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**In search of Italianness:
an ethnography of the second-generation condition
in a mobility perspective**

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
The second-generation condition	5
Habesha in immobility: ancestral identification as a site of incorporating difference	8
Habesha as a source of mobility. Practicing the difference to navigate a second-generation condition in the social space of the diaspora	11
Milano as an interconnected space. Siting the exploration of a second-generation condition	13
Between methodology and epistemology. The “clue paradigm” and the second-generation condition ..	15
Structure of the work	19
Chapter 1: Italianness and Habesha. Genealogy of a differential relation	21
1.1 Introduction.....	21
1.2 Italianness in the making of a colonial otherness	21
1.2.1 Italianness in the making of a colonial paradigm	22
1.3 From Habesha to Abyssinia and Eritrea. The Italian Colonial paradigm and identification shifts	25
1.3.1 Habesha in the Ethiopian and Eritrean national paradigm	26
1.3.2 Habesha in the regional paradigm	28
1.4 The Italianness Habesha Postcolonial paradigm	30
1.4.1 Postcolonial Tigray-kebessa relation	30
1.4.2 Hegemonic Italianness and Postcolonial differentiation.....	31
1.4.3 From the Horn to Italy: postcolonial mobilities.....	32
1.5 Habesha in mobility	34
1.5.1 The Making of a Habesha culture of migration	34
1.5.2 From ethno-regional to national identification. The making of the generation nationalism.	36
1.6 Diaspora space in Milano	39
1.6.1 The Habesha neighborhood of Porta Venezia.....	39
1.6.2 Being Habesha in Milano: incorporating social difference.....	42
Conclusions.....	44
Figures: Asmara’s progressive expansion in precolonial and colonial maps: 1872-1929	45
Chapter 2: Ancestral Identification or differential italianness? Habesha as the marker of a second-generation condition.....	47
2.1 Second generations and Italianness: split in two cultures or pushed away?.....	47
2.2 The postcolonial condition and the second-generation condition: family resemblances	51
2.2.1 Precondition pt.1: Children of domestic workers	52
2.2.2 Precondition pt2: downward assimilation. Why a Milanese Habesha should speak Neapolitan? ..	53

2.3 Racial differentiation, gender, class. The making of <i>Habesha second generations</i>	55
2.3.1 <i>Ragazzi di zona</i> . The class connotation of the Habesha identification	55
2.3.2 The Habesha dark side. second-generation condition and gender divide	58
2.3.3 Cultural Translations: second-generation condition and the making of Habeshaness.....	60
2.4 Translating ethnicity from the ancestral land to the Italian context. Habeshaness as a space of subjectivity.....	62
2.4.1 Liminoid spaces of Habesha constructions: The oratory of Via Kramer.....	63
2.4.2 Nationalist winds: the fracture between a second generation Habeshaness and the ancestral lands	64
2.4.3 Global flows and differentiation. Habesha at the “Muretto”	68
2.4.4 National division, shared differentiation: Habesha as the marker of a differential Italianness ...	70
Conclusions.....	72
Chapter 3: We are all on that ship: the reconfiguration of a second-generation Habeshaness and the Mediterranean route	73
3.1 Introduction.....	73
3.2 Second-generation condition and the Habesha diasporic space: disconnections	75
3.3 Second generations and ethnic identification with refugees. A reading in the Italian system of regulation of the Mediterranean route.....	77
3.3.1 The asylum seekers’ flow and its marginality in the Italian public discourse	77
3.3.2 The resignification of the asylum seekers flow in Italy	79
3.4 Mediterranean route and second generation’s Habeshaness in the liminal. We are all on that ship..	82
3.4.1 Second-generation Habesha’s Ethnic engagement as an Italian phenomenon?	84
3.5 Second generation volunteering for refugees.....	87
3.5.1 Italianness and the making of Porta Venezia as an informal reception space.....	87
3.5.2 Second generations engaging for refugees. Differential italianness as a source of legitimation ..	88
3.5.3 The end of the reception. Second generation Habeshaness in the post liminal and the reintroduction of a differential paradigm.	90
Conclusions.....	91
Chapter 4: Performing difference, reproducing <i>Habeshaness</i>: status and <i>second generations return to Ethiopia</i>	93
4.1 Prologue. A Research companion.....	93
4.2 In between-ness and children of immigrants. The predicament of a <i>third space</i>	94
4.2.1 This is not my Ethiopia: Habesha, Ferengi and Diaspora	94
4.2.2 Habeshaness through Ferenginess.....	96
4.3 Inside the diaspora. In-betweenness as a structural process	98
4.3.1 They are not real diaspora. Cultural difference as an hegemonic discourse	99
4.3.2 Assimilating Tigrayness in the hegemonic category of diaspora.....	101
4.4 Performing the status.....	105

4.4.1 Out of the “real” Ethiopia.....	105
4.4.2 Differential status and <i>cultures of return</i>	107
4.4.3 Reproducing a culture of return: Ties that strangle	110
4.4.4 Play the difference. The nightmare of not being different	115
4.5 Racial categories and social status	118
4.5.1 Racializing the difference: status as ontological division	119
4.5.2 Blackness and social status.....	126
Conclusions.....	131
Chapter 5: Counter diasporic Italianness: The navigation of a second-generation condition	133
5.1 Prologue: Foodpaths and Italianness	133
5.2 Space and power out of hyphenation. Italianness as the mirror of the second-generation Habesha condition.....	136
5.3 Marta and the culture-return nexus. Moving as Ethiopian staying as Italian?	139
5.3.1 Can cultural hybridity stand the test of Ethiopian jokes?	139
5.3.2 Cultural competence and counter diasporic mobility. A self-fulfilling prophecy?	142
5.4 Children of immigrants’ marriages of convenience and the reproduction of Italianness	147
5.4.1 Familiar reunification and children of immigrants. Mirroring the difference	147
5.4.2 With brothers is much better. Ethnography of a stakeholder of informal mobility	149
5.4.3 Italians of Ethiopian origins marriages of convenience as the triangulation of place, mobility and cultural identification	153
Conclusions.....	157
Chapter 6: Italianness in Addis Ababa and the making of differential Italians.....	159
6.1 Introduction.....	159
6.2 Tigrayan returnees from Milano to Addis Ababa: the social value of the Italianness in the Ethiopian social space.....	161
6.2.1 The fasting Easter. Religious Syncretism or performance of Italianness?.....	162
6.2.2 Mahber Milano. Reproducing Tigrayness through Italianness.....	166
6.3 Postcolonial translations. The Italian school of Addis Ababa	169
6.3.1 Non hegemonic Italianness and the making of differential Italians.....	170
6.3.2 The Italian school and the making of a differential Ethiopiness	174
6.4 Postcolonial mirrors: The Club Juventus	175
6.4.1 The making of a differential space	176
6.4.2 Club Juventus and the doubleness of postcolonial Italianness. A space of coexistence or an hegemonic space?	177
6.4.3 The president of the Republic at the Juventus Club: Italianness and the institutional production of bare citizenship.....	181
Conclusions.....	184
Chapter 7: London Calling: Habesha second-generation intra-european mobility	186

7.1 Introduction.....	186
7.2 Take your passport and go. The changing relation between space and identification in the second-generation mobility to London.....	188
7.2.1 Framing second-generation mobility in the wider European social space. Similarities and differences.....	188
7.2.2 Italian mobility in London. A space of possibility, a space of difference.....	189
7.2.3 Second-generation condition and mobility. Subverting the relation between space and identification.....	191
7.2.4 Subverting the relation between hypervisibility and invisibility. Second-generation mobility and London spatial confidence.....	194
7.3 Habesha as a source of mobility. Transnational structures in action	196
7.3.1 Culture of migration. The making of Habesha ethnic identification as a source of mobility.....	196
7.3.2 Habesha houses as infrastructures of mobility.	199
7.3.3 Second-generation networking. Turning ancestral identification into differential Italianness ...	202
7.4 The intra-european (im)mobility of a second-generation condition.	204
7.4.1 Divergent Habeshaness between Milano and London.....	204
7.4.2 Changing of the paths of identification	208
7.4.3 Becoming (differential) Italians in London	210
Conclusions. From Habesha <i>second generations</i> to Black Italians.....	214
Chapter 8: The second-generation condition and the diaspora space of Porta Venezia. Spatial immobility and the mobilization of the national paradigm in the Black Mediterranean	216
8.1 Porta Venezia as a space of disconnection from hegemonic Italianness.....	216
8.2 The refugees' flow out of an hegemonic Italianness.....	219
8.3 A second-generation diasporic Habeshaness.....	221
8.3.1 National identification and the performance of a diasporic Habeshaness.....	222
8.3.2 Differentiation as a source of recognition in the diaspora space	225
8.4 Mobilizing Italiannes in spatial immobility.....	228
8.4.1 Brokering Italianness	228
8.4.2 In search of Italianness: porta Venezia as a site of mobilization of the national paradigm.....	230
8.5 Performing a second-generation condition: Liminoid italianness in Porta Venezia	232
8.5.1 The fracture between diaspora space and Italianness.....	233
8.5.2 Play the difference: liminoid habeshaness and the creative re-composition of the Black Mediterranean.....	235
8.5.3 #PVStateOfMind. Non-hegemonic Italianness and the nexus between space and identification.....	237
Conclusions.....	238
Conclusions.....	240
References.....	246
Acknowledgements.....	268

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Introduction

During the first days of my fieldwork in Addis Ababa, I discussed with Johnny about the inclusion of children of immigrants in the Italian society. Johnny, an Italian citizen born and raised in Milano from Ethiopian parents who was 27 years old at the time, was my main research partner all along the fieldwork in Ethiopia. I met him the year before, during my fieldwork on Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in Milano, and we moved together to his ancestral land. During our conversation, he focused on the role of the Italian associations struggling for children of immigrants' recognition. He told me that when he was younger he was very interested in Italian political issues, but growing up he stopped. He told me he felt like he was wasting his own life. When I asked him if he considered their struggles for recognition a waste of time, he said:

I have only one life to live. The problem with them is that they remained Italians¹.

Johnny's position appeared to me the demonstration of a structural disentanglement reproducing a structural otherness of the children of immigrants compared to the Italian social space. During my fieldwork in Milano, I focused on the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, the main hub in the city for the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora² since the late 70's. I specifically focused on an ongoing process of social engagement concerning Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. Italian citizens born and raised in Italy, with a general poor social, linguistic, and symbolic understanding of their ancestral lands, were increasingly engaging in the diasporic space and interacting with other migrant subjects. In order to frame their presence in the neighborhood, they mobilized the term Habesha, an ethnonym related to their Ethiopian and Eritrean ancestral identification as a source of legitimation in the diaspora space. Their aim was to emphasize a common identification with diasporic subjects. In this context, their ancestral land's social and symbolic dynamics were ubiquitous. From the music in the clubs to the food they ate, from the business they arranged to the discourses they made, their everyday practices explicitly reconnected to the Ethiopian or the Eritrean social space. In short, they framed the diasporic neighborhood of Porta Venezia as a proper space of transition that allowed them to disenfranchise from the wider Milanese (and Italian) space. Within this diasporic setting,

¹ Fieldnotes, Addis Ababa, 15.01.2016

² All along this work I will profusely use the category of diaspora as a descriptive as well as an analytical tool. The term has been overrepresented in social sciences and, as Brubaker pointed out (2005), there is nowadays a proper diaspora of the term diaspora. I will refer to the term as a category of practice, a category of identification, a political tool developing around the frames of dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundaries maintaining. For an overview of the term, its conjugation, and its analytical value see Brubaker, 2005.

they explicitly represented their ancestral lands as the final destination of an identarian transition, the real home, the post-liminal phase of a rite de passage.

During our stay in Ethiopia, Johnny used to represent his journey precisely in the perspective of a permanent “return”. We moved together to Ethiopia, since he had to pursue an ethnographic research as I did. He focused on people of Ethiopian origins born and raised in western contexts who moved to their ancestral land for good. His research purpose, as he told me before we left, was two-folded. Besides his academic requirements, he wanted to know whether Ethiopia could have represented a site of permanent “return” in order to make his ancestral land a site of possible futures³.

Actually, Johnny’s attitude seemed to reproduce explicitly a widespread analytical perspective in the analysis of what both the public and the academic discourse framed as a “second generation belonging”⁴. Blaming those who “remained Italians”, in fact, mirrored a dominant perspective in the *second-generations studies* that considers children of immigrants’ social experience as bounded to a structural *doubleness* (Silverstein, 2005) between their ancestral identification and the place they were born and/or raised. Concepts like “shifting”, “transition”, and “hybridity”, represent analytical starting points in most of the analysis on children of immigrants’ relation with the ancestral land. At the same time, these concepts serve as the epistemological basis to work on their ancestral identification patterns both compared to the place they were born and raised⁵ in and in their mobility paths to the ancestral land⁶. In this perspective, a proper ontological divide emerges as a constituent feature of the children of immigrants’ social experience. This divide is well expressed in Levitt’s words (2009) working on second generations’ transnational embeddedness:

I argue that we should not dismiss outright the strong potential effect of being raised in a transnational social field. When children grow up in households and participate in organizations in which people, goods, money, ideas and practices from their parents’ countries of origin circulate in and out on a regular basis, they are not only socialized into the rules and institutions of the countries where they live, but also into those of the countries from whence their families come from. They acquire social contacts and skills that

³ Fieldnotes, Milano, 13.12.2015.

⁴ In the late 90’s the reference literature on the so called new *second generations* (the children of immigrants who, from the 70’s on, enacted global south-north migration paths) flourished. These studies have largely addressed young people of foreign origins by focusing on their assimilation pathways, identity formation, and sense of belonging. Amongst others see Alba and Nee, 1997; Rumbaut, 1997; Zhou, 1997; Brubaker, 2001; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001.

⁵ For relevant studies on the relation between children of immigrants and the Italian context see among others, Andall, 2002; Colombo, Rebughini, 2012; Marinaro, Walston, 2010; Riccio, Russo, 2011; Riccio, 2106, Queirolo Palmas, 2006, Ambrosini. 2006.

⁶ On children of immigrants’ mobility to the ancestral land see among others Wessendorf, 2010; Wessendorf, 2016; Christou, 2006; King, Christou, 2010; King, Christou, 2014; Levitt, 2009; Potter, Phillips, 2006; Potter, Phillips, 2008.

are useful in both settings. They master several cultural repertoires that they can selectively deploy in response to the opportunities and challenges they face (p.1226).

In this perspective (and that was my perspective when I moved to Ethiopia) Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' activation of an Habesha identification in Milano represented an incorporated response to the social and racial structures sustaining Italianness as an altero-referential discourse (Giuliani, 2014)⁷. Their ancestral land, consequently, should have represented the site where to expand their Habeshaness out of a marginalized diasporic space. I prepared my fieldwork on this theoretical basis: my main line of enquiry, aligned with the studies on what has been framed as the "second generations' counter diasporic journeys" (King, Christou, 2010), aimed at exploring the ways they dealt with the Ethiopian public space considering their western background. Were the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins able to assimilate into the mainstream society? Did they have to face processes of alterization even in Ethiopia?

Those preliminary questions resonating in the first days of my fieldwork in Ethiopia, together with Johnny's explicit representations of his Habeshaness, did not allow me to make sense of his discourse about "remaining Italian" in its specific context of enunciation. In fact, we were in an Italian restaurant of Addis Ababa, where Johnny insisted to go because, in his words, "*he wanted to have a proper meal*" after a couple of days we had only eaten injera. He confronted the quality of his tortellini dish with those he ate in Milano during our whole meal. All over the fieldwork, Italian restaurants represented the main contexts we referred to for our meals and the place where we met his friends. As I had the possibility to notice all over the fieldwork, by all means the practices related to his Italianness were far from being connected merely to food consumption. Besides his familiar network, most of Johnny's friends, contacts, reference places of the city were connected to Italy. The few Milanese of Ethiopian origins who moved to Ethiopia, the Ethiopian migrant returnees connected to his familiar network, even the places historically connected to the Italian presence in the Horn of Africa assumed a crucial value in his experience of the ancestral land. Above all, there was the *Juventus club*, founded by the Italians who remained in the region right after the end of World War II. Besides configuring as one of the main sport clubs of the city attracting the western expats in Addis Ababa, the *Juventus club* represented the institutional reference space of the Italian diasporic community in the city. We frequently attended the place to meet his friends, to use its free wifi connection, and to watch football matches of the Italian championship.

