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## Citizen to Stay or Citizen to Go? Naturalization, Security, and Mobility of Migrants in Italy

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### ABSTRACT

We analyze the relation between naturalization, mobility, and security through 50 in-depth interviews with migrants of different origins living in two Italian regions. We show how migrants pursue naturalization both to protect themselves against bureaucracy and deportation and to move to a third country. The second migration is motivated by improving one's conditions, forced by the economic crisis, or completes the original migratory project once a strong passport is obtained. We argue that citizenship is not essentially linked to either stability or mobility and that mobility should be understood as neither exceptional nor always chosen.

### KEYWORDS

Mobility; citizenship; security; legal status; Italy; economic crisis

In this article, we explore the links between citizenship and mobility in a way that aims to illuminate both concepts. By analyzing the attitudes toward citizenship and mobility of migrants in Italy, we argue that a mobility theoretical frame can explain the differentiated meaning of citizenship and naturalization as a tactic for permanence or further migration, while a reflection on citizenship can allow for a better understanding of mobility as chosen, involuntary, blocked, or failed.

Two studies form the basis of this article, both of which we conducted between 2010 and 2011 in neighboring regions in Italy—namely, Veneto (Della Puppa) and Emilia-Romagna (Sredanovic). The migrants whom both researchers met viewed the acquisition of Italian citizenship as a way to obtain security against the loss of (formal) status and against deportation. However, the interviewees in Della Puppa's research also regarded it as a factor of motility—the capacity to move (Kaufmann, Bergman, & Joye, 2004), while those who participated in Sredanovic's research hardly showed interest in using Italian citizenship to move to third countries. In this article, we aim to explain the differences as outlined here, indicating the various dimensions of motility and mobility.

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The traditional vision of citizenship (cf. Bloemraad, 2004, pp. 392–393), which is still dominant in naturalization research, sees naturalization as definitive settlement and integration within the society of which one becomes a citizen. Beyond such a vision, the concept of transnational citizenship has mostly focused on the legal and political initiatives of governments, which seek to include emigrants in their actions, as well as on the claims of emigrants to political rights related to their country of origin (see, e.g., Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Faist, 2007). Such theorization has been used to show a “deterritorialization” in which migrants can continue to claim belonging to the country “of origin,” even if outside national borders. At the same time, it underlines the continuing relevance of states, which exercise an active influence on their citizens, including nonresident ones, rather than becoming obsolete (see also Bloemraad, 2004). “Flexible citizenship” (Ong, 1993) is the most elaborate concept that has emerged to date among qualitative studies that do not postulate links between naturalization and settlement. The research in this field, focusing on Chinese trans-Pacific migration, has shown the presence of migrants who “settle” in the United States or Canada in order to qualify for a “strong” passport, while continuing to move across the Pacific until they accumulate the years of residence necessary for naturalization.

Among the existing studies on naturalization in Italy, the survey by Codini and D’Odorico (2007) finds that better opportunities for moving to other countries was the second most chosen reason for wanting to obtain Italian citizenship. The authors, however, criticize such an orientation, arguing that the main reason for naturalizing should be the acquisition of political rights. Of the qualitative studies available, the research conducted by Colombo, Domaneschi, and Marchetti (2011) among high school students in Milan shows a strong link between the desire to acquire Italian citizenship and that to move to other countries.

Our aim in these pages is to go beyond the interpretation of naturalization as either settlement or instrumental access to a better passport, through the use of the paradigm of mobility. Mobility (considered as geographic and linked to, but distinct from, the concept of *social* mobility) has been proposed as an approach, which includes all the phenomena traditionally included in the concept of migration *and* phenomena at the margins of that concept, including short or periodic work-related voyages, family-related voyages between two countries and—even if not dealt with in this article—tourism. In particular, we refer to the approach as elaborated by Morokvasic (1996, 2004) and Tarrus (2002). We further welcome the invitations by Faist (2013) to consider mobility and its implications in terms of unequal opportunities (both to stay and to move and its link to the capitalistic destabilization of biographies) and by Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) to neither normalize mobility nor stasis. We are especially interested in how different citizenships are linked to an unequal (potential) capacity to move—that is, motility (Kaufman, Bergman, & Joye, 2004)—and how naturalizing can remove legal barriers to mobility.

