in the citizenship rights for 'immigrants' in Italy started declining, backgrounded by other 'pressing' social issues, subsequently the contributors' engagement with the projects became weaker. Interestingly, the interviewee builds an opposition between issues concerning the civic rights of long-settled immigrants and those issues that have arguably overshadowed those debates such as Italy's economic slowdown and asylum seekers' arrivals and their rights. One could argue that in both areas, the perspective and intervention of long-settled immigrants would be crucial and relevant as the practitioner seems to acknowledge, by observing: 'there is still so much to talk about'.

The advocacy discourse of citizenship law reform is crucial to the cultural politics of intercultural media as already demonstrated with the analysis of content features in the homepages (section 6.2.3.) and in the stories of 'new citizens' (section 7.3.) The promotion of citizenship rights is explicitly advocated by some of the interviewees. For example, *Yalla Italia*'s editor-in-chief, on the one hand argues that their collective blog does not act as 'spokesperson' of any particular 'ideology'. However, on the other hand, they reveal that *Yalla Italia* 'overtly' advocates reform of the nationality law given their 'personal involvement' with the issue – a position which can arguably be considered expression of a certain 'cultural politics':

Look, almost any blog or website acts as a spokesperson for a particular party, ideology or economic interest. On the contrary, **no one can really tell me: you are the spokesmen of that. The only overt mission we pursue is to campaign in favour of *ius soli* because we are clearly personally involved.** Thinking that those of us who were born here still have **to go around with a [temporary] residence permit is outrageous**, particularly for those who experience this situation on a daily basis. When the law was made [in 1992], the second-generations were only 100–200,000 maximum. They are now almost a million, **it is important that the political class takes notice.**

(*Yalla Italia*'s ditor-in-chief)

Italiani.più's coordinator, instead, does not refrain from using the term 'political' to define the mission of the website¹⁰³ geared towards the socio-cultural inclusion of residents of immigrant background into the national representational and social sphere:

There was indeed a whole **'political' project** behind [Italiani.più]... I mean, **'political' as in quotation marks**, saying: 'this is Italy, guys, **this is Italy too; Italy should acknowledge this**'. These [young people of immigrant background] are young **'energies'**. What do we do, do we really want to let them go away? **The originality that has made other countries great, we have it here. This was what *Italiani.più* was about.** (*Italiani.più*'s coordinator).

The interviewee reveals here the 'cultural politics' of the website: 'this was what *Italiani.più* was about' consisting in drawing attention to the 'potential' – framed as 'creativity'/ professional potential – of cultural diversity for the country ('the *originality* that has made other countries great, we have it here').

To conclude, the advocacy of citizenship rights for residents of immigrant background plays an important role in the establishment as well as definition of intercultural websites. Whilst some interviewees explicitly define the website as the expression of a 'political project' (e.g. *Italiani.più*) or 'overt mission' (e.g. *Yalla Italia*), others recognise the importance of the socio-political contexts of movements or campaigns for the rights of immigrant residents in Italy as instrumental to the establishment of the media initiative in question (e.g. *A.L.M.A. Blog*). The importance of a socio-cultural context characterised by public and political debates on the citizenship law reform acknowledged by some of the interviewees and even identified as the driving force motivating the setting up and production of these media, supplement the findings of the mapping in Chapter 5 which found that intercultural websites had their 'momentum' during those years whereby long-settled immigration and citizenship advocacy were at the forefront of the public and political debates.

¹⁰³ No longer active at the time of the interview

8.3 Interculturalism-in-practice

Some of my interview questions were aimed at exploring whether and to what extent the examined digital media platforms create the conditions for ‘interculturalism’ intended as ‘positive encounters between different ethnic and faith groups and the setting up of dialogues and joint activities’ (Rattansi, 2011: 152). Since newsroom diversity is a defining characteristic of these media, the extent to which these projects interpret and perform interculturalism was investigated through interviews. More precisely, the interview questions tended to not directly ask whether and to what extent the projects performed ‘interculturalism’, a term that may be quite generic or vague outside a contextualised academic or policy-oriented discourse. Instead, I used terms including ‘interaction’, ‘encounter’, and ‘exchange’ when asking about the level of *intercultural relations* between practitioners of the projects.

The idea of creating newsrooms with residents of immigrant backgrounds is largely grounded on the intention to redress a situation of social inequality and denied participation in the fundamental structures of the national society, including mainstream media organisations as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.5).

As *Prospettive Altre*’s coordinator explains, the lack of Italian citizenship can sometimes constitute an impediment for those who aspire to work in mainstream news organisations¹⁰⁴. Moreover, particularly for young individuals, limited financial support from family coupled with the precarious legal status subordinated to a residence permit,¹⁰⁵ can result in very few opportunities in terms of journalistic training for immigrant youth:

Most of the young people of foreign origin – especially those who were not born in Italy, who always have **the problem of renewing their** [temporary] **residence permit** – very often **cannot take on unpaid work**, because there is a risk of losing the residence permit. Also they **might not have the financial family support** – hence this does not give the opportunity to have many youth of foreign origin in newsrooms. Since we are also part of a movement that at the beginning of the 2000s **sought to**

¹⁰⁴ Professional journalists in senior roles (i.e. editors-in-chief) are required Italian citizenship according to law, n°47 of 8 February 1948 (*Legge sulla Stampa*). Such law has only recently been reformed (see section 2.1.5.)

¹⁰⁵ Which forbids work in the black market / unpaid work (find regulation).

promote foreign-origin journalists in newsrooms – this was an attempt to create a platform that would have operated a little like a newswire - but without the illusion of selling lots of copies but simply to work with these guys and then give them the tools to search for news stories, write them, with a focus on local news. **To show that there is another level of local news** (*cronaca locale*) **that the mainstream media do not report**, to cover always and only the worst [i.e. negative stories]. This was a bit the goal of *Prospettive*.
(*Perspettive Altre*'s editor-in-chief)

The interviewee explains how the setting up of the journalistic project was instrumental to enhance participation opportunities for young (aspiring) journalists facing restricted access to mainstream media training opportunities. The online media platform would focus on the reporting of 'local stories' as an allegedly area under-reported area in mainstream media.

The creation of diverse newsrooms through the establishment of alternative media platforms is viewed as a strength ('a plus') by many of the interviewed coordinators. *PiuCulture*'s editor-in-chief reflects upon the positives of having a diverse newsroom: firstly, a 'mixed' newsroom facilitates networking with the immigrant communities in Italy. Secondly, it enables the production of more 'real' - as 'truthful' – and in-depth' news stories:

With my three collaborators of respectively Romanian, Somali and Sri Lankan origin, we started realising that a **mixed newsroom** would **enable networking opportunities with the communities of origin** and also more in-depth information and achieve **a more 'real'** – a word that does not seem right though – **journalism** (*informazione*)... Or let's say a type of **in-depth reporting with regards to the issues of the communities in our country**. So we built this *ad hoc* project funded by the Waldensian Church – and our **mixed newsroom is really 'a plus'**.
(*PiuCulture*'s editor in chief)

The interviews also explored how and to what extent a newsroom composed of residents and citizens of immigrant background (and non) offers opportunities for interaction and knowledge sharing among contributors. *PiuCulture* is one of the projects that offers free journalistic training to contributors in the form of workshops. Participating in a journalism training programme means that the participants will

experience the opportunity to learn and work together on the various phases of news production. *PiuCulture*'s editor-in-chief emphasises the existence of a 'strong team spirit' between the contributors of the platform:

I'd say our pride is... if I can say... there is **a strong team spirit**... In total we have worked with around fifty youths in recent years. We currently have a 'senior' newsroom of ten practitioners and the 'junior' one with fourteen people. So probably a positive of this situation is this strong team spirit that has emerged. **This is the plus-factor that gives us continuity.** The workshop-based method and the idea of **making people work together – not in fixed pairs but always in a rota – and sending them out** [for news gathering/production] **together**. If you look at the articles [in the website] about the social events at the end of the training – it is clear also from the photos... that **people got on really well with each other.**
(*PiuCulture*'s editor-in-chief)

However, not all the intercultural media initiatives possess the resources to offer a training programme that would boost friendships and team spirit among participants and prospective practitioners as well as providing them with journalistic training. Those initiatives that largely operate remotely – particularly collective blogs – are not only unable to offer training sessions but might also struggle to organise regular meetings with the team of contributors. As an independent project run voluntarily, *A.L.M.A. Blog* failed to provide opportunities for interaction among its contributors. The coordinator reflects upon this issue and how it ultimately affected the successful running of the project:

Most of the current **contributors do not know each other** and maybe this is why **it has become difficult to exchange ideas**. I ended up **being the only person who knew everyone**. Not because I knew all of them in person, but because I was the one who had been entrusted the task of coordinating the team and also because I have good knowledge of the blog platform. So unlike everyone else, I had to somehow communicate with each of them for training, helping creating their account, log in, post content. **So I got to know everyone while the majority of them do not know each other.** So when I send collective e-mails, sometimes there is this kind of '**awkward silence**' perhaps because they don't know the others who are reading it and then they do not know what to reply. So sometimes when there are important things to discuss, I started sending

individual e-mails, **I write to each blogger individually**, saying ‘this only for you, I’m talking to you, tell me your thoughts on this or that’.