⁷ As I will show along this work, I will frame Italianness as a hegemonic construction (Gramsci, 1975) that reproduces by differentiating people within the national body according to a given social, legal, or racial status.

A few months later, however, Johnny's sentence about "remaining Italians" resonated very differently. I had to admit that the apparent contradiction between his words and his social positioning in the ancestral land had been informed by a certain methodological nationalism (Wimmer, Glick Schiller, 2002): a perspective where the place children of immigrants' grow up and their parents' place of origin overlap in the production of structurally double subjectivities. In a world ordered through the isomorphic relation between place and social belonging (Gupta, Ferguson, 1992), the alternative to "remaining Italians", shortly, would be only to become Habesha. There are not many other choices other than assimilating into the receiving context, developing an attraction towards the ancestral context, or laying in-between.

But what happens when the relation between "here" and "there" as a constitutive feature of the children of immigrants' experience breaks down? All along my fieldwork in Milano, many of the subjects I worked with told me that if I wanted to work on the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I should have moved to London. Effectively, while in Ethiopia the number of Italians of Ethiopian origins was in the order of a few dozens, I experienced that in London there were hundreds of children of immigrants born and raised in Milano who created powerful social networks in the city. This is not an isolated case. Other Italians were also leaving their country in masses: one on four of the total mobility rate of the Italians who moved abroad in 2015 is composed by people who acquired Italian citizenship during their lifepaths⁸. Once we abandon a sedentarist metaphysics (Malkki, 1992), a way of thinking producing fixed, bounded and rooted conceptions of culture and identity, shortly, a clearer picture arises: a picture that allows to work the difference between identity as a category of practice and identity as a category of analysis (Brubaker, Cooper, 2000), and consequently to shift on the investigation of the mechanisms by which this concept is crystallized as reality (Brubaker, 2004).

In this work, I will analyze the mobilization of a Habesha ancestral identification among Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in Milano, in Addis Ababa, in Mekele and in London. I will frame this process and its social salience, not in opposition but within the structural processes that reproduce their Italianness. Drawing on a mobility perspective (Hahn, Klute, 2007), I will specifically work on the enactment of a Habesha ancestral belonging between children of immigrants as social and spatial mobility tactics that allows them to navigate their differential condition compared to an hegemonic Italianness. With the turn of the new millennium spatial mobility started to be

⁸ Ismu Foundation. "È boom di acquisizioni di cittadinanza italiana". Milano, 5.07.2016.

considered itself as an object of enquire (Urry, 2000)⁹. The emphasis on spatial mobility in social theory led to the affirmation of a proper “nomadic metaphysics” (Creswell, 2006), with the consequence of producing an analytical and ethical opposition between movement and stasis (Gaibazzi, 2013; Faist, 2013). I am far from this perspective. In this work I will draw on a mobility perspective, in order to work the transnational space emerging from the interconnectedness between mobility and immobility (De Bruijn, van Dijk, 2012) where children of immigrants make sense of their social condition. In this space I will confront with local and transnational structures of inequality, possibilities and constraints reproducing the children of immigrants’ spatial and social regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013). Within these structures I will particularly focus on the ways the Italian national paradigm (intended as the overlapping of historical social and symbolic processes that both institutionally and in the everyday practice reproduce Italianness as a difference based social construction), entangles with Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins’ social experience. This relation, far from being confined within the national borders, activates in the whole transnational reference space of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. In this perspective, I will use the categories of mobility-immobility in their dichotomic conjugation in order to make sense of the ways children of immigrants navigate their social condition *within* and *out* of the national paradigm. The starting point of the work, therefore, lays in the inscription of the social experience of the so called “second generations” within a single frame reproducing a historically, socially, and symbolically determined social condition.

The second-generation condition

The association of the term *second generation* to a socially determined condition needs to be clarified. The expression “second generations” have long been debated in both the public and the academic debate and its value, as a descriptive, as well as a theoretical tool has been strongly contested¹⁰. The semantic value of the term, underlining an intergenerational continuity with their parents’ experience, structurally configure them as subjects in-between: in between two national paradigms, two social contexts, two belongings and so on. This perspective entered so powerfully in the analysis of children of immigrants’ social life to find a graphic connotation, the *hyphen* (Ambrosini, 2009): the term second generation, this way, turned out to represent a semantic referent aimed at bridging the gap between two differentially ordered spaces (Ethiopian-Italians,

⁹ For a review of the category of mobility as an analytical perspective see among others Sheller, Urry, 2006; Adey, Hannam, Merriman, Sheller, 2014.

¹⁰ I will specifically work on the value of the term and its contested analytical and descriptive value in chapt.2.

Eritrean-Italians and so on). The graphic adjunct of the hyphen, therefore, on the one hand made the term second generation as the representation of a structural *doubleness* and, on the other hand, represented a gate allowing children of immigrants to slide from a social, cultural, symbolic order to another by just shifting from one side of the hyphen to the other.

This perspective, which arose in parallel to the affirmation of a postcolonial western modernity, is based on a celebration, rather than on the enquiry of the concept of difference (Mezzadra, 2008 p.35). Through an acritical postcolonial apology of difference, actually, we would risk as Žižek stated in his harsh critic to the multicultural perspective, to keep the analysis “at distance” and to hide the real order of the present (1997). This statement is even more effective when applied to the Italian national paradigm, where a multicultural perspective, and its theoretical declinations (i.e. the Vertovec notion of *superdiversity* (2007) as a tool to explore the present multiethnic urban contexts) results of difficult application. The denial in the Italian public and political discourse of a multicultural society turns the concept of multiculturalism itself into a field of power relations based on difference (see Grillo, Pratt, 2002)¹¹.

These structures, therefore, require to elaborate on the concept of difference itself. The starting point of the analysis lays in one of the main outcomes of the anthropological tradition: it is exactly a comparative attitude that creates the elements of the comparison. Societies, cultures, ethnic groups are not given structures. In order to make them exist it is necessary to enact a series of procedures aimed at abstracting, ordinating and classifying the processes from the social continuum they are immersed in (Fabietti, 2013 [1995], p.34). These processes had been central in the development of the modern anthropology (Asad, 1973) as a space of interconnection with the structures of power producing the modern national order of things (Malkki, 1995). In the entanglement power/knowledge (Foucault, 1990 [1976]), difference emerges as a space of reproduction of a privileged position in a global landscape founded on unequal relations. In this perspective, the concept of difference may configure as a productive axis of enquiry, revealing the relations of inequality historically, socially, and symbolically reproducing differential subjects within the modern national body. This perspective, requires a semantical transition: rather than describing a relation of diversity, the concept of difference in the modern nation state is the result of historically deep relations of power aimed at reproducing the relation between hegemonic and

¹¹ On the contrary, I found the perspective very useful in the analysis of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins mobility to London, where multiculturalism represented one of the main rhetoric they enacted in order to activate mobility trajectories. See chapt.7.

subaltern subjects along racial, class and gender lines. The construction of an internal differentiation within the modern nation state, underline the ongoing reproduction of a colonial paradigm (Mezzadra, 2008, p.32). In the Italian case, where the *colonial subject* represented the counterpart of the production of a racially connoted and unitarian Italianness (Giuliani, 2014), the processes that from the end of the XX century reproduced an alterity within the national space (postcolonial mobility, transnational labor migrations and the new millennium forced migrations) have been framed through the same perspective. The nation state's differential paradigm, which reproduces the isomorphism between citizenship-state- and territorial belonging, therefore, produced second-class citizens (Balibar 2003 p.191) who are structurally differentiated within the national body. This process does not only happen on a legal point of view with the structural limitations in the formal acquisition of citizenship in the Italian legislative system. Considering the Italian national paradigm where the idea of citizenship lays in the intersection of a pretended territorial, cultural, and racial continuity, even Italian citizens who were born or raised within the national body can be structurally differentiated if they do not meet the characteristics reproducing hegemonic Italianness. Within this national paradigm, the term "second generation" turns out to represent the material representation of these differentiation processes, emphasizing a never ending continuity (on a racial, cultural, symbolic perspective) with an incommensurable otherness.

All of these processes, far from being hidden, play a major part in the conjugation of the present public debate about the relation between children of immigrants and Italianness. A good example of this, is the present Italian public debate on the possibility of a citizenship reform (unhappily called *ius soli*¹²) facilitating the access to the Italian citizenship to the children of immigrants. A law that would have passed as a mere attestation of the presence of at least one million people born or raised in Italy who lack citizenship recognition¹³ turned out in a political battlefield. The political parties opposing the law explicitly emphasized the lack of 'Italianness' of the children of immigrants due to their "other" background. The proposers, on the contrary, underlined how children of immigrants raised in the Italian setting and, therefore, incorporated Italianness. In this paradoxical debate, what remain unquestioned was exactly the differential paradigm sustaining the concept of Italianness, where "second generations" structurally configure as flawed subjects.

¹² The law aims at overtaking the law 91, 1992, granting Italian citizenship on *ius sanguinis*, and contemplating the concession of Italian citizenship to children of immigrants (only if they were born and continuously raised in Italy) at their 18th. The present debated law would allow children of immigrants who are raised in the Italian setting faster paths in their citizenship recognition. The term "*Ius Soli*" by which the law has been framed in the Italian public debate, therefore, is deceptive.

¹³ For data and wider information on the citizenship reform activism see <http://www.italianisenzacittadinanza.it/>

In this perspective, the term “second generation” itself turns out to represent an attribution aimed at reproducing a differentiation within the national body along the lines of a hegemonic Italianness. Rather than representing a descriptive or an analytical tool, the term “second generation” is the qualifier of a differential social condition. Through a process of adjectivization and hyphenation, therefore, a second-generation condition emerges as a differential space within the modern national paradigm. In the Italian social space, this conceptual shift paves the way to the opening of an analytical space where the past and the present structures reproducing italianness through *otherness* overlap: the colonial and postcolonial paradigm, the transnational migrations, the present Mediterranean route, entangle and positionally determine the ongoing reproduction of a second-generation condition.

These processes, rather than representing mere discursive tools aimed at reproducing a differential Italianness, may be incorporated in unsettled ways by children of immigrants and acting on the reproduction of a second-generation condition. This is the fate of the term Habesha, an ancient ethnonym related to the Horn of Africa’s social space, that Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins incorporated to deal with their second-generation condition. In the entanglement of historical, political, and structural changes connecting ancestral identification with the national paradigm, the analysis of a second-generation condition can intercept the structures of differentiation aimed at its reproduction, as well as the tactics the social actors enact in order to navigate it. In this perspective, the value of the Habesha identification among the Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins is twofold. On the one hand it represents a site of incorporation of their immobile condition of differential Italians. On the other hand, it represents a source of social and spatial mobility they can activate in order to deactivate the differential contents reproducing their second-generation condition.

Habesha in immobility: ancestral identification as a site of incorporating difference

On 3rd October 2013 a ship with more than 300 people, most of them from Ethiopia and Eritrea, sank off the coast of Lampedusa. The shipwreck strongly shook the Italian public debate on forced migrations and represented a watershed in the mechanisms of management of the Mediterranean route, with the activation of the sea rescue operation “Mare Nostrum”.

In the immediate aftermath of the Lampedusa shipwreck, a group of Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins organized a demonstration in the city with a big participation of the Milanese citizenry. The main frame they chose to legitimize their quests was a common Habesha

identification with the Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers crossing the Mediterranean Sea¹⁴. They soon became among the main actors in the debate on forced migrations in the city. In the following months, in fact, they actively engaged in the reception of the asylum seekers informally crossing the Italian borders to reach North European contexts, transiting in the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora neighborhood of Porta Venezia.

What is interesting to note, by the way, is that until that time this spontaneous group had never been engaged in the Milanese public discourse, and, above all, had no connections with Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers. The term Habesha itself, in fact, until the Lampedusa shipwreck, had been mobilized as a source of recognition in the Milanese city space, representing a marker of a shared social condition uniting Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins compared to the wider Milanese space. The Lampedusa shipwreck, therefore, led to a new configuration of a *second-generation* Habeshanness. Could it be possible to imagine that their common identification with asylum seekers had always been there waiting to activate at the right moment? If we assume a perspective in which children of immigrants' ancestral identification configure as the loyal reproduction of their parents' social experience, this would be our starting point. The immediate consequence of this, therefore, would be to bound their social experience to the dynamics of the Horn of Africa. Whether this perspective powerfully works as an external representation that the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enact as a source of legitimation, it seems to have no evidence on both an historical and an empirical point of view. Let's get back to the children of immigrants' engagement in the asylum seekers reception in Milano. Ethiopian and Eritrean first generation migrants (the parents of the people who organized the demonstration) mainly defect and overtly criticized the demonstration. In their opinion their children's engagement was totally unrelated with the way to manage a kind of mobility that had always represented a constitutive feature of the diasporic space of Porta Venezia. Once we detach the effectiveness of the children of immigrants' ancestral identification from a structural continuity with the ancestral land meanings and dynamics, a clearer picture arises. Ancestral identification, in fact, entangles with the wider national paradigm they are confronted with. Furthermore, it differently articulates according to the structural changes running across the national space.

The Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins shift towards a conjugation of their ancestral identification as a space of continuity with asylum seekers, in fact, coincided with a wider overturn in the processes of reproduction of the Italian national paradigm. Long silent in the public discourse

¹⁴ I will deeply explore this process in chapt.3.

and relegated to the borders of the national body, from 2013 on, the Mediterranean route turned out to represent a central issue in the Italian national space. The refugees' issue fully entered in the processes of re-articulating Italianness and served as a structural otherness aimed at reproducing the national body. The Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' Habeshanness, in this perspective, worked as the symbolic site of incorporation of this difference, and a way to enact politics of recognition (Taylor, 1994). Paradoxically, their attributed continuity with the Horn of Africa dynamics allowed them to legitimize as political actors in the public debate on forced migrations in Milano.

All along this work I will consider the ways second-generation Habeshanness positionally shifts according to the situational discourses and the practices reproducing a hegemonic Italianness. Children of immigrants incorporate the structures of the difference placing them in a racial, as well as migrant otherness: through these structures they socially site within the public space. This perspective allows to consider the processes intervening in the production of children of immigrants' ancestral identification in the intersection with the national paradigm. It means that a second-generation condition, rather than being produced through a set of processes external to the place they were born or raised into, constantly reproduce along the lines of differentiation by which these structures are framed, modulated, and traduced by a hegemonic national discourse. This condition can be powerfully resumed in Johnny's expression I placed at the beginning of this chapter. His blaming of the Italian intercultural perspective moved from an awareness of the immobility (or immutability) of the hegemonic structures sustaining Italianness. Stuck in the national paradigm, children of immigrants have to paradoxically navigate the differential space reproducing their social condition as a source of recognition. Shortly, in a national space reproduced through its structural otherness, children of immigrants' inclusion cannot be other than differential. Children of immigrants' immobility compared to these structures, therefore, by conjugating their ancestral identification in the national space, reproduce a proper differential Italianness as an everyday practice.

The relation between the concept of place as a hierarchically ordered set of elements (de Certeau, 2011 [1980]) and social identification, in this perspective, turns out to represent a crucial factor in the reproduction of a second-generation condition. Habesha enters the hegemonic order reproducing Italianness, and works as its structural counterpart: an otherness to frame, to distance, to incapsulate, in order to reproduce the national paradigm. What happens, anyway, if we frame the relation between place and identification out of sedentarist metaphysics? The processes

intervening in the ongoing redefinition of a second-generation condition, in fact, independently exists out of a national paradigm. The ancestral land dynamics, the historicized diasporic structures, the Mediterranean route itself, produce powerful discursive orders, and consequently, different hierarchies. In this triangulation between mobility, identification, and place, new configurations arise.