Morokvasic has shown the existence of migrant figures between eastern and western Europe for whom mobility itself is a social context. Morokvasic uses the concept of “settled in mobility” to describe those lives for whom mobility is the norm and, in some cases, a way to avoid definitely leaving the context of origin. Tarrus, in turn, has highlighted a number of migrant figures in the Mediterranean context for whom high mobility is the norm. These authors show the existence of a mobility that is not simply a one-time transformation in an individual’s biography but which is also different from the idealized globetrotting of the upper classes. Enlarging the scope of migration studies to “less permanent” movements allows one to both be aware of the relevance of such movements and avoid reifying migration as exceptional and/or necessarily permanent. While the main target of criticism of mobility theories is the implicit assumption of “stasis” of much social theory, there are differences between authors who see an epochal “mobility turn” in recent decades and invite experts to redefine all social sciences accordingly (e.g., Urry, 2007) and authors who see mobility regimes as including limits to mobility and inequality of opportunities (e.g., Faist, 2013; Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Our vision is closer to the second approach, as we wish to point out that mobilities are sometimes chosen, sometimes unwanted (even if not strictly forced) and are not necessarily either traumatic or successful. We should signal that mobility acquires different meanings according to the legal structure of opportunities; as Italy is part of the European Union (EU), characterized by norms of free movement, and of the Schengen Area, in which internal border controls are limited, the Italian passport is particularly desirable. For non-EU citizens, it increases the motility in a European space that, despite the permanence of stratifications in the opportunities for movement and settlement, constitutes perhaps a unique context in terms of opportunity for international mobility—a context in which the specific rights of the EU citizen are activated upon moving from one member state to another (see, e.g., Favell, 2008).

The migrants with whom Della Puppa conducted in-depth interviews—namely, Bangladeshis in Alte Ceccato, near Vicenza, were often interested in naturalizing to be able to move out of Italy, in particular toward London. The migrants interviewed by Sredanovic in Ferrara, on the other hand, showed little interest in mobility compared to that expressed in the other research: rather, like Della Puppa’s interviewees, they asked for Italian citizenship to end the fear of losing their permit to stay and avoid the nuisance of having to renew it periodically through difficult procedures.

What we argue is that both the normative conception of citizenship, as reserved for genuine residents and a question above all of political rights (Codini & D’Odorico, 2007), and as simply a passport (Ong, 1993) are inadequate (see Sredanovic, 2014a). Rather, we will show how the different orientations toward citizenship can be explained in terms of different configurations of mobility and motility. We met migrants who were not interested in settling in Italy; indeed, they had migrated

only after being unable to find any economic alternative in their country of origin. Others aspired to settle in Italy and saw citizenship as a resource and a protection against deportation. Still others had chosen Italy as an alternative destination because their preferred destination (often the United Kingdom [UK]) was inaccessible and saw the Italian passport as an opportunity to move to the initial destination of choice.<sup>1</sup> Finally, some of our interviewees would have desired to settle in Italy but, being hit by the economic crisis, had to find a living elsewhere and saw naturalization as a key to a richer country. The economic crisis in Italy has hit harder sectors, such as manufacturing and construction, in which migrants had a significant presence, increasing unemployment and the number of working poor among migrants. Onward migrations, return migrations, and mobility within Italy are among the measures taken in response to unemployment and, for those who have not obtained citizenship, the risk of losing legal status (Sacchetto & Vianello, 2013). Schuster (2005) has already shown that, for transient migrants and refugees, moving within and outside Italy is also a way to obtain their first legal status. We show how, for some of our interviewees, moving within Italy can be both an answer to the crisis and a way to avoid losing their legal status.

The variety of (im)mobilities also shows the existence of complex temporalities of migration, which neither the traditional idea of permanent settlement nor those of transience or temporal migration are able to capture (see Robertson, 2015). Rather, the migrants interviewed have often open-ended perspectives, in which naturalization can bring about both a more stable settlement or onward migration. Imagination plays a significant role in the (im)mobilities envisaged: migration is informed by the narratives of the already emigrated (Sayad, 2004; Gardner, 2010; Salazar, 2011) and by the imagined opportunities in a global hierarchy of destinations (Pajo, 2008). That said, imagination can also give meaning to successful or unsatisfactory migratory experiences (Smith, 2006) or to immobility itself (Salazar, 2011).

We argue that an approach that neither naturalizes mobility nor stasis (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) allows one to understand why naturalization is desired, in an apparently contradictory way, both to stay and to move. In the same way, an understanding of the different uses of citizenship (Sredanovic, 2014a) can explain the inequalities in the opportunities for both mobility and stasis (Faist, 2013).

In the following pages, after presenting the research methodology, we will show the attitudes of the majority of Ferrara interviewees, most of whom are interested in security, although some refuse naturalization, seeing the migratory experience as short-term and something to be suffered. We will then look at the Alte Ceccato case, revealing the coexistence of the search for security and answers to the economic crises, and both voluntary and involuntary secondary migrations. We will conclude with a reflection on the multiplicity of uses of citizenship.