(*A.L.M.A. Blog’s* coordinator)

Interestingly, these reflections on the communication routines between practioners of the collective blog suggest the importance and value of ‘offline’ interaction despite the potential for remote communication in a digital media platform. Indeed, the above extract suggest that the failure to ensure opportunities for face-to-face meetings compromised collective ‘exchanges of ideas’ and opportunities for inter-cultural collaboration and interaction to the point that communication became limited to bi-univocal exchanges between contributor and coordinator.

Yalla Italia is another platform largely managed remotely. However, its editor-in-chief observes that – albeit face-to-face meetings with the editorial team are only occasional – a form of interaction was performed at the level of comments exchange in the comment feature under the posted stories. In the below extract, *Yalla Italia’s* editor recalls that conversations in the comment box have been heated on occasion. However, this has allowed contributors with different views to publish a counter-opinion piece, generating a constructive exchange of opinions and the recognition of different viewpoints:

Researcher: Has the blog facilitated exchange between the contributors?

Yalla Italia’s editor-in-chief: **There is interaction.** In the past we have also had many **heated discussions** in relation to certain published articles. Since the stories have your signature: it is your idea, your own account on your own reading of the facts, you put your signature, you are the one responsible. **Some pieces have not been well-received by other contributors. Particularly those about religion.** Sometimes they pick on me. But I didn’t write it...I didn’t sign it, I only published it! The good thing is, though, [that I can] suggest: **write a counter-article!** If the **debate takes place between them, in a constructive way**, I think it’s a positive thing, because **it implies accepting the point of view of others through constructive criticism**: ‘yes, I do not agree with you but I accept it and I am happy that I too get to have my say and that you listen to me’. **This is already a step forward.** If you see what media are like today... They are all a **mouthpiece of one point of view**, hence they are all mathematically

wrong. **Instead we say, we have different views and we express them publicly as well as privately among us...**

Yalla Italia's editor reflects on the opportunities enabled by the comment features of the blog for 'interaction' which is interpreted as 'opinion-exchange' between the contributors of the blog. Differences of opinion and viewpoint offer the opportunity to practice 'constructive criticism', according to the interviewee, and the possibility for different viewpoints to coexist in contrast to the 'mono-cultural' narratives of mainstream media ('mouthpieces of one point of view'). Interestingly, 'religion' is mentioned as the domain that has attracted most controversy and this suggests a terrain whereby cultural/religious differences play out most prominently, particularly given the subjective style of narration of the blog which also has a particular focus on the Middle-East/ 'Arabic' world including some personal reflections on Islam.

A contributor of *Migrador Museum*, a remotely run project¹⁰⁶, interpreted my question on intercultural relations enabled by the platform as the opportunity to interview people of immigrant background (the '*migradors*') as part of the story-gathering process for publishing on the platform:

...The best thing was that [contributing to *Migrador Museum*] has allowed me to **meet very interesting people that I would have never met otherwise...** Those [interviews I conducted for the site] were **beautiful meetings** [...] The positive side of these experiences is that, as well as professional **relationships, friendships** were also born **because you are with people who share things with you**, have **things in common...** it might sound trivial but... [things like] **having a double-origin** and the whole context¹⁰⁷ that this situation entails...
(*Migrador Museum*'s contributor)

Interestingly, while the previous extract placed emphasis on the value of *difference*, here the interviewee highlights the value of *sameness* of experiences ('things in common') that individuals of immigrant background may share. In this case, the practitioner and the protagonists of their stories (i.e. the interviewees / '*migradors*') both share 'double belonging' and its implications arguably for cultural identity ('the double-origin and the whole context that this situation entails...').

¹⁰⁶ The project is 'based' in Milan, where its founders are based, but is largely run remotely.

¹⁰⁷ Italian: *contorno*, literally 'contour', but figuratively meaning 'context'

To conclude, the analysis of interview materials has illustrated that ‘interculturalism-in-practice’ is interpreted differently by the practitioners of the sites according to the various different opportunities enabled by the individual platforms which may vary according to the specific features and structure of the site, in terms of its organisation, budget, and production practices. Interaction among contributors seems to be stronger in those projects that offer journalistic training and this fosters ‘team spirit’ and offline collaborative work among contributors of diverse cultural background (e.g. *PiuCulture*). Similarly, conducting interviews with individuals of immigrant background can be a source of ‘intercultural self-identification’ for the contributors (e.g. *Migrador Museum*). However, remotely-run blogs relying on volunteer collaboration face bigger challenges as they cannot guarantee regular team meetings (e.g. *A.L.M.A. Blog*). Yet, *Yalla Italia*’s editor-in-chief points to the value of the comment features in the blog as opportunities for opinion exchange across ‘differences’.

8.4 Sustainability

As discussed in Chapter 3, alternative media are not necessarily independent of market forces or exempted from the commercial and economic constraints that characterise the mainstream media sphere (Atton 2002; 2004; Deuze, 2006; Bailey et al, 2007). Indeed, different dependencies and relationship with market forces or state institutions may characterise the political economy of alternative media (Bailey et al., 2007). While intercultural digital media are by and large not-for-profit media outlets, in order to sustain their operations, they rely on various funding strategies as I illustrated in Chapter 5 (section 5.3). This may include grants by local councils, national government or the EU; grants by private foundations; funding from a publisher or media organisation; ‘grassroots’ funding from third-sector associations. A minority of websites in our mapping (14%) does not receive any grant money and rely on the voluntary collaboration of contributors. Interviews with editors of websites explored aspects of the political economy of the platforms. In some cases, the interviewees would further expand on issues of funding and overall sustainability of the projects when asked about the challenges faced by the editor-in-chief/coordinator of the project.

PiuCulture is a platform that utilises a mixed-funding model to support its activities: it relies on the voluntary work of the contributors but also receives occasional funding from the Waldesian Church that is used to pay the for journalistic training of contributors. Private donations and fund-raising activities are also sought. *PiuCulture*'s editor-in-chief discloses, in the interview, that her primary concern is to be able to obtain enough funding for remunerating the contributors for their articles who are otherwise forced to rely on other forms of income in low-skilled jobs. This indicates recognition of the 'professional' standards of the work of the contributors who are provided with journalistic training bearing career potential. The interviewee also stresses the importance of acquiring good skills in fundraising and grant applications in order to secure regular funding.

The young contributors write the content of the [online] newspaper but they have **other jobs for supporting themselves** – some [of these jobs] might be related to journalism, such as working as a web editor or in press offices... but **sometimes they work on less skilled jobs**, work that just allows them to support themselves, which are often not well paid. The **six-month grant from the Waldensian Church was used to pay the tutors** [offering the journalistic training]. In the past, to make sure the articles were paid, donations were collected by fund-raising among the local community, friends, acquaintances, organising flea markets, shows, and parties. For a couple of years we have started drafting **more structured projects for grant applications – this is also a professional skill, alike fundraising** – but in our association we are short of people with this expertise so we have to make do the best we can. The idea [behind our mission] was strong and this is why we have succeeded; **content-making work is voluntary**; if we are able to get funding for the tutorials, this is something. Ours is an anomalous situation and that's why we survive. **My only concern** - which now has been partly mitigated– is always **to have a bit of money to give our young contributors the possibility to do more paid work for the platform** and not having to rely on unskilled work inappropriate to their qualification level. [...] I don't want to say that this [paid work for *PiuCulture*] will become their only source of income, that would be a utopia. But ideally it could become for them a sort of part-time.

Despite receiving occasional grants crucial for the provision of journalism training workshops for the contributors, *PiuCulture* has also managed to function during times

when funding was not available. The editor-in-chief attributes this success to the motivation and enthusiasm of the founding members of the project:

Our formula was successful because of **the crazy passion of mine and two other members with whom I have created this project**, and then this newspaper; and subsequently all the young people who have worked for *PiuCulture* were also contaminated by this **infectious passion** that has allowed to **produce content even in moments where funds were not there**. On the contrary, those initiatives that had to rely on funding to run and volunteering was not an option...when they lacked the resources, the project ended.

(*PiuCulture*'s editor-in-chief)

Those projects that are entirely reliant on voluntarist collaboration, whilst on the one hand its practitioners are free from the preoccupation of constant grant-seeking, on the other hand they face the issue of having limited means for their activities. *A.L.M.A. Blog* is an independent collective blog published on a WordPress platform. It was active for four years and whilst it is currently (February 2017) still online, new content is rarely posted. As its coordinator explains in the interview, no financial resources meant the blog was run remotely with few opportunities for group meetings, given the reluctance of the contributors to self-fund travel for a voluntarist project:

Organising team meetings is challenging for a remotely-run and non-funded project... Some people would not turn up because they genuinely could not afford travel costs and I can understand that. But most of them actually **cannot conceive having to pay out of their own pocket for something they believe in**. As if there had to be someone who funds our dreams... We dream of an independent website without a publisher who tells us what to do and what not to do, nevertheless **some are bothered by the idea of writing for free**. If I suggest 'let's organise a national meeting', then everyone starts asking: 'But who's going to pay for travel, accommodation, and food?' *A.L.M.A.* was born out of **a desire for autonomy - and if this autonomy disappears, then the project has failed...** and best to forget about it. *A.L.M.A.* was **created as a 'collective'** and if the idea of a collective disappears, **as if became the space of one individual person who tells everyone what to do**, then the blog has **completely changed its nature**. And I already have my personal blog for that, if I feel the need.