By working on the ways children of immigrants make sense of the processes that underpin the reproduction of a second-generation condition in a mobility perspective, it is possible to see two structural shifts. The hegemonic order reproducing their condition in the place they were born and raised deactivates, and the patterns of identification they used to reproduce to deal with a hegemonic Italianness structurally change. An interconnected space arises, where children of immigrants navigate their differential condition out of the discursive order reproducing the national paradigm.

Habesha as a source of mobility. Practicing the difference to navigate a second-generation condition in the social space of the diaspora

In order to change my perspective on the Milanese space, I had to leave. In the construction of the analytical perspective, the analysis of children of immigrants' relation with the ancestral land (Ethiopia) and with the main hub of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in Europe (London) played a crucial role. The analytical perspective, therefore, arose parallelly to the construction of a multisited ethnography, working on sites where the structures reproducing children of immigrants differential Italianness deactivate.

In Ethiopia, particularly, I had the possibility to note that Italians of Ethiopian origins represented their Italianness, and the legal, social and symbolic status it entails, as the main source of legitimation and recognition to site in the Ethiopian social space. Italianness plays a crucial role even in their social positioning in the European social space. This is the case of London. Despite they make sense of Habesha diasporic networks and connection as a mobility source, in the confrontation with the London space their Italianness takes on a decisive value, representing the legal, social and symbolic vector of identification to work their condition of Italian expats.

Shortly, out of the national paradigm producing a stratified and hierarchical order, Italianness emerges as a constitutive element of their second-generation condition, and orients their paths of mobility. They navigate and re-elaborate the social, class, and racial paradigms entangling in the reproduction of a second-generation condition as self-valuing attributes.

In the activation of a virtuous circle (Riccio, 2007, p.42) where I benefited of the previous steps of my research, therefore, the Milanese context turned out to represent the start and the end of the ethnographic journey. The Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' processes of diasporic engagement, at the end of my ethnographic journey, took on a totally different value. The diaspora space of Porta Venezia, despite being represented as a 'black ghetto' in the Italian public discourse, actually configures as a transnational hub and a field of possibility on an economic, social, and symbolic level. In this space, fueled by the ongoing contact between different social, legal, national, political categories united by transnational regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013) the Italian discursive order represents only a part of a wider transnational field of power relationship. Children of immigrants' Italianness, and their attributed linguistic, social, and cultural competence of the Italian public space, in this context, turns out to represent a self-valuing attribute to join a Habesha diasporic social field. Children of immigrants' experience, therefore, entangles with deeper processes that allows them to mobilize their condition out of the national paradigm despite of their spatial immobility.

By focusing on (im)mobility (Salazar, Smart, 2011) as a perspective in the analysis of the second-generation condition, interesting outcomes arise: ancestral identification turns into a source to mobilize in order to enter a spatial order where the hegemonic paradigms reproducing a second-generation condition deactivate. At the same time, the national paradigm aimed at reproducing children of immigrants' differential condition turns into a space of social identification and recognition they mobilize to navigate the structural otherness they are confronted with in their mobility experiences. This process, actually, is far from being the forerunner of the reconfiguration of a second-generation condition. Following De Certeau's (2011 [1980]), it would be possible to affirm that the children of immigrants' mobilization of the structures reproducing their differentiation have a tactical function, and work as a space of possibility out of the relation with a hegemonic national paradigm. A paradigm that obviously transgresses national borders: in all of the ethnographic sites I worked, the structures reproducing a transnational Italianness constantly intersected Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility trajectories and reproduced their differential condition.

Including the analysis of a second-generation condition in a mobility perspective allows to discover how identification arises as a category of practice inscribed in a transnational field of power relationship. A field of opportunities and constraints activates in the navigation of the transnational structures reproducing their differential condition compared to the national paradigm. A

perspective of mobility, therefore, allows to re-articulate the key categories acting on the reproduction of the concept of “second generations” itself, out of a methodological nationalism. The field of meaning around the triad “home-belonging-nationality”, as the central categories of inquire in *second generations* studies, turns out to represent itself the result of a process of differentiation. A differentiation deriving from a methodological nationalism orienting the analytical as well as the political analysis of the phenomenon.

A perspective reproducing the concept of second generation out of the field of power it lays, is no longer sustainable to make sense of the present social configurations. By extending the analysis on historically deep and spatial broad processes, on the contrary, it is possible to make sense of the reasons why the social lives of subjects who were born and raised in a sited place, who are citizens of this place, and who have very few contacts with the social meanings related to their ancestral land, turn their social identification in a transnational field. The reference group I chose in this research, and the place they were born and raised in, works in this perspective as a powerful acid test in the understanding of a second-generation condition in a mobility perspective.

A deep analysis of the differential paradigm reproducing a second generation Habesha identification in Milano, in fact, allows to site the entanglement of their condition with diasporic transnational networks, with the ancestral land, or with the refugees’ flow re-configuring the present European social space.

Milano as an interconnected space. Siting the exploration of a second-generation condition although since the late 70’s the Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Milano had a constituent value in the city landscape (see chapt.1), their relation with the wider Milanese space has always been placed within a frame of structural difference. This historicized otherness has always been placed along the structures reproducing the isomorphic relation between space, place, identity, and nationality, sustaining a racial oriented reproduction of the national paradigm. The Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in Milano, in this perspective, would represent the present reverberation of this paradigm. The Milanese space, by the way, precisely because of its historicized function in the reproduction of the paradigm of difference sustaining Italianness, represent a strategical site where to place the analysis of a second-generation condition in a perspective of mobility. The Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Milano, in fact, allows to work on the ways the ongoing migration patterns from the Horn of Africa to Italy, enter as a constituent part of the ways Italianness reproduce as a difference based hegemonic formation.

Milano, from the late 70's, represented the main reference space in Italy for postcolonial migrations' secondary movements due to the field of opportunities it represented in the national space (see chapt.1). For those who moved from Ethiopia and especially Eritrea to Italy, the networks related to the Italian presence in the region represented a crucial source of mobility. The colonial paradigm framing the Ethiopians and the Eritreans in a position of structural subordination in the colony and the postcolony, reproduced once in Milano, where postcolonial migrants faced the lack of formal recognition (the first law aimed at recognizing the migrant presence in Italy dates 1986), and a differentiation process pushing them in a urban underclass.

The Milanese context, furthermore, played an important role in the definition of the present national configuration in Ethiopia and Eritrea, configuring as a crucial and interconnected diasporic hub in the long-distance nationalist struggle of the ethnic based political movements of TPLF (Tigrayan people liberation front) and EPLF (Eritrean people liberation front) actually ruling respectively in Ethiopia and Eritrea (see chapt.1).

The Milanese interconnection with the Horn of Africa dynamics turned out to be visible in the aftermath of the Ethio-Eritrean war (1998-2000) and the successive forced transnational migration flows that opened in the region. Precisely because of its central role as diasporic hub, the Milanese setting turned out to represent one of the main reference spaces (as a settlement context, but especially as a transit space towards north European contexts) for Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers across the Mediterranean route¹⁵.

The intersection and the overlapping of these structures with the Italian national paradigm, while acting on the reproduction of a second-generation differential condition, turned out to represent the space the Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins started to navigate in order to face their structural immobility compared to a hegemonic Italianness.

The Milanese context, in this perspective, represents a site interconnecting different places and social processes under a common structural framework (de Bruijn, van dijk, 2012). A mobility perspective, therefore, on the one hand represents an analytical posture in order to make sense of the effects, the models of incorporation, the social navigation of the structures reproducing a second-generation condition. On the other hand, it allows to explore the historical processes, the institutional regulation and control models, and power relationships associated with the mobility trajectories of the subjects involved (Adey, Hannam, Merriman, Sheller, 2014).

¹⁵ It is possible to find a brilliant visual account of these processes in *Asmarina*, a documentary on the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in Milano by Medhin Paolos and Alan Maglio (2015).

Between methodology and epistemology. The “clue paradigm” and the second-generation condition

The ethnographic process, in this perspective, represents a relational pathway between significant sites (Boccagni, 2016). A pathway that allows to access a field of opportunities and constraints, where local practices turn out to reveal wider geographically distant structural processes. Interconnected spaces, therefore, turn out to represent the ethnographic operative context (Riccio, 2014, p.11). An operative context to explore by both following subjects in their journeys, or exploring the processes working in the reproduction of their mobility patterns. A multi local ethnography, and its exploration, therefore, configure simultaneously as a methodological tool, a narrative strategy, and an ethnographic object itself (Giuffrè, Riccio, 2012). The opening of the ethnographic enquiry to a wider social space, however, does not automatically translate into a holistic perspective (Falzon, 2009). On the contrary, it leads us to a non-normative perspective of space, that starts from its configuration as a product of interrelation, its openness and multiplicity, and its ongoing social reproduction (Massey, 2005). Within this spatial configuration multi-sitedness implies “both expansion and limitation of the ‘site’, and represents both an analytical framework and relational practice” (Gallo, 2009). The site itself, therefore, far from representing a pre-given analytical space, turns into a constant space of (co)production.

The interconnectedness between different sites required to focus on their structural links and the ways they produce an unitarian framework in order to avoid to get lost in the mare-magnum of an ethnographic experience dislocated in places and times. In a social field where the social actors perform ethnic identification as discrete category in their social positioning, these structures, far from being explicit, were often expressed in micro-practices and fragments. These marginal data turned out to represent proper *spies* of a wider analytical space. I argue that a “clue paradigm” (Ginzburg, 1979) in a transnational interconnected space, may represent a form of knowledge that, on the one hand, allows to destabilize hegemonic interpretative models, and, on the other hand, opens the analysis to wider structural processes.

This perspective strongly acted on the data collection methodologies and the research positionality. When I entered the fieldwork in Milano I found very difficult to site my research and my social positioning compared to the social actors. I moved in Milano 4 years before I started the research, so, despite the starting point of the ethnography was “at home”, I was a “foreigner” compared to the people I worked with. I had no clue of the historical city dynamics shaping their presence in the city, I had only a superficial knowledge of the suburbs where they spent most of their lives, and I did

not know most of their reference points in Milano. It was paradoxical, therefore, that according to their explicit representations, rather than focusing on their relation with the Milanese space as the starting point of the research, I spent the first part of my fieldwork trying to make sense of their *otherness*, linking their social patterns in Milano to the social and historical upturns in the Horn of Africa. Since the discourses and the practices I activated were aimed at reproducing my presence in a structural otherness, I conversely reinforced their external representations bounding their social experience to the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social space. This process strongly reverberated in my social positioning on the fieldwork. By channeling the conversation on social and political issues related to the Ethiopian and Eritrean space, I started from the pre-assumption that I had to navigate their attitudes to suspicious and mistrusts since it represented a constitutive feature of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic subjectivities (Massa, 2016a). In my previous research in Israel where I worked with Ethiopian Jews and Eritrean refugees (Grimaldi, 2013), I incorporated a practice that Massa's (2016a) defines as "learning not to ask", in order to avoid to turn data collection into ambiguous and suspicious practices (p.271). This practice, by the way, especially at the beginning of the fieldwork, entered in a tense relation with an in-depth ethnographic methodology, and activated an idiosyncratic relation between the perception they had of me as an ethnographer and my silences. In my experience of a super-exposed field of ethnic and political representations it was precisely my perceived unclear position on the fieldwork that activated a circuit of ambiguity. This undefined position led me to risk a proper expulsion from the field. It was march 2015, and, drawing on a network I built during a previous experience of action-research in Porta Venezia (Grimaldi, 2015), I had just started my PhD fieldwork. Two of the people I was working with asked me to make my research goals clearer. When I told them that I wanted to work on the reconfiguration of their social experience following the ongoing forced migrations in the Mediterranean this is the answer they gave me

T: We know you and we know you are a good guy. But you have to know that. You will never work on these topics. It is a taboo for us.

W: Do you know what you're saying around? Do you know what they told me? That I do not have to go around with you. That you are dangerous. That You are a Mossad spy¹⁶.

This event, represented an important turning point in my research for two different, but interconnected reasons. First of all, it confirmed the importance of the "unmentioned" as a practice of ethnographic negotiation and as an incorporated cultural code whose infraction is socially

¹⁶ Fieldnotes, 11.03.2015.

sanctioned. This perspective turned out to reveal as almost useless in the daily relation with Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, but it allowed me to ethnographically work the multi-sited fieldwork and the plurality of subjects, institutions, and groups intersecting their lifepaths.

By the way, this event, represented itself a “spy” a “clue” of the necessity to differently frame the social field I was going to explore. In fact, in the perspective I was going to develop, where my analytical reference points conflated with the external representations of the social actors, I took their performed *otherness* as the starting point of the research. By inscribing them into a differential space, I myself was going to reiterate the structures reproducing their differential Italianness, relegating them into an ethnic and racial niche.

In the changing of the analytical framework, my social positioning on the fieldwork gradually transformed. All along the ethnographic fieldwork, I combined different research methodologies according to the different settings I have experienced. In Ethiopia, because of the ethnographic structural conditions (I have been an active actor in the experience of “return” of Johnny an Italian of Ethiopian origins) I mainly worked using impregnation (Olivier de Sardan, 1995) or perdution (Piasere, 2002), a perspective where the ethnographic intention, represents a successive moment compared to the ethnographic experience. This experience of impregnation acted on the construction of the theoretical perspective and determined my following positioning on the fieldwork. I realized the necessity to analyze the second-generation condition out of the ancestral land/receiving context dynamic. That was one of the main motivations that led me to focus on Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins’ mobility in the diaspora space (and specifically on London) and to avoid to deepen the “return” dynamics in Eritrea. In London, due to the absence of a social group sited in a specific place (differently than Milano), and to the structural constraints the city imposes in terms of time management and distances, I mainly worked through semi structured interviews. The London context, in this perspective, worked mainly as a site of validation where I triangulated (Olivier de Sardan 1995, p.46) the data with the analytical perspective I built between Milano and Ethiopia.

At the beginning of the fieldwork in Milano, actually, the research activity seemed to me of difficult realization. Both the practices and the explicit representation of the social actors I worked with converged in a field of meanings bounding them to the diasporic social world. In my work for impregnation at the beginning of the fieldwork in Milano, therefore, I turned out to incorporate cultural and linguistic codes, as well as everyday practices related to the Ethiopia and Eritrean diasporic social world considering them as strategies of distance reduction to enact in the relation

with children of immigrants. Conversely, I drastically reduced (or even hid) my subjectivity on the fieldwork. All along the work, actually, I turned out to recognize that what I considered as practices aimed at gaining access to the fieldwork reproduced the differential paradigm acting on their second-generation condition. The pre-understandings (Fabietti, 1999) that oriented my presence at the beginning of the research have not allowed me to make sense of my role in the fieldwork. By underestimating my racially and class-connoted Italianness as a space of confrontation, my research lacked of an ethic perspective¹⁷. By ethic I do not mean a bio-moral normalization of the researcher presence in the fieldwork, or a presence systematized by deontological codes where data measurability and standardization of the methods are the criteria to validate a research¹⁸. On the contrary, by ethic I mean an everyday presence, a sited competence, a wider *response-ability* (Haraway, 2008) that, far from closing ourselves from research subjects, allows to cultivate sensitivity towards the other in an ethnographic sense.