## Method and context

Della Puppa interviewed 25 male Bangladeshis in Alte Ceccato, which is an industrial town near Vicenza, in which migrant residents represent about one third of its 6,804 inhabitants and 50% of migrant residents are from Bangladesh. Sredanovic interviewed 25 migrants from Morocco, Ukraine, Lebanon, and Jordan/Palestine in the province of Ferrara. The research undertaken by both authors was conducted between 2010 and 2011, starting with a number of direct contacts and continuing with the construction of the respective samples through a snowball procedure. While for Alte Ceccato, Bangladeshis were a clear majority of the migrant population, in the case of Ferrara, Sredanovic chose two of the nationalities of the research (the Moroccan and the Ukrainian) because they represent the highest numbers in the province among non-EU nationalities (EU citizens were not considered since their freedom of movement within the EU limits the additional advantages of obtaining Italian citizenship). The third group—migrants from Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine—was chosen to integrate a group of predominantly work-related migrants (Ukrainians) and a group of predominantly work- and family-related migrants (Moroccans) with a group in which student migrations had a significant impact and for which there was anecdotal information of a high level of intermarriage with the “autochthones.” The two studies were conducted independently, and the differences in research design (a single national group and a single town in Veneto, a diverse group in a larger area in Emilia-Romagna) mean that our results are explorative rather than able to pinpoint the exact role of specific variables. While the overall sample includes different nationalities and profiles, including work-, family-, and study-related migrants, further configurations of citizenship and mobility certainly exist among other migrants in Italy. Veneto and Emilia-Romagna are interesting to compare in the Italian context. Both regions are located in the north of the country, in which a majority of the migrants live and are characterized by a dense industrial grid of small- and medium-sized companies. At the same time, they are at the opposite ends of the Italian political spectrum: Veneto is regularly governed by the right wing and is one of the main bases of the xenophobic Northern League; meanwhile, Emilia-Romagna has a history of local government dominated by the Italian Communist Party and its more center-oriented successor parties.

In both cases, the interviews were analyzed with qualitative analysis software individuating themes and frames that emerged. All the names used in the extracts from the interviews are pseudonyms.

## Citizenship as a shield

While Italian citizenship helped the yearly returns to their country of origin for many of the interviewees in Ferrara, the main reason for demanding citizenship among this group was the protection it offered against local bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup> This

protection had two levels. First of all, obtaining citizenship means avoiding the frequent and time-consuming process of document renewal.

To take citizenship is a beautiful thing, because it gives you a number of possibilities. One thing is that you don't have to change the permit of stay every year, because at the moment we have two problems, that is the income you have to have to do the card of stay [long-term resident documents], a high income, but how can one have a high income with this crisis? After that, to renew the permit of stay you have to have a house with certain square meters. If an Italian family can have a house where they couldn't stay, but citizens stay there anyway, nobody controls it. (Tetyana)

Secondly, it means obtaining definitive protection from deportation.

[Citizenship] has its value, that I'm not anymore at the mercy ... and citizenship says that if I do, steal, they put me in prison, I remain here [in Italy]. I'm like a tick at this point, I'm here, whatever I do, I'm at home. (Hasna)

The relevance that the interviewees give to citizenship as security contrasts with the postnational citizenship idea that personhood, and not formal status, is the contemporary basis of rights (Soysal, 1994), along with the idea that long-term resident documents and the resulting "denizenship" provide migrants with equal rights apart from voting. Such ideas have found little corroboration in empirical studies (e.g., Bloemraad, 2004) and have shown their limits in events such as the 1996 welfare reform in the United States, which excluded noncitizens from a number of rights, pushing many to apply for naturalization (see, e.g., Nam, 2011). Further counterarguments can be found in the Italian context. Firstly, long-term resident documents in Italy still have to be renewed every 5 years. Furthermore, it was only in 2015 that a court ruled against the practice, conducted in several provinces, to refuse the renewal of the long-term resident document if the bearer became unemployed in the meanwhile. Secondly, a number of everyday bureaucratic controls remain for denizens but not for full citizens. While renewing the documents remains the most difficult procedure (and Tetyana's statement points to the critical income and housing requirements), migrants in Italy often find themselves engaged in intricate bureaucratic procedures, in which showing their permit of stay is not sufficient. Thirdly, long-term-resident status does not give access to many public jobs. While few of Sredanovic's interviewees actually aspired to public jobs, many more wished their children could have a chance to obtain them.

Because they [his children] have citizenship, they've been born here ... with time, let's say, when they go to the university, if they want to do a public job application, you need citizenship, because for many public jobs if you don't have citizenship you don't have a right to apply. Let's hope, that they get to that point. (Abdeljalil)

Finally, only full citizenship protects people from deportation linked to criminal offenses or for reasons of national interest (as the excerpt from the interview with Hasna reminds us). The possibility of deporting regular migrants for reasons of

state interest has been analyzed in particular by Dal Lago (2004) as one aspect of deportability and, indeed, nonpersonhood to which migrants in Italy are subject. While deportation for reasons of national interest is not largely used, Dal Lago shows how the concept of deportability, most often used in reference to undocumented migrants (De Genova, 2002), should be taken into consideration for all noncitizens. In addition to the risk of being expelled from national territory, every non-citizen in Italy is open to the more general and more pressing risk of losing juridical status and/or juridical guarantees.