(*A.L.M.A. Blog*'s coordinator)

The extract highlights the tension between the willingness of *A.L.M.A.*'s coordinator to maintain the project independent from a publishing superstructure that would inevitably hinder its autonomous 'nature' and the practical difficulties that such independence entails. Lack of financial contribution for content-makers means that expectations on numbers of published articles cannot be too high and the overall running of the project may be challenging when facing low motivations of the contributors to work voluntarily. As discussed in the previous section, low motivation might be linked to the difficulties in creating opportunities for face-to-face team meetings that would have foster collaboration, interaction, and motivation.

Those projects that rely on occasional grants face other types of challenges. Precariousness of funding resources can also have an impact on the long-term operation and sustainability of the project. *Prospettive Altre* was an initiative created thanks to an EU grant as part of a EU-funded project, *Media4us*¹⁰⁸ aimed at creating an online magazine to involve youth of immigrant background in journalism. In the extract below, *Prospettive Altre*'s coordinator laments the short-term nature of EU grants. Once the grant was used up, the team faced the challenge of securing other forms of financial support to continue the activities.

... **EU-funded projects are usually a big rip-off.** Projects have one or two-year duration but after that the budget is used up. So far, **very few projects have produced long-term outcomes.** On our part, after we used up the funding for four other projects that we managed to secure [after the exhaustion of the EU grant], the website was no longer active since **our project can't have any kind of sustainability without the support of public authorities...** and public authorities over the past years, do not consider it a priority to have better coverage of immigration.
(*Prospettive Altre*'s editor-in-chief)

Those intercultural digital media initiatives that are affiliated to publishers or media groups seemingly have a more stable financial structure and one might think that their practitioners are seemingly free of preoccupations of constantly seeking funding

¹⁰⁸ *Media4us* was a European project financed by the European Integration Fund. It sought to enhanced media participation of residents of immigrant background in European countries by developing a cross-European multi-media strategy consisting of eight national digital media platforms engaging immigrants in the production process. The project was launched on September 2011 and will be completed by May 2013.

grants. However, interviews with coordinators revealed that projects funded by publishers or media groups face different challenges relating to the subordinate relationship with a media organisation, both at the financial and editorial level. *Italiani.piu* was an initiative funded by the publishing group *Stranieri in Italia*¹⁰⁹, a publisher specialising in ethnic-minorities publications (both print and online). The financial crisis suffered by the publisher affected the continuity of *Italiani.piu*, which was closed down to contain costs, as the former coordinator explains:

Meanwhile, *Stranieri in Italia* [*Italiani.piu*'s publisher] was going through a period of crisis... **in a time of economic crisis**, advertising declines ...*Italiani.piu* could not stand on its own feet with its own money, it wasn't securing enough advertising...It was **also a project of some kind... 'political'**... as **in the best sense of the term**... Right? There is this need and we want to talk about that. **The publisher had its own structure, relied on advertising** and once this diminished due to the **financial crisis**, obviously, the publisher, having to close something down, began to cut some branches and so *Italiani.piu* **had to be terminated**. *Italiani.piu* ended not because the need to talk about certain issues was no longer there but because of the **difficulties in investing in the project**... In short, having to make choices, they decided to 'cut' **the most 'political' branch**...which didn't have a high readership either.
(*Italiani piu*'s coordinator)

Interestingly, the coordinator infers that *Italiani.piu* was the platform most at risk of being terminated given the 'political' nature of the project and perhaps the failure to attract advertising given the low readership. This suggests that despite the reliance on the parent company (the publisher *Stranieri in Italia*), *Italiani.piu* did not escape financial precariousness in its existence, although perhaps whilst it did exist it was better resourced. Yet, one could argue, the project was already compromised in its freedom and degree of distinction from the mainstream too, that is the ostensible relative stability may have come at a price in other ways.

¹⁰⁹ *Stranieri in Italia* is a publisher and media group based in Rome. Its output includes 15 print publications in Italy targeting 'ethnic minority communities' and the website www.stranieriinitalia.it focussing on immigration news and practical information about residency, visa applications, employment, immigration law, etc. The website www.Italianipiu.it was an initiative of *Stranieri in Italia* launched with the financial support of other organisation and institutions including government funds.

Existing under a ‘parent’ organisation can have some advantages that however may come at the cost of financial dependency and limited decision-making power. The tension between values of independence and financial security are addressed by some of the coordinators interviewed. The coordinator and founder of *Multicoolty*, a voluntary-run platform publishing stories of people ‘living in a different country than that of origin’, reflects on the future of the project. The dilemma expressed by the coordinator in the interview is whether to maintain the project as independent and volunteer-run or to seek funding to offer the practitioners a financial contribution and to expand the range of activities of the platform. Yet, this may compromise the independence and freedom of expression of the website:

We are **evaluating various options**. We received a couple of offers in these three years and a half. But what could happen is that **‘politics’ might get in** [to the project] whilst **we would rather to keep it out**. For instance, we were asked if some of our pieces could be re-published on the website of some organisation. However, I noticed that **they would make some changes or omit certain things**. If someone says that in Italy there’s racism which they have personally experienced it, **sometimes certain things are preferred unspoken. The negative aspect – which exists – is preferred hidden**. [...] Our main challenge is **seeking funds** whilst at the same time **trying to keep politics out of the way**... seeking enough funds so that we could **try to support ourselves with this project**. A volunteer-run project is wonderful but many contributors are finishing their degrees and masters and they would like to continue working for the project but at the moment I can’t give them very much ... We are trying to find a balance...

(*Multicoolty*’s editor-in-chief)

The extract provides a critical evaluation of a certain cultural politics concerned with the promotion of positive representations of immigration in Italy that we earlier discussed. Whilst other interviewees valued the ‘political’ nature of the projects positively as it signifies advocacy of values such as inclusion and recognition of equal rights (e.g. citizenship rights), in the above interview extracts, the intrusion of ‘politics’ into the media project in the form of a funding body such as a publisher or other is perceived as a hindrance to an independent agenda. Similarly to the view of *A.L.M.A. Blog*’s coordinator, *Multicoolty*’s coordinator’s insights show that voluntary-run projects face the dilemma of whether to favour independence through voluntarily-run

activities or financial support from organisations such as media groups or publishers at the expense of autonomy. In the latter case, however, as we saw with *Italiani.più*, affiliation to a larger institution or organisation such as a publisher is not alone a guarantee of longevity or financial stability. A relation of dependency or ownership can result in ‘suffering’ the consequences of choices in the hands of those retaining decision-making power, including the termination of the project whenever it is no longer sustainable or has lost interest / priority within the overall agenda of the publisher.

8.5 Conclusion

Interviews with practitioners, largely editors-in-chief / coordinators have demonstrated that a complex set of practices, strategies, and factors inform and influence the operation, editorial strategies and sustainability of intercultural digital platforms. Within the landscape of alternative media engaging ‘immigrant communities’ such as ‘ethnic minority media’ or ‘diasporic media’, the precarious sustainability, often resulting in a short lifespan, of these media – as of alternative media at large – has been acknowledged in many studies (Georgeou, 2003; Bailey, et al. 2007; Maneri & Meli, 2007). As Cottle argues ‘these organizations steer a difficult course between universalist appeals, market imperatives and systems of patronage on the one side, and particularistic aims, community based expectations and felt obligations on the other’ (2000: 3). In the particular case of intercultural media, the accounts of practitioners have showed some of the complexities, limitations and challenges for the construction of an intercultural politics through the setting up of alternative media spaces. The analysis has shown that a set of ethical values are embraced and expressed by the interviewees in relation to the motivations, ideas and cultural politics of the sites, articulated with different emphases and interpretations according to the specific characteristics of individual platforms and the personal vision of the interviewee. Among the aspirations and ethical values, the editors have emphasised the importance of positive representations, freedom of expression, independence, opportunities for journalism training, and intercultural interaction. Nevertheless, the realisation of these ideals is often restricted by political economy factors. Firstly, financial precariousness can limit the range of activities of the platforms and hinder the motivation of the practitioners in contributing to the project

in the long-term. Further, seeking financial stability under a partner organisation can compromise the independence of the medium, yet the stability is not guaranteed. Secondly, the sites have mainly been popularized by the citizenship reform debates, but then overtaken by other issues (e.g. financial crisis, refugee crisis) and therefore the focus of funding has moved with it. To conclude, this suggests that while there is still a story to be told, the infrastructure of alternative media has struggled to consistently secure the means through which to perform an inter-cultural politics.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

This final chapter offers a reflection on the findings presented in this thesis while also outlining and discussing the main contributions to knowledge, wider research implications, and possible future directions of this work.

The overarching aim of this thesis was to critically examine Italy's intercultural digital media as an alternative media form produced by teams of contributors of diverse immigrant backgrounds emerged in Italy in the years after 2000. While media researchers have, over the last few decades, manifested a growing interest for minority or alternative media produced by and/or for specific 'ethnic', immigrant or diasporic communities in Europe and North America (Matsaganis et al., 2011; Georgiou, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Karim, eds, 2003; Alonso & Oiarzabal, eds, 2010), the case of media initiatives engaging culturally diverse teams of contributors has comparatively received very limited attention. In this sense, this study represents an original contribution to a body of literature that has largely concentrated on the particularistic interests and media practices of single 'communities' overlooking the existence or even the possibility of media outlets seeking to engage and/or address members across different immigrant communities as well as the 'autochthonous' population.