It was exactly the lack of empathy that created distance between me and the subjects I worked with at the beginning of the fieldwork in Milano. In Ethiopia, on the contrary, during shared journey's experience with Johnny I understood how crucial it was to change my social positioning. It was not only the emphasis the children of immigrant's I worked with put on their Italianness as a source of legitimation in the ancestral land, it was a matter of everyday life. The people I worked with (and especially Johnny with whom I shared my everyday life 24/7 for three months), wanted to know about me, about my thoughts, about sensitive issues. They wanted to argue, to discuss. In a way, they wanted to meet me. In the daily "useless" talks I had with Johnny, for example, when we argued about the Italian internal political and social affairs, the U.S coming elections, the spread of the far right in Europe, I gradually recognized the central role of social and symbolic structures bounding the subjects I worked with to the Italian social space. The Ethiopian experience, in this perspective, allowed me to rework my previous fieldwork in Milano. I understood that in my previous ethnographic experience, the practices and the structures of Italianness represented the central issue in the conjugation of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins everyday life in the diaspora space. Despite I had underestimated them, they emerged in the fieldnotes through apparently irrelevant discourses and practices, representing "spies" of a different analytical framework

¹⁷ The following paragraph is the result of a confrontation I had with my PhD colleague Giacomo Pozzi. Its first systematization has been presented in the SIAA 2015 conference. 17/12/2015 Quale implicazione? Contributo dialogico per una comprensione delle ricerche engaged. III Congresso Nazionale SIAA - Società Italiana di Antropologia: Applicata: Antropologia Applicata e Approccio Interdisciplinare, Prato, Italy.

¹⁸ This process can be associated to a wider "Audit culture" (Van Aken, 2017) that developed in academic procedures and funds assignment.

(Ginzburg, 1979). These spies, therefore, allowed me to re-calibrate my ethnographic perspective, and to socially site in the fieldwork in an “ethical” perspective. In this perspective, the Milanese social space represents the starting point and the end of both the ethnographic journey as well as of the epistemological process¹⁹.

In the making of the chapters I have tried to make sense of this isomorphic relation between my analytical journey and the transition from the structural immobility of the Habesha second-generation condition compared to the national paradigm, to the extreme mobilization of their social condition by navigating the Habesha transnational space.

Structure of the work

The work consists of eight chapters and is divided in two main parts.

In chapter one, I trace a genealogy of the connections between the term Habesha and the term Italianness. I work on the colonial and postcolonial paradigm reproducing the relation between the Italian and the Horn of Africa space. I will specifically focus on the ways this paradigm entangled with the local space of the Ethiopian and the Eritrean highlands (the ancestral space of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I worked with) creating an interconnected space between the present Italian setting and the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social field.

In chapter two and three I analyze the ways Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins make sense of their ancestral identification stuck in the structural immobility of the Italian national paradigm.

In chapter two, I focus on the ways a hegemonic paradigm sustaining Italianness produces what I call a Habesha second-generation condition as a space of continuity with the migrant experience and as a racialized formation aimed at reproducing an incommensurable otherness.

In chapter three I work on the processes of mobilization of ancestral identification within the national paradigm. Specifically, I focus on the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins’ ethnic engagement in the refugees’ flow across the Mediterranean route, where the emphasis on a common Habeshanness with asylum seekers turned into a politic of recognition in the wider Milanese space.

In the remaining chapters, I will work on the structures and the tactics the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins reproduce in order to mobilize their ancestral identification in a mobility perspective.

¹⁹ This is the reason that led me to divide the Milanese fieldwork between the beginning and at the end of the work (chapt3-chapt.8).

In chapters four, five and six I focus on the ways children of immigrants articulates their relation with ancestral land, with a specific focus on Ethiopia.

In chapter four, I work on the so called “second generations return” articulates as a space of structural differentiation, where the practices ascribing children of immigrants to a structural otherness takes on a crucial value in articulating their experience of the ancestral land.

In chapter five I specifically focus on the ways Italianness configurate as a space of social mobility in the ancestral land and the ways they conjugate their Italian legal, social and symbolic status as a strategy of economic and social legitimation.

In chapter six, on the contrary, I work on the ways the structures sustaining a hegemonic Italianness enters in the making of the Italians of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic experience. I will specifically consider the ways a postcolonial paradigm articulates in the present and reproduce their differential condition in the ancestral land.

Chapter seven is an exploratory analysis of the ways a second-generation condition reproduces out of the binary relation between the ancestral land and the receiving context. I focus on Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins’ mobility in the European social space, and specifically to London. I consider the ways the structures reproducing their ancestral identification intersect in the making of their condition of Italian expats.

The final chapter considers the ways Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins mobilize their ancestral identification without spatial mobility. I focus on their relation with the diasporic neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia and the ways their condition entangled with historical as well as contingent structures reproducing a social, physical, and analytical space that scholars started to call as the Black Mediterranean. In the daily interactions with migrants and refugees living or transiting in the diaspora space, they reproduce italianness as a source of legitimation that allows them to join a transnational social field.

Chapter 1: Italianness and Habesha. Genealogy of a differential relation

1.1 Introduction

In the understanding of the processes producing what I named as an Habesha's second-generation condition, it is necessary to preliminary make sense of the wider structural processes that led to its condition of existence. The Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I worked with are the offspring of the migrant generation, which from the early 70's moved from the Horn of Africa to Italy. The Milanese context, therefore, has been the place they were born and raised, and has heavily determined their condition. By the way, by flattening the analysis of their social condition starting from the arrival of their parents' generation we would miss the point. I argue that, in order to make sense of the ways the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins deal with their social condition, it is necessary to apply a genealogical perspective on the system of power they have to confront (Foucault, 1984). Specifically, I will concentrate on the term Italianness and the term Habesha, two central identification markers reproducing a second-generation condition. Rather than focusing on a historical overview of the two terms, I will work on their contact points. I will focus on the ways Habesha and Italianness, in their ethnic, racial, regional, and national declinations structurally entangled and fueled each other. Specifically, I will discuss the ways the two terms re-articulated in a relationality that dates back to the beginning of the Italian colonial enterprise in the Horn of Africa until present days, and the structural relations they enacted both in Italy and in the Horn. From the production of a racial connoted national identity in Italy, to the making of the Ethiopian and Eritrean national paradigm, from regional mobility processes in the Horn region to transnational postcolonial migration paths, the relation between the two terms has always been expressed along the line of a structural differentiation. A structural differentiation that reverberates in the present diaspora space. In this perspective, by considering the historical processes nourishing this relation, it will be possible to make sense of an Italian Habesha's second-generation condition as a historical product stemming from the making of the Italian national paradigm.

1.2 Italianness in the making of a colonial otherness

Italianness, as a marker of a given social identification is a relative new concept. Although it is possible to trace back the widespread use of the term since the renaissance (Triandafyllidou, 2003), it became a political project only in the late 19th century. By the way, in the wake of the European nationalist spread, the necessity of inventing a national tradition (Hobsbawm, 2002 [1983]) and of

reproducing the isomorphic relation between a territory and a national identification in Italy clashed with its structural post-unitarian disaggregation. The symbolic production of an Italian imagined community (Anderson, 1983) had to face the North-South internal differentiation, following the forced annexation of the *Regno delle Due Sicilie* and the hegemonic position of the Savoia reign in the novel national configuration. The famous sentence “We made Italy, we must now make Italians” (attributed to Massimo D’Azeglio¹), represents one of the most iconic quotes to explain the Italian structurally diversified panorama out of its territorial and political unification². Specifically, the North-South structurally unequal relation produced a proper racial and social system of differentiation that paved the way for the “two Italies theory”, along the line of the developing paradigm of modernity in the European social space. The hegemonic Italy of the north, self-assimilated to the modern northern European nation-state; the other one, in the south, had been assimilated to an attributed *savage space* related to the African continent³.

As Gaia Giuliani underlined (2014), from the immediate post unitarian period (1870) to the fascist racial laws (1936), the processes of social and racial differentiation represented a core feature of Italianness. In this respect, drawing on Guillaumin (1995 [1972]), she underlined how the major version of Italianness derives from the altero-referential nature of both Liberal and Fascist Italy’s racialization system (2014, p.572). A system of racialization that is centered on the other, where the assignment of a precise color produces the racial identity of the self (p.573).

In the making of Italianness as a process of social, racial, and symbolic differentiation, therefore, the relation with a colonial otherness played a decisive role.

1.2.1 Italianness in the making of a colonial paradigm

The beginning of the Italian colonial enterprise is commonly dated with the acquisition of the Assab bay by the Italian Rubattino Shipping Company (1869). Since that time, Italy progressively expanded its domination, until the contested Treaty of Wuchale (1889), by which the Emperor Menelik II dealt out a part of his territory to the Italian Kingdom. One year later, the official “Eritrean colony” was born.⁴ It would have later been called “*colonia primigenia*”, the starting point of a new “Italic stirpe”.

¹ Massimo d’Azeglio, was a Piedmontese-Italian statesman. He was Prime Minister of Sardinia for almost three years, until his rival Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour succeeded him.

² On the North South differential relation in the making of the Italian national paradigm see Gramsci, 1974 [1966].

³ For a wider discussion on the making of an internal differentiation in the reproduction of Italianness see Patriarca, 2010.

⁴ The controversial processes that led to making of the Eritrean colony, specifically its territorial definition, reverberated all along the 20th century and represented one of the causes of the Ethio-Eritrean border conflict of the 1998. See. Negash, Tronvoll, 2000; Lyob, 2000.

The imperialist ambitions of the Italian reign, by the way, were strongly reduced following the 1896 Adua battle, where the Italian army was defeated by the troops of Menelik II. This episode represented a long stop for the Italian colonial ambitions. At the same time, it strongly impacted on the processes of reproduction of an hegemonic Italianness on the model of the North European nation states modernist paradigm. According to the positivist paradigm spread in Europe from the mid XIX century on, with the claim of the white man burden as justification for the colonial paradigm, Adua, where an African army humiliated European power, led Italy to the level of a semi-civilized society (Patriarca, 2010).

Until the end of the XIX century, furthermore, the mobility of the Italians to the colonies was absolutely inconsistent. In 1893 there were 623 Italians in Eritrea and even less in Somalia. Nothing compared to the more than 3million settlers who migrated to North and South America (Labanca, 2001). As Pratt noted (2002), it was exactly along the late XIX century mass migration to the US that, for the first time, in order to face the othering processes Italians were confronted with, the expression "Italianness" arose as an identification tool overcoming the internal processes of North-South differentiation.

In Italy, on the contrary, the altero-referential paradigms reproducing a unitarian Italianness stayed silent until the affirmation of Fascism in 1922. Although one decade before, as Proglia (2016) underlined, imaginaries of Italianness played a decisive role in the Italian decision to undertake the Libyan campaign, it was the resemblance of the Libyan territory, rather than an opposition with its population, the driving force of the colonial enterprise. Specifically, the idea of an Italianness structurally bound to the Mediterranean arose as an ongoing reinvention of the national paradigm bound to the Italo-Mediterranean centrality of the classical period. In this process, Libya should have represented the opposite shore of a space of continuity (p. 216).

The Mediterraneanization of Italianness, during the liberal period, by the way, represented a strong tool in the redefinition of the relation between an Italian center and a colonial Africa. As Ellena (2008) underlined, the representations of the Mediterranean as an Italian space, produced an African otherness, where the Italian internal differentiation recomposed in the name of a colonial project representing the redemption of a proletarian nation oppressed by the North European capitalistic states. This social configuration would have been radicalized and elevated to a political project with the Fascist takeover (p.721).

The fascist rhetoric reproduced Italianness as a space of continuity with the Roman Empire, in a convergence of its imaginaries as a revival of the Roman grandeur. The Italian Mediterraneanness

arose as a site of legitimacy, and the symbolic basis of the Italian whiteness. This process, on the one hand, overturned the social Darwinist thesis about the non-whiteness of the Mediterranean nations, and, on the other hand, recomposed the North-South internal paradigm of differentiation (Giuliani, 2014). The whitening of the Mediterranean space as the basis of the “*stirpe Italica*”, found in a colonial otherness the elected space of its social reproduction. The production of a set of discourses and practices aimed at stressing a structural differentiation between a recomposed and unitarian Italianness and a colonial otherness, served both to affirm the civilizing mission of Italian colonialism (equally to the European powers) and to legitimize an Italian whiteness. This differential paradigm, reproducing a white Italianness in relation to the colony is well expressed in Giuliani’s theory about the *whitening* function of the concubinage between Italian men and colonized women (especially in Eritrea)⁵, a practice unofficially tolerated until the proclamation of the racial laws in 1937. As Giuliani stated:

The informal excuse that the regime produced to tolerate this was, once again, the alleged proximity-difference between the colonizer and the colonized, which had been maintained since the Liberal period: ‘they’ were similar but inferior - they thus needed to be (biologically) whitened (p. 581).

In the relation with the colony, Italianness, therefore, connoted as a white, hegemonic, and masculine construction.

The relation between the colonial space and the production of a racially, socially and gendered connoted Italianness was institutionalized with the fascist occupation of Ethiopia and the proclamation of the AOI (the Italian East Africa) as a part of the Italian empire in 1936. It was reinforced one year later, with the promulgation of the racial laws, institutionalizing the structural differentiation of Italianness to preserve from the contacts with colonized subjects. This process increased parallelly to the institutionalization of the projects aimed at making the colonies (especially Ethiopia) the recipient of the Italian transnational migrations. Ethiopia, represented, in this perspective, a space of possibility where Italiannes could both proliferate and preserve in a hierarchically ordered space (Fuller, 2007).

In the Italian relation with the colonial space, and specifically with Ethiopia and Eritrea, it is possible, therefore, to trace a proper systematization of the contents related to Italianness. The Italian altero-referential system where an attributed structural otherness fueled the processes orienting its social

⁵ The out of marriage contacts in Eritrea between Italian men and Eritrean women (a practice that extend in the whole AOI) represented one of the salient aspects of the Italian colonial presence. I will explore the effects of the processes of domination later on in this chapter. For an account on the informal institutionalization of the Eritrean concubinage (called the *Madamato*) see Gabrielli, 1996; Sorgoni, 1998; Sorgoni, 2003; Iyob, 2000; Barrera, 1996.

reproduction, found in the relation with the colonial subject, the recipient where to crystallize its symbolic contents. A system of derogatory attributions that fueled the North-South post-unitarian structural differentiation, therefore, translated in a hegemonic paradigm that while reproducing the colonial subject as uncivilized, instinctive and black, produced a rational, civilized and white Italianness.

The Italian relation with the colonial space, however, besides serving as the foundational space of a hegemonic Italianness, powerfully affected the social system, the internal relation, the transnational imaginaries connected to the spaces they occupied. In this respect, it is extremely interesting to explore the ways Italianness entangled with the imaginaries, the practices, and the symbols reproducing the present Ethiopian and Eritrean social space, and, at the same time, entered in the processes of redefinition of the term Habesha.

1.3 From Habesha to Abyssinia and Eritrea. The Italian Colonial paradigm and identification shifts

The term Habesha and its linguistic declinations (Habashat, Habasa, Habeshi, Habesh) have always represented a slippery concept. This is one of the main reasons why it has been widely ignored by academic and semi-academic publications (Smidt, 2014). The term has been used to name geographical pockets of territory and people extending from the Arabian Peninsula to the furthest limits of the Horn of Africa region. The origin of the term itself is still disputed. The most popular views interpret the term Habesha as an external ethnic as well as racial attribution produced by Arabs in order to describe the *Non-Black nature* of the people of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean highland⁶. The peculiar positionality of the term in the Sub Saharian context fueled legendary theories about the people of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean highland. The most accredited is the legend of the Queen of Sheba who, after having visited the Israeli King Salomon, stopped in Abyssinia and gave birth to a Jewish offspring (Zewde, 1991).

The isomorphism between the ethnic, racial and political declination of the term Habesha and the emphasis on a political continuum (Levine, 2014 [1974]) from the Axumite civilization (Phillipson, 2012) to the late XIX century production of the Modern Imperial Ethiopia (Zewde, 1991), gave rise to the image of the land they inhabited (what the western scholars called Abyssinia⁷) as an African

⁶ A review of the term its genealogy and its use in the Horn of Africa it is beyond the scopes of the work. For an accurate overview see Smidt, 2010b; Smidt, 2014.