As already mentioned, an Italian passport facilitates the kind of mobility most exercised by these migrants: the yearly returns to the country of origin. Not only are the controls more relaxed, the length of procedures of document renewal is considerable in Italy, leaving migrants with only a receipt for the demand of renewal. Such a “document” strongly limits the kind of mobility one can have: practically, only direct voyages between Italy and the country of origin are possible, as many interviewees told us. For those without even a long-term resident permit, being on a 1-year permit and waiting a full year to have it renewed, never actually touching a document recognized outside Italy, is not merely a hypothetical situation.

While many of the Ferrara interviewees were aware of the opportunities that Italian citizenship gives in terms of motility in the EU and the Schengen Area and, more generally in terms of a second migration, few expressed interest in this option. Some, like Maher, would have been interested in it in the early years of their presence in Italy, when they did not have access to citizenship, but then abandoned the idea with the passing years: “But, to tell the truth, would I have taken [citizenship] ... it could be that it would change the path of my life a bit. Now I, if it wasn't for this [economic] crisis, I would live like a god here in Ferrara.” The other few saw a second migration as an unwanted answer either to a welfare system seen as too weak or to the impossibility of continuing one's university studies because of the *numerus clausus*.

Finally, a group among the Ferrara interviewees, all from Ukraine and all either working at the moment as personal health assistants or having held that job in the past, were uninterested in Italian citizenship. Among the countries considered here, Ukraine is the only one that does not tolerate dual citizenship, which means that naturalizing in Italy could result in the loss of Ukrainian citizenship, thereby, being subject to the visa regime when returning to Ukraine. However, these migrants had other reasons for being uninterested in Italian citizenship, as they were arguably the ones who suffered most during their initial mobility to Italy. Such mobility happened at a mature age as a consequence of the rapidly deteriorating life conditions in post-socialist Ukraine. Moreover, the consequence was a strong downward social mobility, from professional or clerical jobs to working as in-home personal health assistants.

I was thinking [of demanding naturalization], but to obtain citizenship I have to renounce mine, and this is something I cannot do. Because ... maybe it is a big mistake, there are



people, Moroccan, Tunisian, Moldovan, too, that come to Italy to live, change the place where they live, we Ukrainians, maybe three, four percent have come to live. We have come to earn money ... I cannot ask for citizenship because with the particularity of my job, if that person [the assisted] dies ... (Iryna)

In contrast to many eastern Europeans discussed by Morokvasic (1996, 2004), these migrants from Ukraine did not have the opportunity to be “settled in mobility,” exercising, for example, small cross-border commerce or engaging in circular migrations linked to care work (Triandafyllidou & Marchetti, 2013). While circular migration is not unheard of for Ukrainians in Italy, they have fewer opportunities to engage in it compared to EU citizens with greater motility such as those from Poland, a fact that has been both explored in literature (Marchetti, 2013) and mentioned by some of the Ukrainian interviewees in Ferrara.

### **Londoni, interrupted**

Alte Ceccato is a hamlet, part of the municipality of Montecchio Maggiore in the province of Vicenza. This small town in northeastern Italy, which is characterized by a strong immigrant concentration and nativist politics, is adjacent to one of the most important tannery districts in Europe: that of the Chiampo Valley, which constitutes a strong attraction for the immigrant workforce.

### ***Citizenship as the ultimate goal of an inaccessible stabilization path in a hostile and discriminatory context***

The Bangladeshi migrants interviewed in Alte Ceccato report on their almost overlapping journeys. The administrative irregularity in Italy or other European countries and the entrance into the shadow economy represent common and almost obligatory steps.

After having spent a more or less prolonged period of time in Rome or other large European cities, the interviewees report that they have regularized their administrative position through amnesty, which is a factor that also attracted migrants living in other European countries to Italy, especially in the 1990s. The regularization allows them to leave Rome for Alte Ceccato, a move that makes it possible to stabilize one’s working situation (in a factory in the tannery district) and one’s residence, both necessary conditions for the imminent reunification with one’s spouse and, subsequently, for the birth of a “second generation” in the migration.

During their stays in Rome and after several years in Alte Ceccato between the 1990s and the 2000s, the first generation of *probashi*<sup>3</sup> in Italy have today fulfilled the necessary requirements for acquiring citizenship (10 years of regular and continuous residence).

The numerical growth in “naturalizations” registered an almost exponential trend in Alte: In 2010, 132 new citizenships were granted, three times as many as the previous year (Della Puppa & Gelati, 2015).