As an under-researched domain, Italy's intercultural digital media offered an original case study through which to critically examine the possibilities for the construction of alter-hegemonic discourses on immigration and cultural diversity produced by those who often are the 'objects' of other people's stories. The examination of these media platforms, which are enabled by digital infrastructures, provided an insight into the potential as well as limitations for the experimentation with 'alternative' models of information, communication, and organisation seeking to offer a more progressive, inclusive, and pluralistic discourse and agenda on immigration and cultural diversity in a contemporary European society.

As media initiatives emerged in Italy, a country still in the process of granting equal civic rights to its long-term resident population of immigrant background (see Chapter 2), intercultural digital media represented fundamental sites for investigating the possibility for the construction and promotion of a cultural and identity politics where

questions of citizenship, national belonging, and inter-cultural collaboration are performed as key areas of discursive intervention and civic advocacy.

9.1 Summary of key findings

This thesis has considered and investigated multiple features and dimensions of intercultural digital media including its comprehensive media landscape, self-represented intents and motivations, agenda and structural organisation of the platforms, discourses of self-representation and practices of production.

The critical examination of these aspects has been informed by a range of theories, debates, and research from a broad spectrum of literature. In order to explore the complexities of a cultural phenomenon enabled by and expressed through digital media technologies, I have presented, in the early chapters, a theoretical framework that encompasses debates, concepts and theories influenced by postcolonial and cultural studies with more contemporary studies exploring aspects of alternative / digital media culture and practices. In this respect, the thesis contributes to highlight the usefulness of bridging the theoretical framework of cultural studies with more recent studies and research on alternative media and digital citizenship, two scholarly fields that only occasionally have been operationalised together (Mitra, 2001).

Methodologically, the thesis has employed tools from Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Analysis to investigate discourses enabled as well as limited by the opportunities offered by digital media infrastructure. The analysis of digital media platforms presents several challenges for the researcher as CDA-influenced methodological tools for the analysis of web-based ‘texts’ have only started receiving scholarly attention relatively recently (O’ Halloran & Smith, 2011). In this respect, the thesis represents an original contribution to the field of application and operationalisation of CDA to the analysis of cultural discourses articulated through digital media platforms. Designing a methodology that allowed me to analyse textual material across a range of websites served to explore this novel media form in its multiple discursive dimensions.

The first research question of this study was concerned with investigating the principal characteristics of Italy’s intercultural digital media platforms. In order to explore this

question, I constructed a mapping of Italy's intercultural media that examined the key features of this under-researched digital media landscape. The mapping offered a systematic snapshot of websites, instrumental to the understanding of intercultural platforms as a media landscape encompassing a number of platforms sharing a set of characteristics and intents. The comparative analysis of a range of characteristics of the platforms offered findings and information in relation to temporal-geographical context of emergence, political economy, and agenda of 35 websites. Firstly, the mapping highlighted the 'momentum' of intercultural digital media originating in a specific socio-cultural context characterised by increasing attention to the demands for citizenship law reform in Italy. Secondly, the mapping of funding strategies and ownership models illustrated the complexities of the political economy of these platforms maintaining relationships of affiliations to different civil, governmental, media organisations and institutions signalling to the existence of a range of different models for the setting up, operation, and sustainability of non-commercial platforms geared to progressive politics. Thirdly, thematically, intercultural platforms favour the publication of content exploring the multiple aspects, issues and debates relating to immigration and cultural diversity across the local-national-international spectrum, yet favouring the local/national dimension of settlement.

The purpose of the second research question was to analyse the represented intents of intercultural digital media and how these are demonstrated in the organisational structure, aesthetics and agenda of the websites. Firstly, through Critical Discourse Analysis I examined the purpose and motivations articulated in the mission statements of a sample of five websites. The analysis of the discursive constructions articulated in the mission texts revealed that the five sampled websites share similar discourses legitimising and promoting their multiple cultural interventions. The existence of intercultural digital media is legitimised upon strategies of critique of mainstream media in relation to alleged mis- and under-representation of residents of immigrant background in hegemonic discourses and practices. Yet, I have argued that the mission texts tend to avoid confrontation and strong antagonism with mainstream media favouring figurative language over explicit references. As a way to redress exclusion from dominant representational practices and discourses, all the mission texts in the sample express calls for agency empowerment through participation and self-representation opportunities for contributors of immigrant background both as subjects

and producers of the stories. Furthermore, the intent to move away from ‘old’ othering ways of talking about ‘immigration’ to highlight national belonging and inclusion is manifested in the deployment of labels such as ‘new Italians (*Italiani.piu*)’ ‘new citizens’ (*Italiani.piu*; *Yalla Italia*) or ad-hoc created terms such as ‘*migradors*’ (*Migrador Museum*).

In response to the second part of the question, the multimodal analysis of the homepages demonstrated the way the common set of intents identified across the five mission texts, are expressed by the existence of different areas of intervention reflected in the organisation, agenda and aesthetics of the website. The focus of each individual website on one particular area is the expression of the individual history, cultural politics, and editorial strategies of the platforms. Three main areas of interventions were identified responding to three key communicative goals (Van Leeuwen, 2005) of intercultural media platforms. Firstly, a *journalistic* aspiration of the platforms manifests the intent to provide an alternative media representation of current events and issues related to immigration and cultural diversity in society. Secondly, emphasis on narrative practices aimed at *self-representation* is the expression of the need for agentic power and subjectivity to redress experienced marginalisation and ‘collectivisation’ in dominant representations of ‘immigrants’ in Italy. Thirdly, *citizenship advocacy* represents a third discursive area of intervention which seeks to emphasise the recognition of residents of immigrant background as ‘legitimate’ citizens through symbolic empowerment that emphasises national identity and belonging as well as through the provision of practical advice concerning residency and citizenship rights.

The in-depth exploration of the third research question enabled me to investigate what kind of discourses and self-representational narratives were utilised to construct and promote alternative ways of talking about immigration and cultural diversity in Italy. In particular, the discursive construction of ‘new citizenship’ underpinning the personal stories of residents and citizens of immigrant backgrounds published in various categories of the websites devoted to personal narrative and testimonies, represented crucial sites for investigating the possibility of an alternative, inter-cultural discourse about immigration. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, Chapter 7 examined the stories of ‘new citizens’ published on five selected websites. As positive

and largely successful stories, these narratives restore centrality to the voice and stories of residents and citizens of immigrant background in Italy. I argued that the discursive construction of the ‘new citizen’ as a successful self-enterprising individual embeds the intention to advocate the inclusion of residents and citizens of immigrant background into the national representational space as model citizens ‘worthy’ of recognition and inclusion. A second prominent discourse focused on the perceived identity split between *feeling* and *being* Italian, drawing attention to a situation of socio-political exclusion from access to equal citizenship rights. Some platforms broaden the spectrum of the ‘new citizen’s story’ to include Italians (of single national heritage) as immigrants in the world constructing a cosmopolitan identity of the new citizen that is taken even further in stories displaced in a science fiction narrative world.

The purpose of the fourth and final research question was to investigate the context of practice of intercultural digital media through interviews with practitioners of the sites, largely editors-in-chief or coordinators. The question was concerned with gaining an insight into the experience of running and maintaining an intercultural digital media platform with focus on organisational, editorial and funding strategies. The analysis revealed that intercultural media practitioners face different challenges hindering the achievement of a long-term running of the project due to various organisational and structural difficulties and most crucially to the issue of precarious forms of funding. The interview extracts highlighted a tension existing between the aspirations of an editorially independent project with an independent news agenda and the financial opportunities that the affiliation to an editorial structure (e.g. a publisher) would offer. The pursuit of a positive news agenda was favoured by some of the interviewees, although they would also recognise the value of freedom of expression and publication of the contributors. The realisation of motivations and ethical ideals sought by the practitioners that represented the motivational push that led to the establishment of the platform in the first place are often limited or variously influenced by ‘political economy’ constraints as well by the topicality of the issues of long-settled immigrants within the national news agenda and public-political debates.

9.2 Further reflections and contributions

The critical examination of Italy's intercultural digital media has revealed some of the possibilities as well as limitations for the creation of progressive, more inclusive, and pluralistic media practices and discourses enabled by digital media platforms expanding and adding complexity to the broad field of 'media by and/or for "ethnic" minorities' (Matsaganis et al, 2011). The analysis has highlighted different entwined areas of interventions corresponding to the multiple concerns, interests, and demands for the pursuit of a 'new' (inter-)cultural politics: from more pluralistic and accurate information, to opportunities for self-representation and subjective writing, from citizenship advocacy to the experimentation with 'new' or alternative ways of talking about 'immigration' re-framed and advocated as 'new citizenship'.