⁷ The name Abissinya appears into the various European languages through the Portuguese. When they landed in the horn region in the early 16th century AD, they Latinized the term Habesha. into "Abassia", "Abassinos", "Abessina" and finally into "Abyssinia" (1902 Encyclopedia, David Kay; Zewde, 1991, Levine, 2014 [1974]; Hess, 1970; Smidt, 2010b).

anomaly and a paradox (Jesman, 1963). The present Ethiopian and Eritrean highland, what Tibebe (1996) defined as the Abyssinian of the Ge'ez civilization, was, in fact, composed by the ethnic trinity Agaw-Amhara-Tigrayan, and defined by the Ge'ez script, and later in time by Judaic-Christian culture. It is this ethnic trinity that has been identified as the founders of an historic Ethiopia or Abyssinia (p. 427)⁸ who fueled the European Orientalist imaginaries of a land and its people as an anomaly compared to the Sub-Saharan space. Habesha were 'Semitic', rather than 'Negroid'; 'civilized' and not 'barbaric'; 'beautiful', not 'ugly', and so on. In the Western paradigm of knowledge of Orientalist Semiticism, therefore, Habesha was explained in superlative terms because the "Negro" is considered subhuman (Tibebe, 1996). This paradigm, in the late XIX century, with the consolidation of the imperial conquest⁹, produced an isomorphic relation between an enlarged Abyssinian land (the result of an internal colonial enterprise) and its hegemonic Habesha ethnic group. By the way, following the Wuchale treaty and the making of the Italian Eritrean colony, there was a fracture within the hegemonic Habesha group. The Christian, Tigrinya speaker groups inhabiting the highlands of the present Tigray region in Ethiopia and the *Kebessa* (highland) Eritrea found themselves divided by a border and engaged in two different national paradigms.

In order to make sense of the effects of this division it is necessary to preliminary understand the ways the Italian presence in the region contributed to the making of the Ethiopian and Eritrean national paradigm.

1.3.1 Habesha in the Ethiopian and Eritrean national paradigm

Italian colonialist claims in the Horn of Africa, in this perspective, strongly contributed to the foundation of the Ethiopian national paradigm, by forging the rhetoric of the never-colonized country¹⁰.

The 1896 battle of Adua brought Ethiopia to the attention of the world, representing, for the commenters of the time, *the first revolt of the Dark Continent against domineering Europe* (Berkeley, 1969 [1902]). Abyssinia gained global legitimacy especially in the areas where white domination of black people was extreme like in South Africa and especially in the United States. Ethiopia became a beacon of independence and dignity, inspiring movements of political and

⁸ The continuist perspective on the making of the modern Ethiopian nation state is, nowadays, highly debated among Ethiopianists, with the shifts from a centralist Amhara centered perspective, to the attention on Southern, Western and Eastern peripheral populations (Donham, James, 1986; Aalen, 2011).

⁹ On the process of construction of the modern Ethiopia from the Highland empire to its present configuration see Zewde, 2001.

¹⁰ The rhetoric, that is integral part of the Ethiopian nation state paradigm, does not take into account the Italian fascist presence in the region, as well as the documented invasions in the region (Tibebe, 1996).

religious separatism, based on the imagine of the biblical Ethiopia (Zewde, 1991 p.81). Adwa victory reverberated forty years later and as Tibebe (1996. p.426) stated:

The biblical Ethiopia "stretching its hands unto God" became the real Ethiopia invaded by Mussolini. It was in the historical context of Mussolini's invasion, and earlier the Ethiopian victory at Adwa, that the pan-African construction of the Ethiopian identity was formed. It was the feeling that the pride of Adwa, the pride of Africa, was to be erased by the second coming of Italy that galvanized a passionate pan-African defense of Ethiopia. Ethiopia has a unique place in the consciousness of Africans. It has been revered as the symbol of Black defiance of White domination. From London to Harlem, from Lagos to Kingston, from Accra to Cairo, the Italian fascist invasion of Ethiopia became a rallying ground of pan-African nationalism. The Italian presence in Abyssinia, therefore, strongly contributed to produce the imaginaries of Ethiopia as the symbol of pan Africanism and the dignity of black people around the world. Those imaginaries, actually, did not replace the internal rhetoric about Habeshanness as a non-African ethnic and racial group. On the contrary, they conflated and positionally reproduced the coming Ethiopian nation state hegemony and legitimacy in the Horn region.

In Eritrea, on the contrary, it was exactly the Italian ongoing presence to crucially work on the making of a national identity. From the making of the Eritrean borders right after the Adwa defeat¹¹, to the fixing of customary laws (Chelati Dirar, 2007) to the production of a western oriented modernity in opposition to the Ethiopian *Africanness* (Smidt, 2010a), the Italian colonial domination entered in the construction of an Eritrean national identity.

It is therefore possible to conjugate the present significance of the term Habesha according to the hegemonic national paradigm in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The term Habesha in Ethiopia, on the one hand would configure as a descriptor of the whole national space regardless of its ethnic racial or symbolic value and on the other hand would remark the hegemonic position of the highland on the lowland. According to the Eritrean national paradigm, on the contrary, the term Habesha could represent a space of identification among the Eritrean Christian Kebessa (Smidt, 2010a), as well as a term to reject in order to oppose to the Ethiopian hegemonic presence in the region (Iyob, 2000). The national connotations of the term Habesha, are central to make sense of its significance within a regional paradigm. Particularly, it is necessary to work the way Ethiopia and Eritrea national paradigm coalesced with the Italian presence in the region and acted on the reproduction of the regional space of the highlanders Tigrigna speakers (the present Tigray Ethiopia and Kebessa Eritrea).

¹¹ The Italian poor cartographic knowledge of the region would have created many problems in the following years on the demarcation of the Ethio-Eritrean border. See Chelati Dirar, 2007).

1.3.2 Habesha in the regional paradigm

It is hardly possible to trace an historical based analysis of the relation between the Tigray Ethiopia and Kebessa Eritrea, the Christian Tigrigna speakers group of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean highland. The relation, actually, entered the present nation state rhetoric of both Ethiopia and Eritrea producing different understanding and representations of this contact¹². Undoubtedly, the two groups, whether symbolically separated by the Mereb river, have always been in contact on a social as well as on an historical point of view¹³. This relation, furthermore had long been marked by the political centrality of the Tigray area and its centers of power (above all Axum), in opposition to the peripheral space of the present Kebessa Eritrea (Tronvoll, Mekonnen, 2014)¹⁴.

At the end of the 19th century, by the way, this relation had been completely overturned by the events that shocked the whole Horn Area. On the one hand, the modernizing politics led by Menelik II aimed at making Ethiopia a centralized nation state (above all the foundation of the city of Addis Ababa in the annexed Oromo territory as a new capital to replace Gondar in the northern Amhara), led to a progressive loosening of the Tigrayan relevance in the novel Ethiopian nation state configuration (Borchgrevink, 2010). On the other hand, the Italian presence in the region, and the making of the colonial Eritrea, besides institutionalizing a national difference in the Tigrinya speaker area, modified its power relations. The institutionalization of the colonial power in Eritrea, in fact, led to a progressive attention of Italian colonizers from the Red Sea lowlands (where the Italian occupation started) to the highlands. This process led to an impressive urbanization of the Eritrean Kebessa area: its main centers, soon replaced the Tigrayan cities in terms of economic and commercial attraction. This process is clearly expressed in the progressive growth of Asmara from the late XIX to the early XX century. In 1890, when Italy proclaimed the Eritrean colony, Asmara was slightly more than a village on the caravan road from the highlands to the Red Sea¹⁵. By examining precolonial and colonial maps (fig. 1-2-3) it is possible to see how the progressive Italian attention

¹² In this perspective, Reid, 2007 offers a precise picture of the different understandings about the relation between continuity and discontinuity fueling the Tigray-Kebessa trans-Mereb contacts.

¹³ The area, represents the core of the ancient Axumite empire, the hegemonic power of the Horn until the coming age of the Salomonic dynasty. On the age of the Axumite empire see Phillipson, 2012.

¹⁴ It goes far beyond the scopes of the work to trace back the precolonial power relations connotating the present Ethiopian Tigray and Kebessa Eritrea. These relations, far from being fixed, had been marked by a number of structural phenomenon that crossed the Horn of Africa since the rise of the Axum Kingdom. All of these processes are part and parcel of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean nationalist historiography, and emphasize continuity or distance between the two parts of the region according to the present political configurations.

¹⁵ Asmara area was settled in the VIII century, when four distinct villages were established. In the fourteenth century they merged to become 'Arbate Asmara', which approximately stands for 'the four united'. The city alternated periods of fortunes as well as of deprivation. In 1884, Ras Alula, a general of the Abyssinian Empire established the capital of his kingdom in the city. See: Denison, Ren, Gebremedhin, 2007.

over the highlands, led to a constant growth of the city of Asmara, that from the mid 20's on, parallelly to the raising of Fascism imperialism, turned out to indisputably represent the core of the Tigrigna speaking region.

Shortly, the nationalist paradigm on the Ethiopian side and the colonial paradigm on the Eritrean side reshaped the social, political and symbolic landscape of the region. The affirmation of a modernist paradigm in Asmara's urban area, therefore, together with the cyclical famine in Tigray region and the repression of the subsequent riots by the Abyssinian central state¹⁶, played a crucial role in the determination of the mobility patterns in the region in the 20th century. The historical caravan road from the Tigrayan highlands to the Eritrean lowlands who served to link the area to the red Sea, from the mid 20's on, turned out to be the main route for impoverished Tigrayan peasants moving towards the colonial Eritrean urban contexts¹⁷. In the entanglement of national and colonial paradigms, regional mobility entered the nation-state modernity configurations. This was an ongoing process that never stopped regardless of the overturns in the region all along the 20th century that shaped the present Ethiopian and Eritrean national configuration: the end of the Italian colonial control in the and the fall of the colonial paradigm (1941), the British mandate in Eritrea and the raising of the Eritrean nationalism (1943-1950), the Ethio-Eritrean federal experience (1952-1960) the forced annexation of Eritrea as a province of the Ethiopian nation state (1960), the longstanding independence war Eritrea fought against the central Ethiopian nation state until the independence (1960-1991)¹⁸.

Transregional "modern oriented" mobility in the Tigrigna speaker area, therefore, entangled with all of these processes and produced novel configurations in the relation between Tigrayan Ethiopians and Kebessa Eritreans as well as new patterns of mobility.

Specifically, in the next paragraph I will underline how the relation between the two social groups in a perspective of mobility (Hans, Klute, 2007) entangled both with the nationalist paradigms arising in the region at the end of the Italian colonial presence, as well as with the Italian postcolonial presence in the region.

¹⁶ The Tigrayan riots of the first half of the 20th century culminated in the 1943 so-called First Woyane rebellion which had been bloodily suppressed by the imperial troops of Haile Selassie. Abbay,1998, Inquai, 2007 [1998].

¹⁷ The other main recipient of both Tigrayan and Eritrean mobility has been, especially from the end of the II world war on, the Addis Ababa urban context. From the 1960 until the Eritrean independence, Addis Ababa represented the capital of the whole region.

¹⁸ Despite all of these processes are central in both the definition of the Ethiopian and the Eritrean present national belonging their analysis goes beyond the purposes of this work. For an extensive account of the Eritrean history from the end of the Italian colonialism to the independence see Iyob, 1997.

1.4 The Italianness Habesha Postcolonial paradigm

1.4.1 Postcolonial Tigray-kebessa relation

With the crumbling of the A.O.I in 1941, the Italian presence in the present Ethiopia and Eritrea strongly decreased. By the way, by the end of the 40's there was a renewed attention of the Italians over the Horn region. At the end of the Second World War a community of 10.000 people remained, mostly concentrated in the city of Asmara (Bottaro, 2003). Those people represented the forerunner of the Italian postcolonial – or, as Marchetti (2014) says, neo-colonial - presence in both Ethiopia and Eritrea. Italians, in fact, dismissed from their role of colonial rulers and easily assumed the role of white elite by occupying a hegemonic socio-economic and cultural position in the region (Marchetti, 2014, p.18). From the late 40's on, the main urban contexts that shaped the Italian colonial paradigm (Addis Ababa and Asmara) represented powerful attractive spaces that until the takeover of the Derg (1974), connotated a “golden era” for the Italians in the Horn¹⁹.

The Italian postcolonial presence obviously reverberated in the regional political asset: it was effective especially in Eritrea, where Italian postcolonial presence coincided with the production of anti-Ethiopian feelings and the growing of an Eritrean quest for independence. The Italian colonial past, in fact, turned out to be part of the Eritrean nationalist paradigm, representing a powerful discursive rhetoric in order to differentiate from the Ethiopian dominant position along the lines of modernity-backwardness (Calchi Novati, 2005; Negash, 1997). The seminal Eritrean national paradigm, in turn, strongly acted on the ways to frame Ethiopian Tigrayan transregional mobility along a differential paradigm. The ongoing Tigrayan presence in Eritrean urban stratified contexts turned out to represent a structural *otherness* and the material representation of Ethiopian backwardness. Tigrayan low status job and social position in Asmara, even fueled the production of an isomorphic relation between a given space of the Tigray and a differential status. This is the case of the term *Agame*, a Tigray province on the Eritrean border, that turned to represent (and still represents) a derogative term to refer to the whole Tigrayan Ethiopians through the altero-referential rhetoric of dirtiness, backwardness, and poorness (van Reisen, Zecarias, 2016).

However, while on the one hand Italian colonial and postcolonial presence in the Horn strongly affected the Ethio-Eritrean as well as the Ethiopian Tigrayan - Kebessa Eritrean politics of representation, on the other hand represented the forerunner of new relationalities.

¹⁹ In that period there was a significant growth of the Italian firms, factories, banks, missions, shops, and trade relationships with Italy. (Marchetti, 2014).

1.4.2 Hegemonic Italianness and Postcolonial differentiation

Italian postcolonial economic and social hegemony in the region, in fact, similarly to the colonial period, reproduced on the lines of an ongoing differentiation process and a structural division compared to locals. A division that, far from the political control of the territory, expressed through social, economic, and symbolic processes of stratification. A stratification that sited the locals in a position of structural subordination. At the same time, the Italian postcolonial presence represented a space of possibility for the locals on both a social and an economic point of view (Marchetti, 2011). In the relation with Italians, therefore, the structural differentiation between Tigrayan and Eritreans faded in a relation of subordination to an external hegemonic group. Besides the few well educated people (mostly Eritreans who reached the highest grades of the Italian schools) who gained administrative positions, this relation configured both Eritrean Kebessa and Tigrayan Ethiopians as low status labor force to employ as workers in Italian factories, companies and houses. This relation of dependency, a central tool in the analysis of Eritrean postcolonial memories (Marchetti, 2011; Marchetti, 2013), is well expressed in the memories of many people I worked with along my field research, who gratefully talked about their relations with Italians in postcolonial times and valued them as a source of social mobility. For example, in the words of Amira, an Eritrean woman in her late 50's who was raised in Asmara as a domestic worker for an Italian old man and moved to Italy in the mid 80's, it is possible to make sense of the incorporation of the Italian paternalistic rhetoric reproducing a proper postcolonial paradigm.

He was very old but he raised me as one of his daughters. By the way, his concubine and his real daughter hated me and tried to push me out of the house. I lived between him and my mother's family. [...] When Derg arrived, he lost the most of his patrimony and I had not abandoned him. He decided to give me his surname and I became Italian by law. Ten years later I decided to move to Italy²⁰.

In Amira's extract it is possible to see the structural differentiation that historically oriented the postcolonial relations between hegemonic Italians and subordinated locals. The hegemonic relation with locals, the concubinage, the issue of the out of marriage offspring (the so called *Meticci*)²¹, the domestic worker dependency, entered the everyday landscape of the relation between Italians and locals and concurred in the production of a postcolonial paradigm.

These structural relations, fueled by Italian catholic missions and the institution of Italian professional schools aimed at producing an Italian oriented labor force (Marchetti, 2011), actually,

²⁰ Fieldnotes, 19.07.2016.