For many interviewees, becoming Italian citizens is a bureaucratic accomplishment aimed at establishing social roots and family stabilization. In Italy, the residence permit is strictly subordinate to employment status (Basso, 2010; Basso & Perocco, 2003). In a country in which the immigration policies bind the residence permit of the entire family to the employment contract of the breadwinner—the architect of the reunification—and which is characterized by an increasingly deregulated labor market, dismissal from one’s job is the precursor to administrative irregularity for all the members of the reunited family. The acquisition of citizenship, thus, represents a *form of resistance* to the progressive narrowing of immigrants’ social rights.

The tortuous path to citizenship is also an *act of rebellion* against the symbolically and materially degrading bureaucratic maze that the migrant workers have to deal with. In addition, there are the often unfriendly attitudes of administrative staff or law enforcement authorities with whom migrants must interact on each renewal of the residence permit.

The status civitatis thus becomes a form of male protection through which Bangladeshi fathers and husbands try to preserve a minimum of security for their family in Italy and seek to spare them the humiliation connected to the bureaucracy which the immigrants have to regularly face:

If I find citizenship my wife and my daughter won’t lose the residence permit anymore. After I find the passport and I have it in my hands, I will ask for it for them. Citizens, written on the paper, written everywhere. (Samad)

When my daughters are grown up, I don’t want them to go to the immigration office to take the residence permit and wait there all night like I did. For this I took Italian citizenship, for my children. I also want my wife to take it too. . . . The immigration office makes a lot of problems with renewing the residence permit, always. (Tariq)

The family protection connected to becoming “Italianized” is considered a male act (Sayad, 2004) because of the dynamics of gender that characterizes Bangladeshi migration to Italy, in which it is almost always the man who opens the family’s migratory chain and, therefore, is the first to fulfill the requirements, which allow a request to be filed for the *granting* of citizenship. Once the husband-cum-father becomes an Italian citizen, he can then consequently “immunize” the other family members.

### **From Alte Ceccato to Londoni**

If the possession of an Italian passport for some symbolizes the ultimate goal of a process of stabilization consisting in putting down roots in Alte, it is a strategic *factor for migratory mobility reactivation* for others. By becoming Italian citizens, the *probashi* also become European citizens and acquire the ability to move within the territory of the EU and to undertake any new international migration, which is almost always oriented toward a context generically defined as *Londoni*: “Then I go around Europe,” says Ali, and Masud confirms, “Then the world opens up.”

The prospect of a life in Alte Ceccato implies the impossibility of an actual improvement in their socio-occupational condition and a reduction in the risk that their children will end up following the same professional and existential trajectory—that of a “laborer for life” (Sayad, 2004),<sup>4</sup>—as unskilled workers in the tanning industry or other jobs which in Italy are implicitly “reserved for immigrants”: the so-called “3D jobs.”

Migration to the United Kingdom is the Bangladeshi migrants’ response to the fear that the disregard for their educational credentials and qualifications will also affect their children, born and socialized in Italy. But it is also a strategy to cope with the exclusion of the younger generations from an English-speaking environment (perceived as a key to the world and, therefore, as a multiplier of the chances of success) and to cope with the economic crisis that affects the industrial district. This new “emigration” represents the migratory dream often cultivated from the very beginning of the journey from Bangladesh to Europe. According to many interviewees, the construction of a solid life plan in Europe began in Italy, as this was one of the countries that, in the years of their arrival, offered more opportunities for entry and regularization, by virtue of its expanding labor market and, therefore, “instrumentally lax” immigration policies. After entering Italy in an irregular manner and subsequently regularizing their administrative position, many migrants have found in Alte Ceccato conditions favorable to family stabilization. Others, however, began a long-term stay aimed at meeting the requirements to enter Britain.

From this perspective, Italy has been the final migratory destination for some of the interviewees (a project that failed also because of the economic crisis), while for others it has been a contingent and undesirable (but necessary) step to reaching another, more coveted, European context of immigration. It should be emphasized that, as found in other research (Della Puppa & Salvador, 2015; Sacchetto & Vianello, 2013), the crisis has also often produced an internal mobility of immigrant workers in Italy, who add to the transients and refugees who already had a high level of mobility (Schuster, 2005). They migrate from the provinces to the urban centers, from the small towns to the big cities, seeking new work opportunities. But they also start commuting weekly within national boundaries, from the place of residence (where the housing conditions are better and cheaper) to work places elsewhere.