Informing the examination of intercultural digital media was the understanding of the socio-political Italian context within which these platforms emerged and operated. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and throughout the thesis, such context has been significantly characterised by ongoing calls for citizenship rights to young residents of immigrant background. I therefore argue that the articulation of demands for the socio-political inclusion by civic as well as political/institutional actors both influence and limit the discursive possibilities for re-thinking cultural 'difference' within a 'new' discursive framework. In constructing an alternative representation of the 'immigrant' subject, I have argued that an 'integrationist' strategy (Hall, 1997b) was embedded in the discursive and narrative constructions of some of the stories of 'new citizens' analysed in Chapter 8. As discussed, these stories tend to focus on the professional endeavours of individuals exhibiting exceptional self-enterprising qualities resonating with established neo-liberal models of identification. These stories, I have argued, manifest the intent to persuade the wider public of the inclusion of residents of immigrant background into the nation as 'legitimate' citizens 'worthy' of the legal recognition.

More generally, the analysis has showed that across the multiple content features and discourses examined, the various platforms attribute importance to the dimension of national inclusion into the country of settlement by articulating discourses – with various degrees of emphasis in individual platforms and through the employment of

various semiotic resources – that highlight national identity, ‘Italian-ness’, feelings of national belonging, and formal citizenship. Borrowing from Stuart Hall’s reflections upon collective tactics of ‘strategic essentialism’, embracing a ‘new Italian’ / ‘new citizen’ identity serves, I argue, to temporarily and strategically homogenise the heterogeneity of cultural, ‘ethnic’ and political backgrounds and experiences in order to pursue the group’s social and political agenda (Hall, 1997b; 1987; Spivak, 1988) which in this case is represented by calls for citizenship law reform.

On the whole, this study has showed that it is the national context of settlement whereby calls for recognition and inclusion as ‘national citizens’ are articulated to be prominent at the level of cultural politics expressed and promoted by the sites. I have indeed argued that such strategic representation of diversity tends to highlight ‘sameness’ of aspirations, values, feelings, and lifestyles of residents of immigrant background with the ‘dominant’ regime of representation. Therefore, the ‘Italian-ness’ of the ‘new citizens’ is affirmed and even, on some occasion, celebrated, whilst rarely questioned, deconstructed, and almost never contested. This suggests an inter-cultural politics of moderation and negotiation whereby ‘difference’ is carefully integrated within the dominant representational and symbolic paradigm of national identity. This implies that certain representations, stories and voices may be underplayed or excluded. For instance, the voices of those discussing potentially contentious issues such as situations of cultural conflict or expressing criticism of a citizenship-centric perspective on cultural identity may not find representation in these sites.

In support of this argument, the analysis has demonstrated that the ‘immigrant background’ is framed, within the narrative of success stories, as a repository of skills and competencies offering ‘additional’ career potential to residents or citizens of immigrant background. While on the one hand issues of social injustice such as racism, discrimination and inequality are sometimes represented and discussed, often through a subjective perspective, on the other hand, rarely are potentially divisive issues discussed in devoted sections. The mapping (Chapter 5), for instance, has showed very few projects have categories specifically devoted to religion as a potential area of contention. Furthermore, an interviewee (see section 8.3.) has revealed that the discussion of religious matters is what sparked the most heated debates among contributors.

Although other discourses are present, the analysis showed, that ‘citizenship’ is a prominent area of intervention explored by intercultural websites which significantly informs the cultural politics expressed and promoted by all the five sites examined. This adds complexity to – and to some extent challenges – the conceptual boundaries between ‘formal national citizenship’ and ‘digital citizenship’ used by some scholars – as discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.1.) – who have suggested that practices of ‘digital citizenship’ are somewhat unrelated to legal membership to a nation state (Atton, 2008). Indeed, this study has shown that advocacy for ‘national citizenship’ is a prominent discursive construction informing the discourses, editorial strategies, as well as motivating the existence of this alternative digital media form. In other words, being a ‘digital citizen’ can entail performing civic calls through participation in digital media platforms for the inclusion of ‘non-citizen residents’ into the formal national space and even strategically borrowing from the repertoires informing dominant representations of the aspired national identity to pursue recognition of equality of civic rights.

I recognise that the focus on citizenship in this thesis might have – to some extent – side-lined the discussion of ‘interculturalism’ and precisely how this concept played out in the discourses and practices enabled by these media platforms. In fact, it was an interest in exploring media initiatives produced by ‘culturally diverse’ – or intercultural – teams of contributors that drove the motivation to investigate the case of Italy’s ‘intercultural’ digital media. Nevertheless, I argue that the distinctive feature of this type of media, namely offering content produced by culturally diverse newsrooms was instrumental to a cultural politics in which the dimension of ‘citizenship’ was more prominent than that of inter-cultural ‘exchange’ or interaction between and across residents with different cultural backgrounds or between ‘old citizens’ and ‘new citizens’.¹¹⁰ In this regard, the analysis has suggested that a discourse promoting the civic and legal inclusion of immigrants into the national representational and ‘political’ space was more prominent at the discursive level than a discourse concerned with inter-cultural relations between members of diverse national, cultural, or religious backgrounds resident in Italy. Thus, I argue that

¹¹⁰ Namely, between Italians of single national / cultural heritage (‘old citizens’) and residents or Italians of immigrant background (‘new citizens’).

interculturalism was channelled into a ‘political’/civic project concerned with the advocacy of citizenship reform as strongly supported by residents (and citizens) of immigrant background across their differences. In this sense, I contend, the full potential of interculturalism, intended as ‘positive encouragement of *encounters between different ethnic and faith groups* and the setting up of *dialogues* and joint activities (Rattansi, 2012: 152)’ was only partially fulfilled. The analysis of the platforms, particularly of those five forming the case study of Chapters 6 and 7 shows that the agenda and discourses favour a focus on settlement, on individual endeavours and self-represented feelings of belonging, as well as broader socio-political issues related to the multiple aspects of (im)migration across the local-national-international spectrum. Whereas questions on inter-faith dialogue or encounters across cultures, when explored, are often part of the personal reflections of single contributors featuring particularly in those projects – such as collective blogs – encouraging a subjective viewpoint and personal narratives.

Furthermore, the practice of interculturalism through the setting of joint activities (Rattansi, 2012) in order to foster inter-cultural exchange, participation and collaboration between and across ‘differences’ has turned out to be a challenging endeavour for some of the platforms investigated. Interculturalism-in-practice, as interviews with editors-in-chief / coordinators of the platforms demonstrated, often faces the limitations that many not-for-profit alternative media projects encounter in relation to their precarious political economy (Kenix, 2015; Beiley et al., 2007). Limited and/or precarious financial resources have often reduced opportunities for face-to-face meetings and interactions as well as editorial collaborations between contributors. In other words, despite the platforms all being collective sites, a number do not demonstrate much formalised collaboration between contributors due to practical issues. Furthermore, ties of affiliation to and/or of funding from media, governmental, civic organisations or institutions can hinder editorial independence and subsequently influence the organisational and production practices.

This work has intended to be an original contribution to the broad field of alternative media seeking to promote more progressive, pluralist and democratic spaces for representing and communicating cultural diversity in society. It has been a critical investigation into the possibilities around the construction and performance of

alternative discourses about ‘immigration’ in contemporary, increasingly culturally diverse societies where cultural ‘difference’ is still often a contentious and highly politicised ‘issue’ in the media, political, and public arenas. Although specific to the Italian context, the exploration of alternative media can advance our understanding of the ways people construct, communicate and perform counter (or alter-) hegemonic strategies geared towards the advancement of progressive politics, rights equality and social change. The study has showed how the practice and performance of alternative mediated discourses requires a specific set of tactics and performative strategies. This may include a careful cultural politics of negotiation with established hegemonic representations and discourses, an attentive consideration and assessment of potential influences, benefits, or constraints from structures of affiliations, as well as the awareness of the transient nature of public, media and political debates situated in specific socio-cultural contexts.

9.3 Directions for future research

The analytical focus of this thesis – as stressed throughout the chapters – was primarily the level of ‘content’ of the media platforms at the centre of this work. As a media landscape that had not been previously examined as a coherent media genre, it was crucial to focus on the textual and structural features of these platforms in order to understand and critically analyse its principal intents, agenda and values. The discursive level was therefore the principal interest of this thesis as instrumental to the understanding of the cultural politics practiced and promoted by these media initiatives through the construction and proposition of an alternative mediated discourse on immigration. As explained in Chapter 4, this thesis embraced and was informed by the view that (media) ‘texts’ represent crucial sites for the construction and expression of discourses influencing and influenced by wider socio-cultural practices (Fairclough, 1995a; 1995b).

Therefore, the study is limited to its own scope. And in this, it represents an important foundation from which to explore further domains of the same media form examined in this study or of similar initiatives in other contexts. This might include further investigation of the audience and the reception of this media form. Although reflections concerning the ‘model’ audience of these media have been included

throughout the analytical chapters (see section 5.2), the media usage and reception does not constitute the core focus of this thesis. Therefore, this research opens the possibility for a follow-up study addressing and exploring the ‘empirical’ audience of this media, their engagement with the platform and with its contributors and their views. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that, in the context of digital media, and particularly with small-scale alternative media, the role of the user, producer, and consumer is extremely convergent and fluid (Barker 2003). Interviews could also be extended to content-making practitioners – beyond editors-in-chief/coordinators – and this is a direction that I shall certainly consider for follow-up research and that has been, to some extent, already piloted.