²¹ I will focus on the term *Meticcio* in chapt. 5-6.

reverberated out of the Horn of Africa, and represented the forerunner of the Tigrayan Ethiopian and Kebessa Eritrean mobility to Italy.

1.4.3 From the Horn to Italy: postcolonial mobilities.

Although it is possible to trace back an Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Italy since the beginning of the 20th century, it was during the Italian postcolonial presence that transnational mobility from the Horn to Italy started to reach relevant numbers. In the 60's/70's Italy represented the first destination for Tigrayan Ethiopian and Kebessa Eritrean migrants to the Western world (Marchetti, 2014). This process of transnational mobility is all but linear; actually it lays in the entanglement of postcolonial practices with the political upturns in the Horn region.

As Marchetti reported, the first waves of transnational mobility from Eritrea to Italy were mainly short termed and mainly implicated young women employed in the major Italian cities as domestic workers. The colonial stereotype of the Eritrean women as "brave, intelligenti e pulite" (docile, intelligent, and clean), reverberated in postcolonial times (Marchetti, 2013). From the 60's on, Tigrayan Ethiopian and Kebessa Eritrean domestic workers from Eritrea (mainly from Asmara) turned out to represent a status symbol of the bourgeoisie Italy. The Eritrean domestic workers requests in Italy activated short term mobility patterns with the perspective - for the young women - of an economic and status enhancement back in Eritrea²². Along with this process there was another mobility vector from Eritrea to Italy that mainly interested men and that reproduced the Eritrean role of labor force in postcolonial Italy. The growth of commercial contacts between Italy and the former colonies intensified the Mediterranean-Red Sea shipping routes. From the 60's on, a growing number of Tigrayan Ethiopians and Kebessa Eritreans enrolled as sailors in the Italian shipping company on the route from Massawa to the Italian ports (mainly Bari and Napoli). In the narratives of the people I worked with (confirmed by Marchetti, 2014), Kebessa Eritreans and Tigrayan Ethiopians sailors who, after the arrival in Italy settled down in the main southern seaport cities in the 60's, represented the forerunner of a male oriented postcolonial migration.

Until the late 60's therefore, mobility patterns were, by the most, short termed; stable presences, on the contrary, were not conspicuous. A decisive change in the composition of the Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Italy coincided with the impressive political upturns in the region, that from the

²² An important role in this process had been played by the Italian catholic mission, which played the role of stakeholder of mobility. For an extensive analysis of this process see Marchetti, 2011. I will deeply focus on the domestic worker condition in Italy in chapt.2.

late 60's on, led to a proper civil war in Eritrea²³, to the deposition of the emperor Haile Selassie, and to the institution of a Marxist-Leninist military junta (the Derg)²⁴.

The overlapping of local, regional and national overturns in the region led to a strong destabilization of the Horn area: in this new setting, Italians progressively abandoned both Ethiopia and Eritrea. A process, that, with the 1975 Derg law aimed at nationalize the lands, commercial activities and factories (Ottaway, 1977), led to the definitive collapse of the Italian postcolonial paradigm²⁵. By 1975, the thousands of Italians that remained in the region for good or because they could not afford the trip back to Italy, had been repatriated with Italian governmental airlifts from Addis Ababa and Asmara to Rome (Casu, 1994).

The Italian abandonment of the former colonies, together with the political instability of the region, inaugurated a new paradigm in the Tigrayan-Kebessa mobility paths to Italy. First, the short term working mobility from Eritrea to Italy became permanent²⁶. Furthermore, it was not rare that the Italians who fled Ethiopia and Eritrea brought with them their Ethiopian/Eritrean wives and concubines, their offspring, and even their servants to Italy (Brambilla and Favaro, 1984; Melotti, 1985; 1988; Sironi, 1988). As I had the opportunity to note in an interview with an old Italian man who flew Asmara in 1972, the resettlement process in Italy mainly worked thanks to the contact of the Italians who escaped before. It created big concentrations of Italian postcolonial returnees (and consequently of Italians-Ethiopians and Italians-Eritreans) in specific areas²⁷.

From that period on, however, most of the mobility patterns from the Horn region to Italy started to follow unsettled paths: these paths laid in the entanglement of the political instability in the Horn region, the emerging Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in Europe, the transnational system of refugees' protection and the navigation of the Italian system regulating and controlling transnational mobility. From the early 70's on, as I will show in the next paragraph, a diasporic culture of migration (Cohen, Sirkeci, 2011) inaugurated, and transformed Tigrayan Ethiopian and

²³ The war that started between the imperial Ethiopian army and the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) struggling for Eritrean independence, transformed in a civil war between the two branches of the Liberation front (ELF and EPLF), where the latter, mainly composed by *Kebessa* Eritrean and ideologically Marxist oriented, prevailed on the former mainly composed by lowland Muslim Eritreans. On the political and religious implication of the ELF EPLF civil war See Woldemikael, 1991; Connell, 2001.

²⁴ It is far beyond the aims of the work an analysis of the political upturns in the Horn region from the late 60's until the deposition of Haile Selassie in 1974 and the instauration of the Derg. For a deeper analysis see Markakis, Ayele, 1986; Pankhurst, 2001; Zewde, 1991

²⁵ It is possible to trace many of the narratives about the crumbling of the Italian presence in the Horn (specifically in Amsara) on the website www.ilchichingioio.it, collecting memories of postcolonial Eritrea. (last visit, 02.11.2017).

²⁶ Especially domestic workers started to settle in Italy, creating a strong gender gap in the Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Italy As Anselmi (1987) reported, in the 80's the 85% of the Eritreans in Italy were women.

²⁷ The most populous area was the hinterland of Rome.

Kebessa Eritreans, respectively in the representatives of the coming Ethiopian and Eritrean nation state.

1.5 Habesha in mobility

1.5.1 The Making of a Habesha culture of migration

Many of the Italians who lived in Asmara used to give their surname to the people they got in touch with. Anyway, at that time, the Italian institutions repatriated everyone without asking so many questions. There was the grave surname. People who could speak a bit of Italian went to the Italian cemetery and signed the surname of a dead man. Then they said they were part of his family. Many people managed to get to Italy in this way. That is the reason why many Habesha in Italy have Italian names and surnames²⁸.

This is an extract of an interview I had with Sara, an Eritrean woman in her 50's who moved in Italy in the late 80's. After more than 20 years in Italy (where she gained the Italian citizenship) she decided to move to London where she currently lives. In her words a proper mobility narrative sustaining the Ethiopian and Eritrean culture of migration emerges. She framed the trajectories from the Horn to Italy as a process to navigate where informal structures played a decisive role. In the aftermath of the upturns that shook the Horn of Africa in the early 70's, there was a multiplication of the mobility trajectories from Ethiopia and Eritrea to the global north. The opening of UNHCR refugee camps in Sudan represented one of the few formal ways to escape the repression of the Derg regime with a relocation mainly in the US and in northern Europe. These mobility trajectories, by the way, took long times and had a very limited capacity confronted with the mass of people who mobilized to flee Ethiopia²⁹. The practice Sara called as the "*grave surname*", in this perspective, represented a very iconic peak of an underworld of tactics of mobility where the subjects involved turned the Italian colonial and postcolonial presence in the region into a social source. This presence, in fact, played a crucial role in their navigation of the transnational dispositives regulating and controlling mobility in the global north. The Italian migratory system, in fact, between the 70's and the 80's, configured as an anomaly compared to the main western destinations forging a global Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora. Differently than the US and the Northern Europe countries (especially UK, Germany and Sweden) that, same as Italy, saw an exponential growth of the Ethiopian and Eritrean population³⁰, Italy was the only one that prevented them to apply for the

²⁸ Fieldnotes, 08.07.2016.

²⁹ In 1981 as reported in a New York Times article, there were more than 500.000 people in the UNHCR refugee camps in Sudan. More than 400.000 people were Ethiopians. See New York times. Flood of Ethiopian refugees into Sudan continues. <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/26/world/flood-of-ethiopian-refugees-into-sudan-continues.html>. Last access 02.11.2017.

³⁰ The main destination in this perspective, were the US and the Northern Europe.

refugee status. Until 1990, in fact, the so-called “geographic limitation” of the Geneva Convention (1951) prevented any African person from applying for political asylum in Italy. Furthermore, all along the 70’s and the first half of the 80’s, Italy was still mainly concerned with the migration of Italians towards other western countries or with internal migration from the South to the North of Italy. Transnational migration to Italy, on the contrary, remained mainly invisible in the Italian public discourse: the first organic law aimed at recognizing the migrant presence in the country (equating migrant workers’ rights to the Italians), was published only in 1986³¹. However, the inattentiveness of the Italian public discourse about the migration issue allowed a relative permeability of its national borders and facilitated informal mobility paths. Italian borders’ permeability between the 70’s and the 80’s is clearly expressed by Yamane one of the people I worked with during my fieldwork in Addis Ababa, an Ethiopian Tigrayan man born in Eritrea who moved from Asmara to Milano in 1980 and returned to his ancestral land in 2008. As he said:

There were two ways to get out of here. One was legal and the other one was illegal. All of the illegal ways passed through Italy. Everyone who had a relative in Italy was safe. It was easy. From Eritrea people used to go to Sudan in the refugees’ camps. In the camps there was a proper organization of Eritreans who produced fake passports to move to Italy. The relatives sent money from Europe and those in the camps most of the times managed to reach Italy by plane³².

This is exactly what happened in the experience of Mikal, an Italian citizen of Ethiopian Tigrayan origins who reached Italy in 1983. Three years before, after many infructuous attempts to gain a regular passport, she crossed Eritrea on foot and reached a refugee camp in Sudan. She remained in the camp for three years waiting to be eligible to get a refugee’s Visa to the US. Since she could not manage to get the Visa, she decided to move to Italy. She bought a fake passport and she managed to enter the country³³.

In the wake of the formation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean global diaspora, by the way, Italy represented, in most of the cases, a transit space towards the North of Europe or the United States. From Italy it was possible to irregularly move in the European social space, as well as to produce new fake passports in order to reach North European contexts or the US and ask for asylum protection. In this perspective Italy represented a crucial hub in an emerging interconnected transnational space where social relations and familiar networks crossed national boundaries. The Italian context, by the way, had not only played a significant role of mobility hub: because of its

³¹ See Italian parliament L. 943, 30.12.1986.

³² Fieldnotes, 10.03.2016.

³³ Fieldnotes, 02.02.2016.

centrality in the making of a transnational diasporic space, the Italian nation state, (specifically its main urban contexts) from the mid 70's on, became amongst the main global reference space in the long-distance political struggle against the Derg regime for both the Tigrayan Ethiopian and The Kebessa Eritrean diaspora.

1.5.2 From ethno-regional to national identification. The making of the generation nationalism.

From the mid' 70's on, both Kebessa Eritreans and Tigrayan Ethiopians self-represented as insurgent identities in relation with the Ethiopian central state. Together with the Eritrean liberation struggle even Tigrayan Ethiopians, from 1975 on, formally constituted an armed political group, the TPLF (Tigrayan people liberation front). The political struggle of the two main ethno-regional organizations of the Tigrigna speakers' area had been, in its initial phase, strongly connected. A very widespread idea about the future of the area, actually, had long been the creation of a political trans-Mereb unit, uniting the two ethnic groups under a common state, the Greater Tigray, on the model of the historical boundaries of the Axumite empire.³⁴

The global north diasporic contexts, in this perspective, used to be a proper material representation of the structural connections among Tigrayan Ethiopians and Kebessa Eritreans. Their shared mobility paths (both Tigrayan and Kebessa mainly moved from or through Eritrea), as well as their shared condition on the arrival, automatically produced shared settlement spaces where ethno-regional identifications constantly entangled with an interconnected (and interdependent) everyday life. This configuration reinforced all along the 80's thanks to the migration chains where settled migrants represented the reference point in the activation of new mobility patterns.

Along with the evolution of the conflict between the Ethiopian central state and the armed groups in Tigray and Eritrea, the diaspora space, due to its features of interconnected space, rapidly took on the shape of a political group. In this context Italy, and especially Milano, played a major role. The city from the late 70's on, turned out to represent the main hub of both the Tigrayan and the Kebessa Eritrean diaspora in Italy due to its economic attractiveness in the Italian scenario. Together with the major diasporic settlement spaces in Europe (Frankfurt and London) Milano, for both TPLF and ELPF, represented the center of a capillary diasporic political organizations supporting financially and diplomatically the political struggle against the central Ethiopian government.

The capacity of the Milanese diaspora space to mobilize economic and political flows is well expressed in the following ethnographic extract. Yamane, that was based in Milano as a TPLF

³⁴ For a further and deeper analysis of the Greater Tigray option see Abbay, 1998, P.21-69; Abbay, 1997.

militant all along the struggle against the Derg, talked about the salient phases of the advancement of the TPLF army towards Addis Ababa few months before the definitive Mengistu's³⁵ surrender.

Our army was stucked in the Simien mountains in the midst of the Winter time. Can you imagine how an army of people that never saw snow could survive in there? They were not at all equipped to sustain that weather and we were risking losing many soldiers. Some of them lost their fingers because of the cold. Therefore, they sent us a dispatch and they asked us for 100.000 gloves [...]. The three centers in Europe were interconnected, so anytime we had to mobilize big amounts of money, all of the money converged on an only account. From Milano we found a smuggler from Napoli and he provided the gloves. He sent the shipment by boat until Djibouti and then the organization provided to make the cargo arrive on the Simien mountains through military corridors. [...] the point is that gloves were not enough. So they sent another dispatch asking for winter clothes. Clothes were very expensive. So we got back to the smuggler and he told us he had a golden opportunity. A full outfit with sweater, jacket and trousers at 12.000 €. But he asked us to never open the Cargo until Djibouti. That clothes, in fact, were old military uniform that Italian government had to destroy and that he managed to intercept. This way, clandestinely, we managed to send the uniform to the fighters. Once the TPLF army entered in Addis many of them wore Italian army uniform. Can you imagine? They reported the news on national newspapers³⁶. Both the Italian government and the heads of the TPLF had to officially declare that there were no collaborations between Us and the Italian government. After that, there were official investigation in Italy about this issue. As far as I know, the smuggler ended up in prison.

Yamane's words about the diaspora engagement in the struggle against the Derg on the one hand shows how transnational interconnectedness represented a crucial aspect in the reproduction of a network encompassing both homeland and diaspora space. On the other hand, the extract showed the ways diasporic subjects locally re-elaborated the political issues related to the Horn of Africa, navigating the field of possibilities the Italian social space offered.

By the way, in the same ways the diasporic space entered in relation with the homeland, the changes that happened in the Horn of Africa affected the diasporic space. A paradigmatic example of this phenomenon can be traced back in the processes that made Tigrayan Ethiopian and Kebessa Eritreans in diaspora the representatives of the Ethiopian and Eritrean nation state.

Along with the developments of the conflict in the Horn, a change in the positionalities of the two ethno-regional political groups happened. Abandoning the idea of a shared trans-Mereb political

³⁵ Mengistu was a Derg general and from 1978 until 1991 ruled Ethiopia. His policies are associated with the Red-Terror period connoted by systematic violence and mass murderers.