### ***Citizenship as a strategy for facing the crisis and as a key to better education for children***

The new migration is mainly incentivized by the economic crisis and its effects on the everyday life of immigrant families, whose main income is connected to the tanning industry. Rumon is an example of an interviewee who, after more than a year of unemployment, started to consider emigrating to the United Kingdom:

It is nearly one year that I haven't worked ... and I want to change my life. If I find a good job here, I will then stay here and I will not change anything. I want to stay here, but until now I cannot find a job, so I try to change, to go away, to go somewhere, to change residence, to change everything. If I don't find a job in the UK, the social [policies] will help. ... My adult daughter wants to stay here two more years to finish her studies. ... Then, when she has to go to university, she wants to go to Oxford. I am happy too. I found citizenship in 2005, already in 2005 I wanted to go outside Italy. (Rumon)

A further motivation for reactivating migratory mobility is, therefore, represented by the dissatisfaction of Bangladeshi fathers with the Italian educational system. The impossibility of getting an education in the English language for their children is a big concern for Bangladeshi parents. In addition to being seen as a fundamental requirement for achieving a better job and a higher *social status*, English is, indeed, considered simultaneously a global and colloquial language.<sup>5</sup>

I like London. I asked for citizenship, I am waiting, I am here, when I get citizenship, I try and go there. London works well, study well too, in English, even my country is using English. (Musharaf)

For linguistic reasons and for the symbolic value conveyed by the former capital of the British Empire, a university degree obtained in the United Kingdom holds greater value in Bangladesh than an Italian degree. Moreover, in line with the "global" aspirations of *probashi*, this also happens in other Western countries outside of Italy:

Our children were studying here only the Italian language. I say the Italian education system is not bad, but we are not happy as parents. Our hope is always for a bit higher education for the children, higher studies to become a great engineer, a great doctor, a great officer or lawyer, we hope for this. So the education system in Italy is a problem for our community. [...] There are many who, after becoming Italians they want to go away from Italy. Because you can go to England with an Italian passport. So if I find work there, it is better for children to study there. To have opportunities English is important for us. (Sherif)

Since the push towards the UK is motivated by expectations of social promotion for the children, the date of actual departure from Alte is planned according to the structure of the academic year and courses in the Italian and British schools.

### ***A way out of the factory***

For those who have managed to keep their jobs, the impossibility of being able to quit particularly strenuous jobs, to which the immigrants are usually confined (Perocco, 2012) until they are able to retire, is among the motives pushing the *probashi* toward the UK. The Italian jobs market is, moreover, segmented along ethnic, racial, and national lines, which segregates immigrants in the lowest segments.

Ali is a tanning-industry worker whose doctor has advised him not to continue in the tannery, since his body can no longer endure this work. According to Ali,

however, a Bangladeshi immigrant in Italy, even if in possession of formal citizenship, is destined to be a factory worker. Even if his body capital is getting used up, Ali cannot afford to abstain from work; therefore, the only way to continue consuming, investing, and putting to work the remaining productive elements of his biological machine is to change the type of work he does. But he says this is impossible without changing the geographic, social, and productive context. He hopes to be able to find different and better jobs in *Londoni*: no longer at the factory, no longer a factory worker.

### ***To feel at home far from home***

The interviewees felt discriminated against in the workplace because they are systematically classified as unskilled workers, channeled toward more strenuous, unhealthy and dangerous tasks, deprived of concrete possibilities for vertical mobility, and sometimes harassed by colleagues and department heads. Moreover, they claim to be discriminated against in sociolegal terms and emphasize the escalation and normalization of Italian racism (Basso, 2010).

This means that being Italian “on paper” does not constitute a sufficient condition to escape racial discrimination, such as in the case of the resolutions and regulations issued by many local municipalities in Italy (Ambrosini, 2013; Caneva, 2014; Perocco, 2010) related to the housing eligibility of the residents. In the municipality of Montecchio Maggiore, for example, Resolution 233/2009 widens the domestic square footage needed to obtain residency, while resolution 347/2009 prohibits the accommodation of any foreign person if the number of people in the house was to become higher than that stated on the certificate of eligibility. These measures have been followed by more than 200 checks by the police who have spent night and day inspecting the private homes of many immigrants, often *already in possession* of Italian nationality.

Zaeed perceives that Italian society is still unprepared to include people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds or different national origins. He is especially concerned about his son, whom he wants to spare the suffering and humiliation of growing up in a context in which he is unlikely to be liberated from the condition of being a “foreigner” and an “immigrant”: “What I can do as his father?” he wonders. Indeed, although Italy is the boy’s country of birth and Italian citizenship is stated on his papers, Zaeed describes a citizenship that is embodied *sensu stricto*, saying that “his color says that he’s Indian.”

The administrative immunization pursued by many through citizenship does not seem to constitute a sufficiently effective guarantee. If migrants have tolerated the degradation of being considered “third-class citizens” for over a decade, this condition no longer seems to be acceptable with the birth of newer generations.

The UK, which is the capital of the Commonwealth of Nations and the coveted goal for generations of Bangladeshis, offers, however, the possibility to “feel at home away from home”; as Rumon explains, “Many are in England, because in

England you can find the same situation as in Bangladesh because there are so many Bengalis.” Through this further migration, they dream of enjoying European standards of living, while remaining within the community of fellow countrymen, thus claiming their self-attributed belonging.