It has been stressed throughout the thesis the importance of the context of emergence of this media form. The mapping (Chapter 5) has highlighted that this media had its momentum in Italy in the first few years of the 2010s. However, this does not mean that collective endeavours expressed through – as well as outside – media platforms have disappeared from the Italian public arena. On the contrary, conversations and forms of civic activism campaigning for citizenship law reform – to date, February 2017, yet to be enforced – seem to favour other forms of communication and inter-cultural aggregation. In particular, as already observed in Chapter 3, the grassroots movement *Italiani Senza Cittadinanza* (‘Italians without citizenship’) has been organising initiatives and events through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Exploring the ongoing evolution of collective tactics of mobilisation and visibility through media/digital technologies – and their impact on offline practices – is a crucial contemporary area of investigation for understanding the demands of people in society articulating calls for recognition, inclusion and rights equality.

Furthermore, this thesis represents the basis of an informed understanding of the interests, demands, and discursive practices articulated by residents of immigrant background at the European level and in other European countries. Whilst in some aspects, Italy represents a case where the nationality law is particularly strict for non-EU nationals – even when born and/or bred in the country – who cannot claim any bond (through ancestry or marriage) with an Italian citizen (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), increasing mobility and diversity in contemporary societies demonstrate the importance of understanding and examining discourses articulated by residents or

citizens of diverse cultural, national, religious backgrounds in order to develop inclusive and equal practices and policy frameworks. Interestingly, after a preliminary review, I have identified that a few projects worldwide utilise a similar vocabulary to the examined Italian platforms: *New America media* in the US¹¹¹, *The New Londoners* in the UK¹¹², and the *New Danes* in Denmark¹¹³ are just three examples of instance where a similar semantic choice is made to refer to the resident population of immigrant background beyond individual ‘ethnic’ communities. A further study could, therefore, concentrate on the intents, agenda, cultural politics, operation and significance of these platforms within a European and/or international comparative perspective.

In conclusion, my research has the potential to inform civic and cultural debates on the modes for increasing possibilities for public engagement and participation of people in society, particularly of those experiencing or perceiving forms of institutional marginalisation and under-representation. Further, this work, by highlighting the role of local institutions and associations in funding and sustaining these initiatives could raise awareness in local policy debates on the range of locally-grounded initiatives practicing ‘intercultural citizenship’ or similar forms of collective civic action and collaboration. This study also suggests that mainstream media organisations would also benefit – in terms of their democratic value – from a deeper understanding of small-scale media outlets practicing a more alternative and progressive agenda driven by a set of perceived shortcomings in major news organisations. At the same time, this study has demonstrated some of the complexities of the mainstream-alternative relationship and showed the possibility for collaboration as well as the limitations of such hybridisation. Finally, without dismissing the importance of ‘particularistic interests’ of ‘minority groups’, it is imperative that further studies consider and investigate the existence of a wider range of interests and demands beyond ‘ethnic

¹¹¹ *New America Media* (<http://newamericamedia.org/>) is a network of 3,000 ‘ethnic media’ outlets founded by the non-profit Pacific News Service in 1996. *The New Americans* is also the title of a seven-hour observational documentary that follows the lives of a series of immigrants to the United States over the course of four years.

¹¹² *The New Londoners* is a print newspaper and a website (<http://thenewlondoners.co.uk/>) set up with EU funds and produced by the Migrants Resource Centre.

¹¹³ TV2 Denmark (a publicly owned subscription television station in Denmark) produced an advert highlighting cultural diversity of today’s Denmark and using the expression ‘new Danes’ to refer to residents / citizens of immigrant background.

minority politics' that might also include an emphasis on national belonging and formal citizenship as an inter-cultural civic tactic for pursuing the construction of a more democratic, pluralist, and equal society.

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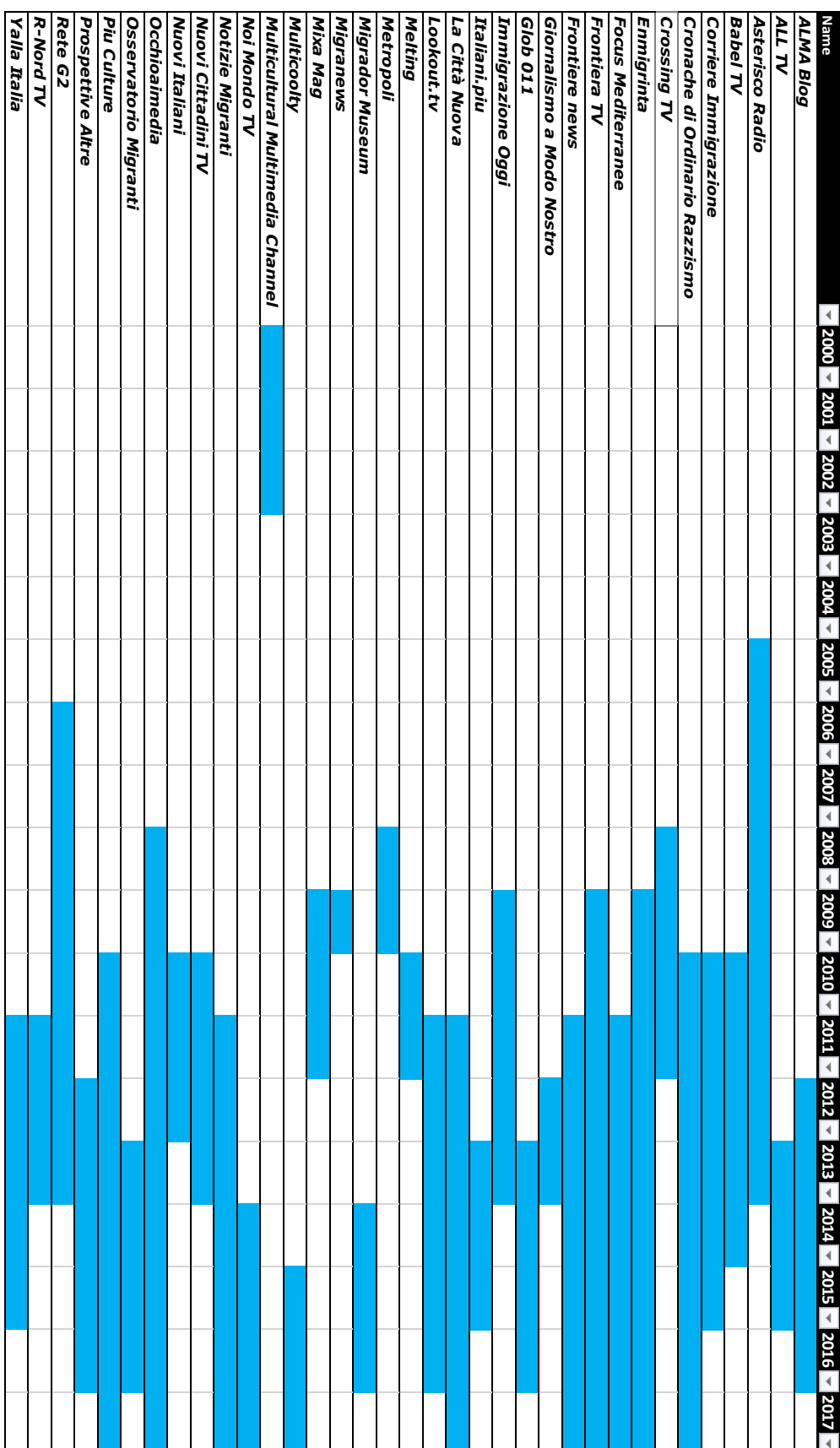
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Appendix 1: Intercultural websites (name, launch date, location, termination)

Name	Launch	Location	Termination
<i>A.L.M.A. Blog</i>	2012	<i>remote</i>	2016
<i>All TV</i>	2013	Milan	2015
<i>Asterisco Radio</i>	2005	Bologna	2013
<i>Babel TV</i>	2010	Rome	2014
<i>Corriere Immigrazione</i>	2010	Modena	2015
<i>Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo</i>	2010	Rome	2017
<i>Crossing TV</i>	2008	Bologna	2011
<i>Enmigrinta</i>	2009	Merano	2017
<i>Focus Mediterranee</i>	2011	Milan	2017
<i>Frontiera TV</i>	2009	Foggia	2017
<i>Frontiere news</i>	2011	Rome	2017
<i>Giornalismo a Modo Nostro</i>	2012	<i>remote</i>	2013
<i>Glob 011</i>	2013	Turin	2016
<i>Immigrazione Oggi</i>	2009	Viterbo	2013
<i>Italiani.piu</i>	2013	Rome	2015
<i>La Città Nuova</i>	2011	Milan	2017
<i>Lookout.tv</i>	2011	Rome; Milan	2016
<i>Melting</i>	2010	Rome	2011
<i>Metropoli</i>	2008	Rome	2009
<i>Migrador Museum</i>	2014	Milan	2016
<i>Migranews</i>	2009	Rome; Turin; Bari	2009
<i>Mixa Mag</i>	2009	Milan	2011
<i>Multicoolty</i>	2015	<i>remote</i>	2017
<i>Multicultural Multimedia Channel</i>	2000	Firenze	2002
<i>Noi Mondo TV</i>	2014	Fano	2017
<i>Notizie Migranti</i>	2011	Caserta	2017
<i>Nuovi Cittadini TV</i>	2010	Milan; Genoa	2013
<i>Nuovi Italiani</i>	2010	Milan	2012
<i>Occhioaimedia</i>	2008	Ferrara	2017
<i>Osservatorio Migranti</i>	2013	Matera; Bari	2016
<i>Piu Culture</i>	2010	Rome	2017
<i>Prospettive Altre</i>	2012	Florence	2016
<i>Rete G2</i>	2006	Rome	2013
<i>R-Nord TV</i>	2011	Modena	2013
<i>Yalla Italia</i>	2011	Milan	2015