³⁶ See: La Repubblica, 31.05.1991. Battaglia nelle strade di Addis Abeba, La Repubblica, 31.05.1991 <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1991/05/31/battaglia-nelle-strade-di-addis-abeba.html?ref=search>

project, both TPLF and EPLF re-centered their efforts on the making of a new Ethiopia and Eritrea, according to the borders that the Italian colonialism crystallized. While EPLF kept on fighting for independence from Ethiopia, TPLF transformed its struggle in a liberation war, configuring as the most prominent ethno-political group of an ethnic mobilization of the main component of the Ethiopian nation state against the Derg³⁷. The divergent national conjugation (Abbay, 1998) the Tigrayan-Kebessa struggle against the Derg took on³⁸, powerfully reverberated in the diaspora. Subjects that used to share their everyday life in the emerging global north's diaspora spaces, found themselves as the representatives of two different nation states. In their perspective, Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic identification turned out to represent a synecdoche arising from the power dynamics reproducing the Ethiopian and Eritrean political space all along the liberation war. In this perspective, Hepner (2015), with reference to the only Eritreans (but in a process extensible to the Tigrayan Ethiopians as well), framed the cohort of people that, flowing from the early 70's until the 1991 formed the present Ethiopian and Eritrean global diaspora, as "generation nationalism"³⁹. Hepner used this term in contraposition to the successive forced flows from the Horn Region, which, from the late 90's on, started to reshape the Ethiopian and Eritrean global diaspora space. After the fall of the Derg in 1991, the instauration of an Ethiopian state with a hegemonic role of the TPLF and the 1993 referendum ratifying a EPLF led Eritrean independence from Ethiopia, in fact, the relation between the two former allies (TPLF - EPLF), and consequently between the two new nation states, started to worsen. In a progressive escalation of tensions, in 1998, the Ethio-Eritrean border conflict exploded⁴⁰, which, until 2000, caused thousands of victims and the closure of relations between the two countries. The war represented the watershed in the recent history of the Horn of Africa, leading to a radical authoritative shift of the politics in the area. A process that, especially, in Eritrea, inaugurated new forced mobility patterns of people fleeing the country in order to escape the

³⁷ Between 1989-1990 The Tplf established a coalition of ethnic based political movements which it called the Ethiopian people's revolutionary democratic Front (EPRDF). See Campbell, 2013.

³⁸ The analysis of the political developments of the longstanding war against the Derg concerning the positionalities of TPLF and EPLF goes far beyond the scopes of this work. For a preliminar overview see Young 1996; Reid 2003.

³⁹ From this moment on, unless specified for the purpose of the book, I will use the categories "Ethiopia" and "Eritrea" avoiding to contextualize the regional and political differences within the two countries. The choice follows the explicit representations of the diasporic subjects I worked with to self-designate as the representatives of the two nation states.

⁴⁰ The official cause of the war had been a border issue dispute concerning a small village (almost abandoned) on the Ethiopian Eritrean border, the town of Badme. Because of the low importance of the disputed territory, the international community defined the Ethio-Eritrean conflict as the most senseless ever. Actually, the processes that led to the war played a central role in the definition of an Eritrean and an Ethiopian national identification. Despite all of these processes are central in the understanding of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean nationalist positions it is beyond the scopes of this work to deeply analyze them. For a detailed account of the social dynamics that led to the Ethio Eritrean border conflict see Abbay, 1997; Jacquin-Berdal, Plaut (eds), 2005; Iyob, 2000; Reid, 2003; Negash, Tronvoll, 2000.

regime⁴¹. This group, which nowadays represents the political generation of people fleeing Eritrea to Europe through the Mediterranean Route, represents a proper cohort that Hepner (2015) defined as “generation asylum”⁴². Even in this case, the salience of the conflicting relation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as of the new refugees’ flow from the turn of the new millennium on, went far beyond the regional assets, but entangled with the composition of the diasporic networks and the making of the diaspora space. In this new configuration, the Italian legacy as a transit hub to the European social space, as well as the politics of differentiation diaspora subjects have been confronted with all along their presence in Italy, strongly affected the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora relations and powerfully acted on the reproduction of the Milanese diasporic space of Porta Venezia, the major reference space for Ethiopians and Eritreans in Italy.

1.6 Diaspora space in Milano

1.6.1 The Habesha neighborhood of Porta Venezia

From the late 70’s, the presence of Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants in Milano massively increased. According to Aimi (1985), while in 1979 there were 490 Eritrean/Ethiopians, five years later, their presence almost triplicated (1276). These data, by the way, do not consider all the unregistered presences in the city that almost double the total number (Bonora, 1983). Shortly, all along the 80’s, Milano represented the main recipient of the secondary mobility patterns of Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants within the Italian space. The prominent role the city had in the Italian economy and its high demand of working force (Arnone, 2010) turned out to make Milano the most important settlement space for those who remained in Italy. In parallel to the growing of the Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in the city, a diasporic community institutionalized. Much of the existing literature has long focused on the Milanese diasporic space by framing it as mainly Eritrean (Melotti, 1985; Ambroso, 1987; Arnone, 2011): in fact, that the vast majority of people in Milano self-defined as Eritrean (although until 1993 -the Eritrean independence- all of them were registered as Ethiopian citizens), and the Milanese EPLF played a major role as a stakeholder between the community, the homeland issues and the larger city space (Sironi, 1988; Riley, Emigh, 2002). However, left alone the political issues related to the divergent struggles against the central Ethiopian government, Ethiopians and

⁴¹ Particularly, Eritreans fled the country in order to avoid the permanent military service. At the end of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict, in fact the Eritrean Army was not dismantled. All of the citizens between 18 and 50 years (40 for women) have been included in the Eritrean Defense Force and the National Service. They earn a very low salary (25\$ per month) and the dissents are punished by physical punishment, torture, death and detention. See Costantini, 2015

⁴² All along the work i will abundantly use the categories of *generation nationalism* and *generation asylum*. Unless specified, I will refer to Hepner classification.

Eritreans in Milano shared all of the aspects of their social life. The material representation of the shared relation between the two ethnic/national groups had undoubtedly been the Ethiopian-Eritrean Center” (il Centro etiopico-eritreo) of via Kramer, ran by an Eritrean Capuchin brother, Marino Haile, the priest of the adjacent Church of San Francesco (Melotti 1985, p.43; Melotti and Valtorta 1985, p.15; Sironi 1988, p.52). Although he was a Catholic priest, he conducted mass according to Abyssinian rites, in Tigrigna: furthermore, he had a prominent role in provided access to resources, jobs, education, and housing (Ambroso 1987:38-40; Arnone, 2010)⁴³. Together with the Ethio-Eritrean center of via Kramer, from the late 70’s on, the diaspora community started to have a visible presence in the urban Milanese space. Precisely, the area around Porta Venezia, one of the historical gates of the city of Milano, started to host “ethnic oriented” bars, restaurants and commercial activities led by subjects of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora. The neighborhood of Porta Venezia, that nowadays is one of the most central spaces in the urban landscape, in the 80’s represented a peripheral zone in the Milanese geography. The building decay of the area, together with low rentals, paved the way for the opening of Ethiopian and Eritrean-led activities which made the neighborhood (that occupies a strategic position close to the Central station) the city hub of the diaspora community⁴⁴. Porta Venezia soon became the economic, social and symbolic hub of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora (Arnone, 2011), as well as the informal reference space for those who transited in Milano in their journeys to the north European contexts⁴⁵.

The capacity of the diasporic organization to navigate the Milanese space and the relative contacts with the wider Milanese context has been framed in the existing literature as a signal of the good incorporation level of the diasporic community in the Italian society (Riley, Emigh, 2002). Riley and Emigh, in this perspective, focused on the higher rates of working contracts, marriages with Italians, use of formal migration channels, or even political representation compared to other immigrant groups in order to explain how diaspora organizations led to a major degree of incorporation in the wider Milanese space (p. 182). However, I argue that all of these data, far from underlining an incorporation within the Italian society, are only remarking the organizational capacity of the

⁴³ I will extensively talk about the via Kramer center and its different conjugations in the making of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins second-generation condition in chapt 2 and chapt.6.

⁴⁴ The presence of Ethiopian and Eritrean subjects in Porta Venezia have been a matter of public attention since the early 80’s. In 1982 the Milano council held a public debate on the condition of immigrants in the neighborhood. See. [www.corriere.it La nuova Casbah. Quando a Milano c’era il Corno d’Africa.](http://milano.corriere.it/la-nuova-casbah-quando-a-milano-c-era-il-corno-d-africa)
http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/15_settembre_12/nuova-casbah-porta-venezia-milano-corno-africa-97ae570c-592a-11e5-bbb0-00ab110201c3.shtml (last visit, 04.11.2017)

⁴⁵ I will extensively talk about the historical configuration of the neighborhood of Porta Venezia as transit space for the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in chapt.3.

diaspora space. This statement is much easier to understand when confronted with structural data. In Italy, the immigrant population had been prevented equal working treatment until 1986. Milano had been the only city in Italy that, with a council resolution, allowed the migrant population to be eligible for council housing (Martignoni, 2016). All over Italy, they had to wait until the late 80's. Housing occupation in the crumbling houses of the city center had been, until the late 80's, the major housing solution in the Eritrean diasporic community⁴⁶. The working patterns of the Ethiopians and Eritreans in Milano had been mainly related to domestic working (for women) and labor force (for men). All of these processes reverberate in the narratives of the people I worked with. For example, Johnny, the Milanese of Ethiopian origins I worked with in Ethiopia, said that his father was the only Habesha migrant he had ever met that never had a labor job. Then he added that, for this reason, in the past he had been criticized and accused to profit from his political position in the diaspora organization⁴⁷.

Furthermore, Ethiopian and Eritrean working experience in Italy has been related to a proper racial paradigm reproducing a colonial imaginary (Marchetti, 2011). In many of the narratives of women serving as domestic workers, violence and racism had been a constant. It is indicative, in this respect, the racism Marta, an Eritrean woman who moved to Milano in 1984, had to face in her first working experience in Italy. She found a job as domestic worker in the house of an old bedridden Italian woman. Once her son presented Marta to the old lady, she started to laugh. She said she reminded her a small monkey she saw on the zoo when she was a kid⁴⁸.

The Ethiopian and Eritrean incorporation in the Italian society, therefore, developed along a differential line and their migrant condition turned out to represent the mirror of the altero-referential contents reproducing colonial and postcolonial Italianness.

The powerful mechanisms that acted on the production of a Habesha space in colonial and postcolonial Italy, in this perspective, entered in the reproduction of a Habesha diasporic community. The diaspora network, in this perspective, rather than representing a tool that allowed them to incorporate within the Italian social space, served as a source to navigate their structural lack of social recognition⁴⁹. This process is clearly expressed in the ways the Milanese diaspora repositioned after the fall of the Derg, when Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic subjects turned from allies into enemies.

⁴⁶ I will analyze the housing issue in the next chapter.

⁴⁷ Fieldnotes, 19.02.2016.

⁴⁸ Fieldnotes, 08.07.2016.

⁴⁹ I will work on this process in chapt. 8.

1.6.2 Being Habesha in Milano: incorporating social difference

Since the immediate aftermath of the longstanding Ethiopian civil war, the relation between Ethiopians and Eritreans in diaspora started to deteriorate. It is possible to find a signal of this process since the very day of the creation of the Eritrean independent state. In the following extract, Mebrat, an Italian citizen of Ethiopian ancestors born and raised in Eritrea, talks about the discomfort she experienced in Milano on the day of the Eritrean referendum.

The day of the referendum there was a big feast throughout the community. I was on the bus on my way to the consulate to vote for the referendum. Whereas the referendum passed I would have been granted automatically the Eritrean citizenship. I was with some of my friends on the bus towards the consulate and they started to ask me why I was going to vote for the Eritrean referendum since I was Ethiopian. They knew that I was born in Asmara and my father arrived in Eritrea when he was a kid but apparently it was not enough for them. I got very angry and I decided to get off the bus. That is the reason why I decided not to be Eritrean. In perspective I could say that it went well to me⁵⁰.

In Mebrat's experience it is possible to trace back the germinal contrasts based on nationalist perspectives that in the following years would have led to the eruption of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. Above all, the extract powerfully shows how the decision to opt for the Eritrean citizenship or not could have been merely contextual. The citizenship's arbitrariness especially worked for Ethiopian people of Tigrayan origins whose longstanding mobility paths to Eritrea made them often self-designate as Eritreans. In 1993, with no controlled borders between the two nation states and good relation between the two governments, the citizenship issue did not have a central value. As a result, most of the families of Tigrayan origins who enacted migration paths are often split in two different nationalities. In Mebrat's case, in example, one of her brother decided to opt for Eritrean citizenship. This choice became relevant in the following years.

With the degradation of the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the 1997 mass deportations of Ethiopian born Eritreans and vice-versa (Riggan, 2011), in fact, familiar networks, kinship relations, life paths, spread along the Ethio-Eritrean border (Massa, 2017). Citizenship, in this perspective, turned out to be a crucial tool that could enact or prevent dramatic change in the subjects' biographic trajectories. The Ethiopian-Eritrean fracture along nationalist lines echoed in the diaspora space. The shared community center in Milano closed right after the end of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict (see chapt.2), and even religious sharing diminished with the construction of two different Orthodox churches based on nationality (see chapt.6). The crash of

⁵⁰ Fieldnotes 15.03.2016.

the relations between the two nation states, furthermore, entered the private social sphere of diasporic subjects affecting kinship relations and affective networks: family's ruptures, friendship relations ending and even marriage breakups represented a widespread phenomenon in the Milanese diasporic space.

In this deteriorated frame, however, the neighborhood of Porta Venezia kept on representing the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora reference space in Milano. Furthermore, from the mid 2000's on, the neighborhood enriched of the presence of the so-called generation asylum, those who fled Ethiopia and especially Eritrea from the end of the conflict on. Porta Venezia, in this perspective, turned out to represent a shared space not only for contrastive nationalities, but also among divergent political generations (Arnone, 2010). A space shared between those who contributed to produce the present national configurations and those who escaped from the present national paradigm.

In order to contain all of these postionalities, Porta Venezia, as I will show along this work (chapt.3- chapt.8), configured as a space where the explicit discourses related to homeland policies were banned from daily interactions. The term Habesha itself turned out to represent a way to deal with the complicated relationships constituting the neighborhood, as a way to self-represent in the diaspora space by avoiding the activation of contrastive identifications.

In order to understand the motivations that made Porta Venezia flourishing in a context of national and political structural division, it is therefore necessary to consider its salience by shifting the attention from the Horn of Africa political issues to the Italian national paradigm.

In the isomorphic relation established between the paradigm reproducing postcolonial Italianness and their attributed migrant condition, Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic subjects found themselves structurally excluded from the wider Milanese social space. The economic and social value of the diaspora space of Porta Venezia, in this perspective, far from representing the material representation of the structural continuity reproducing their Ethiopian and Eritrean experience, turned out to represent a space of social legitimation aimed at dealing with their social condition. The ongoing reproduction of the neighborhood of Porta Venezia as a Habesha space, in this perspective, cannot be detached from the processes of differentiation they have historically experienced when confronted with the paradigms reproducing Italianness from the late 70's until present days. This perspective will be the starting point that will allow me to elaborate on what I define as the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' second-generation condition.

Conclusions

By tracing back the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic experience in the entanglement with the processes reproducing national configurations both in the Horn of Africa and in Italy, I argue, it is possible to make sense of the term Habesha in its present Milanese conjugation. The Italian penetration in the region and the colonial paradigm they established, on the one hand, crucially contributed to the affirmation of a nationalist paradigm territorially dividing the Tigrinya's speaker area along national borders. On the other hand, the modernist paradigm established in the colonial Eritrea represented the main factor in the activation of a colonial and postcolonial mobility within the area towards the main urban centers and, consequently, a longstanding process of Tigray-Kebessa cohabitation. The postcolonial condition they were confronted with compared to the Italian hegemonic presence in the region, furthermore, played a crucial role in the activation of postcolonial transnational mobility paths towards the Italian context and the subsequent production of shared transnational Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic spaces. In fact, the ongoing political transformations in the Horn region gradually turned the diasporic Tigrayans Ethiopian and the Kebessa Eritreans in the representatives of the Ethiopian and Eritrean nationalism. After the long-standing war against the Derg, they turned from allies into enemies and they were stuck in an immobile otherness when confronted with Italianness. In this perspective, their diasporic condition deeply entered in relation with the Italian social space, where the salience of a shared diasporic space, rather than reproducing the homeland assets turned out to represent a crucial source to make sense of their migrant condition.