### *Dual welfare of Londoni*

The UK is an attractive destination also by virtue of its welfare system, which is considered more inclusive than the “Mediterranean” system, which, in the current context of economic recession, seems to fail to meet the needs of the families of an ever-growing number of unemployed migrants. In a general context in which the Italian welfare state is itself undergoing sharp “reorganization,” immigrants are often further excluded from access to social protection based on their “national belonging,” the type of residence permit they hold or an informal “local ethnic profiling” (Ambrosini, 2013; Caneva, 2014; Perocco, 2010), which is also practiced in the municipality of Montecchio Maggiore. This contributes to the creation of a differential rights regime and the perception that immigrants continually suffer discrimination.

The government is trying to say to us, foreign people, “Leave this country!” We’re thinking the future is becoming more and more difficult for our families. If you have got the Italian passport and if you have three children you can apply for the local welfare and every year they will pay more than 1,200 or 1,300 euros, but if you don’t have an Italian passport you cannot apply. Do you understand? The Municipality gives the money every year: if you have more than three children you can apply, but I don’t have an Italian passport, I have family, I’m living here, I work hard, I’m paying taxes, I’m paying money to the Municipality, but I cannot apply for it. ... They mistreat us. Discrimination. (Mukul)

The real contributions made by the British government (Gardner, 2010), however, do not fully explain the attraction exerted by the new migratory destination, which is rather determined by an unrealistic and idealized representation of British welfare. This representation is the result of an exchange of stories relating to the experiences of fellow countrymen, which migrants disseminate within the transnational social space, such that the image of a promised land is gradually restored (Gardner, 2010; cf. Sayad, 2004; Salazar, 2011). The attractive force exerted by such representations of the UK is strong enough to induce migrants to actually restart the migration process.

Besides institutional welfare, an informal and “community” welfare to which the families of Bangladeshi origin have access, takes shape in *Londoni* due to the influence of British multiculturalism. The British multicultural model, requiring referents representing the “ethnic communities” within the territory of the state, has contributed to the creation of “ethnic community associations” and has funded these activities, *provided* that such associations reflect the expectations and representations of the immigrant society. These expectations and representations have been modeled around a supposed “cultural and religious authenticity” built by the (British) immigrant society itself.

This leads to the creation of a dense associative and religious network, which guarantees a solid community-based welfare inside the British Bangladeshi population.

## Conclusions

The comparison between different studies (Della Puppa, 2014; Sredanovic, 2014a, 2014b), which focused on the links between the practices of acquiring formal citizenship and the trajectories of international mobility or local presence of immigrants in Italy, has allowed us to identify different types of “new citizens” and different strategically oriented styles of citizenship practice.

First of all, it must be emphasized that, for some migrants, the path to citizenship is a passage within a broader strategy of social and territorial stabilization for themselves and/or for their family members, especially children (Sayad, 2004). However, in the context of the crisis, this happens in a regime of increasing internal mobility (Della Puppa & Salvador, 2015). The latter is a form of individual and family protection against possible loss of juridical status, as well as the risk of deportation to the country of origin (King & Mai, 2009): that is, avowedly a citizenship *to stay*. For others, on the contrary, this appears to be the gateway to an easier—and for several reasons *pursued*—international mobility: that is, a citizenship *to go*.

However, when examining the mobility trajectories of the respondents in more detail, it is possible to outline more-specific profiles, even though they are blurred and sometimes overlapping. Firstly, it is possible to find the experience of those who have unwillingly *suffered* the migratory mobility, despite the original intention of rooting in their country of origin. For these subjects, the acquisition of citizenship is not capital to use in the system of international mobility or the process of rooting in the context of immigration. But it represents a constraint for mobility to the country of origin, despite migrants’ precarious and fragmented working career in the country of immigration. This means a citizenship that hinders the opportunity *to go* within the frame of an incomplete, or *pursued*, security *to stay*.

It is then possible to outline the profile of those who can take advantage of acquired Italian citizenship in order to access the broader context of the EU, even if this kind of international mobility is perceived as a forced choice, a coping strategy for the dramatically compromised employment conditions suffered due to the economic crisis, which is hitting with particular violence the countries of Mediterranean Europe and, within these, affects immigrant workers and their families with particular virulence (Della Puppa & Salvador, 2015). In the context of changing economic conditions, these actors must exploit the motility linked to formal citizenship, which is probably acquired for the rooting securities that, at least from a legal and normative point of view, it offers: a form of protection from deportation and administrative irregularity for themselves and their family (King & Mai, 2009; Sayad, 2004). In this regard, such an intra-European re-emigration, facilitated by the acquisition of the citizenship of an EU member country, can include another

family reunification in the new country of immigration or, in any case, the reactivation of the sending of remittances to the family who remains in the previous context of immigration (Della Puppa & Salvador, 2015). What takes shape in this context is a citizenship *to stay*, which is reconfigured as a citizenship *to go*, despite the original projects of the actors involved.