Appendix 2: Visualisation of life span of the websites (Gantt chart)



Appendix 3: Ownership / affiliation and funding sources

Name	Ownership / Affiliation	Funding sources
<i>A.L.M.A. Blog</i>	Independent	Voluntarist
<i>All TV</i>	All Media Srl.	EU; Govt. (Ministero dell' Interno); private grants; donations
<i>Asterisco Radio</i>	Independent	Municipality (Bologna) grants; private grants
<i>Babel TV</i>	SKY	Media (SKY); private grants; crowdfunding, ads
<i>Corriere Immigrazione</i>	Ass. Giu le Frontiere (publisher)	Donations
<i>Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo</i>	Ass. Lunaria	Association (Lunaria); donations (5x1000)
<i>Crossing TV</i>	Ass. Crossing; Centro Interculturale Zonarelli	Foundations; Municipality (Bologna) grants; association (Crossing generazioni creative)
<i>Enmigrinta</i>	Independent	Voluntarist
<i>Focus Mediterranee</i>	Independent News	Voluntarist
<i>Frontiera TV</i>	Euromediterranea Pianificazione e Sviluppo	Regional grants (Foggia Province)
<i>Frontiere news</i>	Coop. Frontiere	Private grants
<i>Giornalismo a Modo Nostro</i>	Independent	Voluntarist
<i>Glob 011</i>	Independent	Province and Regional grants; adverts
<i>Immigrazione Oggi</i>	NGO; publisher	NGO; private donations
<i>Italiani.piu</i>	Stranieri in Italia publisher	Media (Stranieri in Italia); EU; Govt, (Labour and Social Policy; Interior)
<i>La Città Nuova</i>	Il Corriere della Sera Milano	Media (Il Corriere della Sera); ads
<i>Lookout.tv</i>	Foundation grants	Private grants (foundations)
<i>Melting</i>	MELTING free press	Media (MELTING publisher); Association
<i>Metropoli</i>	La Repubblica (repubblica.it)	Media (La Repubblica)
<i>Migrador Museum</i>	Independent	Private grants (AVIS, Cesvi, Franco Verga Foundation)
<i>Migranews</i>	Project Equal - Immagine degli Immigrati in Italia	Govt; (Ministero Lavoro e Politiche Sociali); EU; Assoc. (Immagine degli immigrati in Italia)
<i>Mixa Mag</i>	Coop. Cartacanta	Grants from Coop.; private donations; ads
<i>Multicoolty</i>	Multicoolty Germany (independent)	Voluntarist
<i>Multicultural Multimedia Channel</i>	Cospe (NGO)	EU; NGO
<i>Noi Mondo TV</i>	Ass. Mille voci (Fano)	NGOs; Municipality (Fano) grants; EU; Govt. (Interno) Interior Ministry
<i>Notizie Migranti</i>	Jerry Masslo NGO	NGOs, adverts
<i>Nuovi Cittadini TV</i>	Independent	Private donations, private grants
<i>Nuovi Italiani</i>	L'Unità.it (media group)	Media (L'Unità)
<i>Occhioaimedia</i>	Ass. Cittadini del Mondo	Voluntarist
<i>Osservatorio Migranti</i>	NGO network	Private grants
<i>Piu Culture</i>	NGO (Intersos); La Sapienza University (collaboration)	Private grants (Chiesa Valdese); donations
<i>Prospettive Altre</i>	Media4Us (EU); ANSI; COSPE (NGOs)	EU grants; Private grants (foundations)
<i>Rete G2</i>	Rete G2 NGO	Private grants; Local Govt; associations
<i>R-Nord TV</i>	Local Govt.	Municipality (Modena)
<i>Yalla Italia</i>	Vita publisher	Media (Vita publisher); foundations

Appendix 4: Full mission statements: translation and original Italian text

4.1. Italiani.più

Italy has already changed and it continues its rapid transformation through the people who live in it, through their stories, and their personal and professional journeys.

Italiani+ aims to recount the reality that many do not yet see, or at which they only take a superficial glance. An everyday reality made of cultural encounters, challenges, and prejudices.

We will talk about them – the so-called ‘second-generations’, the children of immigrants – and we will also let them speak. Young adults born or raised in Italy who feel solidly Italian, but who are equally proud of their origins. Each of them in their own way.

Italiani+ is a web portal useful to new Italians, but also to anyone who wishes to find out more. A point of reference, information and legal advice, but especially for sharing, where everyone feels like a protagonist.

Children of the new Italy of today and tomorrow. Children of a new message and a new image that simply talks about us: Italians.

L'Italia è già cambiata e continua la sua veloce trasformazione attraverso le persone che la vivono, con le loro storie, i loro percorsi umani e professionali.

Italiani+ vuole raccontare la realtà che molti ancora non vedono, o alla quale dedicano uno sguardo solo superficiale. Una quotidianità fatta di contaminazioni, sfide e pregiudizi.

Raccontiamo e facciamo parlare le cosiddette “seconde generazioni”, i figli degli immigrati. Ragazzi e ragazze nati o cresciuti in Italia che si sentono saldamente italiani, ma ugualmente fieri delle loro origini. Ognuno a modo suo.

Italiani+ è un portale utile ai nuovi italiani, ma anche a tutti quelli che vogliono saperne di più. Un punto di riferimento, d'informazione e di orientamento legale, ma soprattutto di condivisione, in cui tutti si sentano protagonisti.

Figli dell'Italia nuova, di oggi e di domani. Figli di un nuovo messaggio e di una nuova immagine che semplicemente parli di noi. Italiani.

(Retrieved from www.italianipiu.it:80/index.php/chi-siamo)¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ As the website has been closed down, the ‘about us’ page can be accessed through the Internet Archive website: <https://web-beta.archive.org/web/20130629002851/http://www.italianipiu.it:80/index.php/chi-siamo>

4.2. Yalla Italia

Yalla Italia is a meeting platform for those young people who no one has yet found a way to define: second generations, new Italians, 1.5 generation, children of immigrants, blah blah blah... Slow expressions, very slow, which do not capture the dynamism and the speed at which Italian society is changing, the thousands faces that represent its silent fuel, the real country.

Young adults, students and workers, non-religious or religious... We are young people who wish to offer our point of view on a complex reality, without offering reassuring stereotypes, violent provocations for their own sake, absurdities and generalizations that give immediate glory. The only promise we make to you is that we will always try to keep ourselves and you informed by adopting a telescopic gaze to observe Italy and the world. We [also] wish to reassure you that this is not a laboratory of pre-packaged answers, or a 'cyber-trendy platform' from which we pontificate on the Two Chief World Systems.

Not just as Italians, Arabs, or Euro-centrics: as new citizens who simultaneously belong to two worlds and enjoy catching the most interesting, contradictory, ambiguous, problematic, and why not, provocative aspects of both. We will talk about traditions, politics, society, and even cuisine: but without ever losing sight of the wish to self-represent ourselves with fun.

Yalla Italia è una piattaforma di ritrovo per giovani che nessuno ha trovato il modo di definire: seconde generazioni, nuovi italiani, generazioni 1.5, figli di immigrati, bla bla bla... Espressioni lente, lentissime, che non colgono la dinamicità e la rapidità con cui la società italiana sta cambiando, i mille volti che ne rappresentano il carburante silenzioso, il paese reale.

Ragazze e ragazzi, studenti e lavoratori, laici o praticanti... Siamo tutti giovani che offrono il proprio punto di vista su una realtà complessa, senza fornire rassicuranti schemi stereotipati, provocazioni violente e fini a se stesse, assurdità e generalizzazioni che regalano gloria immediata...

L'unica promessa che vi facciamo è quella di provare, sempre, a informare noi stessi e voi con il cannocchiale che usiamo per osservare l'Italia e il mondo. Vi assicuriamo che non è una fabbrica di risposte confezionate, o un osservatorio cyber fighetto da cui si pontifica sui massimi sistemi.

Ma diremo la nostra. Non da italiani, o da arabi, o da eurocentrici: semplicemente come nuovi cittadini che appartengono contemporaneamente a due mondi e che si divertono a coglierne gli aspetti più interessanti, contraddittori, ambigui, problematici e perché no, provocatori. Parlando di costume, di politica, di società, persino di gastronomia: ma senza perdere mai di vista la voglia di autorappresentarci divertendoci.

(Retrieved from <http://www.yallaitalia.it/chi-siamo/>)

4.3. Migrador Museum

‘Narrate, people, your story!’
(A. Savino) ¹¹⁵

Italy has an unknown patrimony (Ita: patrimonio = heritage?). It is made of treasures in the form of stories, experiences, languages, ideas, courage, sacrifice, colours, flavours, and the skills of thousands of nameless and faceless people who won a big challenge: starting a new life in a different place, with a different language and different cultural codes. Some of the stories and experiences exceed our imagination. Others have the capacity to narrate the country as it changes. We believe [it’s changing] for the better. And we rely on the memoirs of the *migradors* to prove it, by giving them a voice, calling them by name, looking at their faces and listening to their stories.

Narrate, uomini, la vostra storia!"
(A. Savinio).

L'Italia ha un patrimonio sconosciuto. E' composto da tesori sotto forma di storie, di esperienze, di linguaggi, di idee, di coraggio, di sacrificio, di colori, di sapori, di competenze di migliaia di persone senza volto e senza nome che hanno vinto una grande sfida: iniziare una nuova vita in un altro ambiente, in un'altra lingua e con codici culturali diversi. Alcune storie ed esperienze superano anche la nostra immaginazione. Altre hanno la capacita di saper raccontare la storia del paese mentre cambia. Noi crediamo per il meglio. E ci affidiamo alle memorie dei migrador per dimostrarlo, dando loro voce, chiamandoli per nome, guardando i loro volti e ascoltando ciò che hanno da raccontare.

(Retrieved from <http://www.migradormuseum.it/mission/>)

¹¹⁵ Italian: ‘Narrate, uomini, la vostra storia’ is the title of an Italian-language novel published in 1942 authored by writer, painter and composer Antonio Savinio (Athens 1892- Rome 1952) was a collection of ‘poetic biographies’ of eminent historic figures (from the composer Giuseppe Verdi to Nostradamus, from the Italian luthier Antonio Stradivari, to the American dancer Isadora Duncan.

4.5. A.L.M.A. Blog

A.L.M.A. – acronym for ‘I Raise up My Hand Now’ [*Alzo La Mano Adesso*] – is a collective blog run by writers, journalists, and bloggers of various origins resident in Italy who seek to intervene in the national debate, raising our hand and saying: ‘we are here too and we want to have our say’.

The idea of the initiative dates back to October 2009 and we owe it to Cleophas Adrien Dioma, a writer of Burkina Faso origin, now based in Parma. In that year, Cleo invited all the ‘immigrant’ authors who were writing for the weekly magazine *Internazionale* in the column titled *Nuovi Italiani* to participate in the cultural festival *Ottobre Africano*, an annual initiative he himself had conceived and organized in the city of Giuseppe Verdi. The idea was to shift from the status of a group of people linked to each other only by the occasional contribution to a magazine column, to a thinking and active collective. To reflect together on the reality around us, to raise our hand and speak out.

In a country where the immigrant population has today reached the 10% mark, immigrants are present in all sectors of social and economic life, except in those places that really matter. There are a handful of immigrants in positions of responsibility such as politics and their voice in the media is almost non-existent. As [individuals] living in a country that constantly points the finger at this or that ‘ethnic’ group or culture as ‘socially dangerous’, we felt, after our first meeting in Parma, that it was our duty to try to intervene and raise awareness among ‘all forces of civil society’ of an increasingly intolerable situation. A first document was written (click here to read the Parma meeting statement), and a first attempt to create a collective blog was made. The attempt failed. That was not yet the right time.

At the end of 2011, the writer Igiaba Scego drew the group’s attention to the growing necessity to have a space for shared expression, especially since in the meantime the column *Nuovi Italiani* had been closed.

This time, as if by magic, the appeal was received with enthusiasm by many, and the editorial team of the new blog - enriched with new ‘recruits’ - was formed in a short time. The concept [of the collective blog] is that of a container of individual blogs where each contributor is free in terms of time, mode, style, and contents, but in which there should be a sort of shared strategy, especially in addressing important themes and in offering a viewpoint on ‘burning’ issues which are imposed on us by current events.

“Alzo La Mano Adesso” (A.L.M.A.) è un collettivo di scrittura composto da scrittori. Giornalisti e blogger di varie origini, residenti in Italia, che cerca di intervenire nel dibattito nazionale, alzando la mano e dicendo: “siamo qua anche noi e vogliamo dire la nostra”.

L’idea dell’iniziativa risale all’ottobre del 2009 e la dobbiamo a Cleophas Adrien Dioma, scrittore originario dal Burkina Faso, stabilito a Parma. Cleo, quell’anno, invitò tutti gli autori “immigrati” che scrivevano sulla pagina “Nuovi Italiani” della rivista settimanale Internazionale, a partecipare al “Ottobre Africano”, una iniziativa da lui ideata e organizzata ogni anno nella città di Giuseppe Verdi. L’idea sua era quella di passare dallo stato di gruppo di persone accomunate solo dall’apparizione saltuaria su una data pagina di una data rivista ad un collettivo pensante e attivo. Per riflettere insieme sulla realtà intorno a noi, per alzare la mano e prendere la parola.

In una Italia dove la popolazione immigrata ha ormai raggiunto il 10%, presenti in tutti i settori della vita sociale ed economica, tranne nei luoghi che contano. Gli immigrati nei posti di responsabilità e in politica si contano sulle dita di una mano e la voce degli stessi immigrati negli organi di informazione è quasi nulla. In un paese in cui si continua ciclicamente ad additare tale o tale gruppo “etnico” o culturale come socialmente pericoloso, Nell’incontro di Parma si considerò che era nostro dovere cercare di intervenire per segnalare a “tutte le forze vive della società civile”, una situazione sempre più insostenibile.

Un documento base fu scritto (clicca qui per leggere la dichiarazione di Parma), e ci fu un primo tentativo di creare un blog collettivo. Il tentativo fallì. I tempi non erano maturi.

Alla fine del 2011, la scrittrice Igiaba Scego richiamò l’attenzione del gruppo sulla sempre più crescente necessità di avere uno spazio di espressione condiviso, soprattutto che nel frattempo la pagina Nuovi Italiani era scomparsa. Questa volta come per magia l’appello fu accolto con entusiasmo da molti e il gruppo redazionale del nuovo blog, arricchito con nuove “reclute”, si è formato in poco tempo.

Il concetto è quello di un contenitore di blog individuali in cui ognuno è libero nei tempi, modalità stile e tematiche da affrontare, ma nel quale dovrebbe esserci una specie di strategia condivisa soprattutto per affrontare questioni importanti e per portare più punti di vista sui temi “caldi” che l’attualità ci impone.

Buon Blog a tutti.

(Retrieved from <https://collettivoalma.wordpress.com/about/>)

4.6. Prospettive Altre

Prospettive Altre. (English: Other Perspectives): Facts, insights and discussions about a plural Italy.

With the voices of journalists of foreign origin in Italy, [we aim] to go beyond the stereotypical coverage of immigration in Italian media and bring to the surface the everyday reality of our cities and the challenges of an intercultural society under construction.

[We will offer] Space to local news without overlooking the connections with the rest of the world as well as [we'll offer] analyses and debates on current affairs exploring the changing reality.

Fatti, approfondimenti e dibattiti sull'Italia Plurale

Con le voci dei giornalisti di origine straniera in Italia, per andare oltre le informazioni stereotipate dei media italiani sull'immigrazione e far emergere la quotidiana realtà delle nostre città e le sfide della società interculturale in costruzione.

Spazio alle news dai territori, senza dimenticare le connessioni con il resto del mondo e analisi e dibattiti di attualità per approfondire la realtà in cambiamento.

(Retrieved from <http://www.prospettivealtre.info/chi-siamo/>)

Appendix 5: Consent form



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The present document is intended to invite participants to take part in the PhD research project titled: *New Media and New Italians. An analysis of Intercultural Media projects* (working title). The study is designed and conducted by PhD student Marina Morani at the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University. The research is supervised by Dr. Kerry Moore and Dr Arne Hintze.

The research aims to examine the phenomenon of intercultural media initiatives in Italy, namely ‘alternative media’ produced online (news websites, collective blogs, web-zines, etc.) seeking to offer media participation opportunities for the ‘new Italians’ and alternative accounts of immigration in Italy. A series of semi-structured interviews with the founders / coordinators / editors-in-chief of the various projects will be conducted. Semi-structured interviews with practitioners are aimed at gathering qualitative data in relation to the motivations behind creating the project, objectives, organization, production practices, editorial choices, challenges, achievements and future.

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I am aware that my participation in the research will consist of a Skype semi-structured interview aimed at gathering information on the project I founded and / or coordinated. I am aware of the fact that the interview will be recorded to facilitate the transcription of data by the researcher.

Voluntary participation

I am aware that participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without the need to give reasons.

As a participant, I have the opportunity to ask questions at any time and discuss any clarifications or questions with the interviewer about the nature of the questions.

Anonymous data

I understand that the information I provided to the researcher may be shared with the supervisory team. Extracts from the interview may be quoted in the final draft of the thesis and may be used in subsequent publications.

The information I provide will be treated anonymously and the data corresponding to my identity will be made anonymous in the final draft of the thesis or subsequent publications.

Confidentiality

I understand that the information I provide is treated confidentially, so that only the researcher Marina Morani and research supervisor Dr Kerry Moore can trace the information to my identity.

The information and the data will be safely stored for up to five years.

I am aware that I can have access to information at any time. I also have the option to request that the information and data provided by me can be deleted / destroyed before the five years prior request, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (UK).

I, _____ (NAME) give my consent to participate as interviewee in the study conducted by Marina Morani for the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University.

Signature (Researcher):



Signature (Research participant): _____

Date:

For further information, do not hesitate to get in touch:

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