A further practice of citizenship is that of those who fully exploit the potential of the international mobility system, within and beyond the borders of the EU, and move to further improve their working lives, which is probably favored from the beginning by the possession of formal citizenship. Such a practice outlines, in this case, the profile of the “transnational citizen” in the strictest sense, and a citizen *to go* at the same time, which, however, implicitly shows an embodied security *to stay*.

Finally, it is necessary to reflect on the citizenship and mobility path of those whose migration project assumed and assumes an intermediate and more or less initial experience in Italy, before moving to other more “prestigious” European contexts (Della Puppa, 2014). Italy has been identified by the respondents who follow this trajectory and who have acquired Italian citizenship by demonstrating the 10 years of legal and continuous residence, as a context that relatively easily allowed the possibility of entering and obtaining administrative regularization. This situation characterized the Italian immigration scenario in the late 1970s and the late 1990s (when these respondents arrived): the economic needs of the internal labor market reinforced by a sociolegal frame already defined as “instrumentally lax.” The migration project of these migrants, therefore, has always assumed, or at least never completely excluded, a reactivation of international mobility to other European countries that are represented and perceived as harbingers of greater material wealth, work, educational and social realization, and opportunities for living in contexts of cultural affinity and that often coincide with the former colonial motherland. Such a project is elaborated and unfolded for the respondents themselves and, again, especially for future generations, and the good that guarantees this migratory mobility reactivation is formal citizenship, which, in this case, is revealed in its characteristic of citizenship *to go*.

While security (and symbolic) reasons made *Italian* citizenship the goal of many interviewees, other were interested above all in a “strong” passport and the motility linked to it. While we analyze such motility in terms of EU citizenship, it should be underlined that this is a category of the researchers, and that only some of the interviewees presented the opportunities linked to the passport in the terms of the EU.

The comparison between the two research studies allows for some variables to emerge that influence the different conceptions and uses of citizenship, such as national origin and job placement and also temporal and social mobility perspectives. Migrants who foresee an onward migration or a long-term settlement aspire both to citizenship, while those who perceive themselves as only temporarily outside the country of origin are not interested. While these are relatively well-known facts, we show how such orientation is strongly mediated by the upward or downward mobility experiences and the imagination of possible outcomes of migration.



In fact, the interviewees who did not show any interest in using the citizenship to move to third countries have many different national origins and are characterized by a plurality of employment conditions—and either saw citizenship as protection or were generally uninterested when they have experienced strong downward mobility. Meanwhile, the interviewees who see citizenship as a factor of mobility are all Bangladeshi factory workers with a long-term contract, who perceived themselves to be without any opportunity for upward social mobility in Italy but expected to be able to have it in the UK. A colonial imagination is active among this second group of respondents, shaping social aspirations and contributing to the construction of an ideal migration destination for generations of Bangladeshi and, more generally, southern Asian migrants, pushing them to aspire to London and to idealize it as a “land of opportunities.” More generally, the motility linked to Italian citizenship encourages some of the interviewees to imagine possible onward migration to countries that are higher in the global hierarchy (Pajo, 2008). Such an opportunity, however, is more interesting to those with perspectives and resources that make onward migration more plausible (Smith, 2006).

From this perspective, therefore, it is possible to observe the polysemic character of formal citizenship and, specifically, Italian citizenship as part of EU citizenship. At the same time, it can be stated that “modern” citizenship is gradually losing its collective character by appearing increasingly practiced in different ways, depending on biographical and family projects, experiences, and migratory trajectories of each actor involved.

## Notes

1. This article was written before the 2016 referendum on UK membership in the EU. Some of the considerations here included would be significantly changed by the exit of the UK from the EU.
2. Although we are here focusing on the “practical” uses of citizenship, this does not mean that citizenship is without a symbolic value, as recognition both of personal dignity and of a feeling of national belonging, for many of the interviewees (Sredanovic, 2014a).
3. In Bangladesh, emigrants are called *londoni* or *probashi*. The first term derives from one of the first great destinations in migration from Bangladesh—namely, London, and by extension, the whole of the UK. The second means “external inhabitants” or “those who went abroad.”
4. See Salway (2008) for how, in spite of the representations of the respondents, the conditions of social, labor, and material subordination are also reproduced in the British context.
5. This was a specificity of the Bangladeshi group, as the interviewees in Emilia-Romagna mentioned language competence as an instrument for moving to other countries but not as a goal in itself, despite the relevance that French arguably has for Moroccans and Lebanese.

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