In this perspective, the term Habesha in diaspora emerges as a three-fold signifier. It represents firstly a site of ancestral identification born in the overlapping of regional and national categories whose meaning may shift according to the positionality of the speakers: from a ethno-regional Tigrinya based commonality, to the Ethiopian hegemonic paradigm, to a regional inclusiveness comprehending the whole Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Secondly, the term Habesha emerges as a transnational space comprehending both the homeland and the diaspora network; a space connected to an Ethiopian and Eritrean culture of migration, that from the early 70's on, reproduced and reinforced in parallel to the production of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean national configurations.

The term Habesha, finally, can be considered as the explicit expression of the processes of differentiation Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic subjects have been confronted with compared to the wider national space. This final feature, differently than the others, differently conjugate in the

transnational diaspora space according to the ways othering processes in the receiving contexts affects their social lives. In the Italian case, where a structural differentiation turns out to represent the constitutive feature of hegemonic Italianness, Habesha strongly works as a site of incorporation of an attributed difference.

In the next chapters, I will show how these three feature of the term Habesha entangle in the making of the social experience of the offspring of the migrant subjects who constituted the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora, the so called “second-generations”.

Figures: Asmara’s progressive expansion in precolonial and colonial maps: 1872-1929

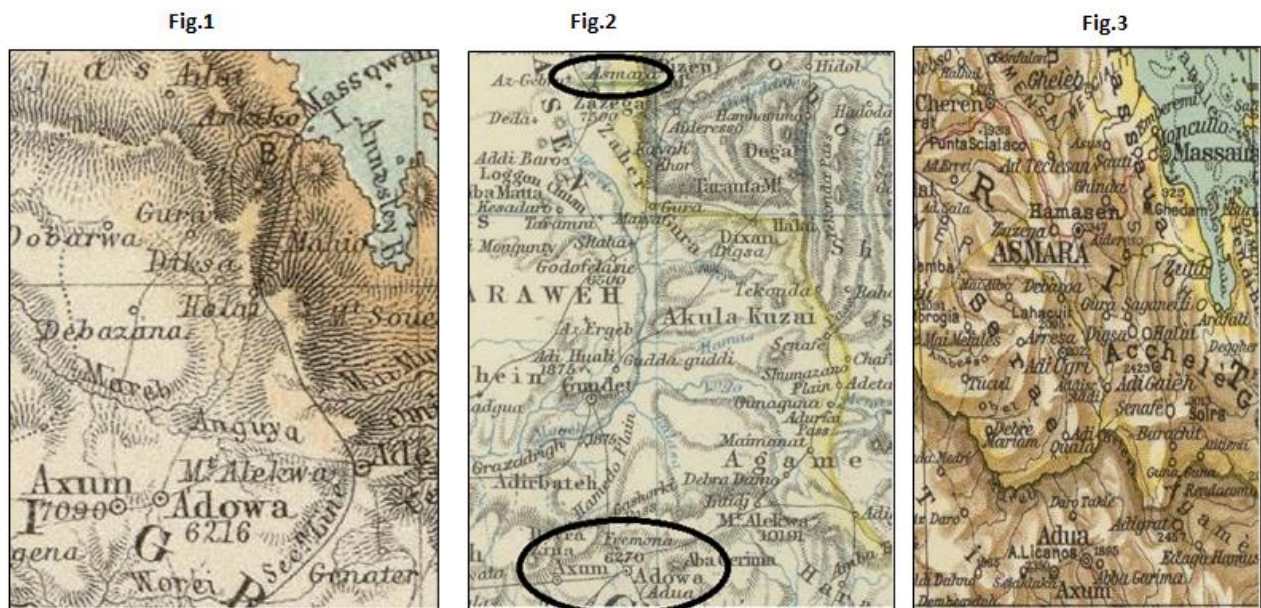


Fig.1: Fullarton A. (1872) Countries In The Northern Tropical Regions of Africa. LXXIV. List n. 3007.076. Retrieved from Rumsey Collection.

Fig.2 Johnston, K. (1893): Upper Nubia and Abyssinia. List No:3287.049. Retrieved from Rumsey Collection.

Fig.3: Touring Club Italiano (1929) Etiopia, Eritrea, Somalia. List No: 1012.062. Retrieved from Rumsey Collection.

Chapter 2: Ancestral Identification or differential Italianness? Habesha as the marker of a second-generation condition

2.1 Second generations and Italianness: split in two cultures or pushed away?

Considering the widespread contested analytical relevance of the term second generation¹, its popularity in the present Italian discourse is quite surprising. Since 2002, when the migrant population in Italy numbered less than one quarter than today², Jacqueline Andall underlined the problematic nature of the term “second generations” in the Italian context. She insisted on the necessity to historicize migration patterns and consequently to distinguish within generational cohorts (p.390). Focusing on the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, she underlined the differences between those who were born or raised in Italy in the 70’s and the ones who grew up in Italy from the mid’ 80’s onwards (p.392 - 394). She distinguished, in this respect, between *older* and *younger* second generations (p.390) as two incommensurable social groups, as they grow up in two structurally different settings³. Compared to the invisibility of the *older* second generations, Andall states, the younger group grew up in a social and political climate where the issue of immigration and the presence of the children of immigrants had already acquired some prominence (p.390). More than a decade after Andall’s analysis, despite the structural changes of the Italian nation-state role in the transnational migration system, and the recognition of children of immigrants as a structural presence in Italy, the term *seconde generazioni* is far from being dismissed from the Italian public discourse. Paradoxically, the hegemony of the term as a descriptive mark to represent the children of immigrant condition creates a proper *descriptive discomfort*, a crisis in the representational patterns among the subjects depicted as “second generations”. This situation is clearly expressed in the following ethnographic extract, where Ariam, an Italian of Eritrean origin in her late 20’s, talked about the difficulties she had to identify with the term *second generations* in her work as a documentary director.

¹ The term “second generation” has been contested both as a descriptive concept and as an analytical tool. In reference to the Italian context see, among the others, Colombo, Domaneschi, Marchetti,2009; Colombo, Rebughini, 2012; Thomassen,2010; Andall,2002.

² Istat: Ricostruzione della popolazione residente per età, sesso e cittadinanza nei comuni. Indicatori demografici Anni 2001-2011. http://www.istat.it/en/files/2013/09/indicatoridemografici_26_09_2013_def.pdf last visit (07.11.2017).

³ To socially site my work, I decided to consider the same social group. Specifically, I worked with people of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins whose parents moved to Italy before the 1991, the children of the so-called generation “nationalism” (see chapt.1). The age range of the people I worked with, therefore, oscillates between those in their mid 20’s to those in their late 30’s.

A: What can I say? I need to say that I am working on second generations. But the people I am working on are in their 40's and their lifepaths were totally different compared to mine. I hate this word but I have no other means to explain my topic. At least I can say that I am working on the *first* second generations, just to point out that we are not all the same⁴.

Ariam was involved in the production of a documentary on the Milanese of Eritrean origins who were born and raised in Milano in the 70's. By explaining her project to me, she surprisingly recalled the distinction Andall underlined 15 years before. Talking about *first* and *second* second generations, she stressed how different was their experience from hers. The two social groups she referred to, furthermore, were exactly the same Andall analyzed in 2002 (those who were born in the 70's, and those who were born from the mid 80's on). Nevertheless, she could not find any linguistic referent but the term *seconde generazioni* to explain the topic of her documentary. Such a descriptive discomfort, actually, is widely shared within the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins discourses about social identification. Among many of the Milanese I have worked with, the term second generations appeared totally inappropriate. As Maharet, a Milanese woman of Eritrean origins in her 30's pointed out: *nowadays we are at the third generation. Are we still talking about second generations and integration?* Maharet pronounced these words while holding the son she had with her partner, an Italian of Ethiopian origin⁵. Ariam and Maharet's positions clearly express a sense of discomfort regarding the term *second generation*. However, in their interviews, both of them could not avoid its semantic reproduction: a reproduction structurally bound to the migrant experience of the so called "generation nationalism" (Hepner, 2015) who moved to Italy between the 70's and the 80's (see chapt.1). While Ariam emphasized the lack of terms to distinguish her experience from those of the older generation of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin, Maharet, with the use of the term 3rd generation, semantically linked her son's experience to their parents. The term second generations, in this way, turns out to represent a frame of a never-ending experience of alienation from the context where they were born and raised.

Since its formulation in the early 90's as a marker aimed at describing a new social category arising from the opening of new mobility patterns in South-North relations (Portes, Zhou, 1993), the expression "*second generations*" has been widely criticized both as a descriptive and as analytical tool. Many authors emphasized the predicament related to the term both in a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. The term "second generations" does not distinguish the age of arrival of the

⁴ Fieldnotes, Milano, 12.07. 2016.

⁵ Fieldnotes, Milano, 11.02.2015.

subjects entitled to fit this social category. In addition, it lacks diachronic depth, because it associates different generational experiences (Mannheim, [1923] 1970) under the same umbrella of their migrant's ancestors. Furthermore, the term encompasses any legal status: both citizens and migrants (regular as well as irregular), in fact, can be defined as "second generations" within the Italian public discourse. Finally, the use of the term "second generations", hides the racial differentiation processes constituting the relation between children of immigrants and the so called *receiving context*.

In relation to the Italian context, it seems clear that the term "second generations" certainly did not emerge as an act of self-definition but rather as a need of the receiving societies to label and count immigrants and their offspring (Thomassen 2010, p.26). In this respect, he argues that the analytical representation of the so called *second generations* as subjects in-between two cultures is based on false assumptions and that the real division lies in the discrepancy between "rhetoric and reality" in the understanding of their social life (2010, p.35). More accurately, the term has become a discursive tool to reproduce what, in the Italian context, has become a structural contraposition between "nationals" and foreigners". Rather than resolving their social and institutional recognition, their role within the Italian public space, or their racial positioning compared to the hegemonic structures reproducing Italianness, the term "second generations" portrays children of immigrants within an *undifferentiated mass of foreigners* (Macciò, 2009 p. 10). Their engagement in the Italian public discourse as social groups based on national or religious belonging, on the contrary, is increasingly turning into a threat to national identification (Riccio, Scandurra, 2008). In the present Italian scenario, the term *second generation* structurally configures a liminal space situated between the space of modern national identification and colonial otherness (Said 1978): a colonial fracture (Bancel, Lemaire Blanchard 2005; Berrocal, 2010) that produces the hegemonic opposition between Italianness and its migrant "other" (see chapt.1).

The term *second generations*, therefore, reveals its poietic function exactly as a discursive tool. In this chapter, I argue that the term concurs in the reproduction of the *structural* processes of social differentiation the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin are confronted with in relation to the place they were born and raised. From a cultural category, therefore, *seconde generazioni* starts to reflect a proper *condition*, a material representation of what others define as 'differential' Italians. By turning the term *seconde generazioni* from a category to a condition, it will be possible to see how the term emerge in the entanglement between present, colonial and postcolonial paradigms and transnational migrations. The term *second generation*, once framed as a condition deriving from

the intersection of multiple diachronic structures of differentiation, takes on a different analytical value: whereas it doesn't designate any legal status, nor any unit of generational experience (Colombo, Rebughini, 2012): on the contrary, it works as the mirror of the processes of differentiation aimed at reproducing a hegemonic Italianness. As Mbembe underlined (2001) one of the main vantage points in this perspective lies in the inscription of both hegemonic and subaltern subjects within the same episteme (p. 105). The lack of a public conscience and a proper state-revisionism about the Italian colonial past and postcolonial legacy (Del Boca, 2011) crystallized the modes of definition of Italianness in terms of unspoken whiteness (chapt.1). Therefore, considering that in Italy national and racial *otherness* coalesce, the analysis of the term second generation as a condition allows to work on the immobility of a hegemonic Italianness and its structures. Related to the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I worked with (where a historicized diasporic presence and ongoing migration flows produced the paradox of defining in the same way both people in their 50's and newborns) the analytical relevance of the term *second generation* arises as a gauge to explore the structures aimed at reproducing a differential Italianness. More importantly, by framing the term *second generation* as a *condition* rather than a descriptive category, it will be possible to analyze the ways these structures are performed, incorporated, contested and re-elaborated by the subjects who are confronted with it. In this perspective, the appropriation and the re-articulation of the ethnic category *Habesha* among the Milanese of Ethiopians and Eritreans origins opens interesting analytical paths in the analysis of their differential Italianness. In the following paragraphs, I will consider how the two main features related to the term Habesha among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins - Habesha as a source of intergenerational continuity, and Habesha as a space of differentiation compared to the Italian context - intersect and mirror their *second-generation condition*. The term Habesha, therefore, on the one hand, makes sense of the hegemonic discourses about *second generations* as structurally tied to the ancestral context. By emphasizing a continuity between their experience as Italians and the historicized trajectories producing their parents' diasporic social lives (see chapt.1), the term Habesha opens to the analysis of the differential structures reproducing a social unit beyond generational distinctions and structurally tied to the *generation nationalism*. On the other hand, the term *Habesha* works a site of incorporation of their differential condition compared to the Italian context. Laying at the intersection of gender, class and racial classifications, the term Habesha configures as the material representation of the "colonial fracture" mirroring the hegemonic structures of Italianness.

The juxtaposition between the ethnic name *Habesha* and the social category of *second generations* will allow to frame the social lives of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins within a structurally determined and historicized *condition* related to their differential Italianness. The analysis of the ways the *Habesha* condition is socially reproduced within the immobile structures of a hegemonic Italianness, will serve as the necessary starting point to explore the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins tactics of mobilization of these structures of differentiation.

1.2 The postcolonial condition and the second-generation condition: family resemblances

When I arrived in Milano I was 11. It was the New year eve of the 1980. I grew up with my uncle in Asmara and I attended the Italian catholic school. My mother sent her the money from Italy. She was in Milan since 1974, when the Italian family she was working for, moved from Asmara due to the riots. I tried to run away two times from the school because I wanted to enroll with the rebels. Both of the times they sent me away because I was too young [...] My mother told me that she decided to make me join her in Milano precisely because of this reason. She was worried that the next time I would have tried to enroll, they would have accepted me [...] The main problem was the passport. The Derg would have never allowed me to leave the country. Fortunately, we had some contacts at the immigration office in Addis Ababa and my family managed to corrupt an officer. They had to pay 100.000 birr in order to allow me to get the passport.⁶

Yonas, 48 years old. Ethiopian citizen raised in Milano.

Yes my parents told me about being *Habesha* when I was a kid. I remember that almost every time I cried they used to tell me: Are you throwing a tantrum? You are *Habesha*⁷.

Tesfay, 27 Years old. Italian citizen of Eritrean origin, born and raised in Milano.

According to its academic definition, both Tesfay and Yonas could be defined as second generations⁸. It would be even superfluous to underline the structural differences between their lifepaths and the impossibility to frame their condition under a common lens. Tesfay is an Italian laborer in Milano. He speaks a very poor Tigrigna and his last time in Eritrea was in 1997, before the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. Yonas is a shop owner in Addis Ababa. He was actively involved in the Tigrayan diasporic organization in Milano against the Derg from the mid 80's on.

Yonas and Tesfay, mirror Andall's definition of the "old" and the "new" second generations. Their parents' generation moved to Milano from the first 70's to the mid 80's following the trajectories

⁶ Fieldnotes, Addis Ababa 02.02.2016.

⁷ Fieldnotes, Milano 15.05.2015.

⁸ In this respect, Rumbaut (2004) proposed the classification of 1,25 -1,5, 1,75 generation, in order to distinguish between life stages and generational cohorts in the "second generation experience".

uniting their postcolonial condition and the transnational upturns in the Horn of Africa (see. Chapt.1). In the coalescence between these structures and their evolution along space and time it is possible to trace back the production of the second-generation condition.

2.2.1 Precondition pt.1: Children of domestic workers

Until the end of the 80's the Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Italy was mainly gendered. Approximately the 85% of the Eritreans in Italy were women (Anselmi, 1987), and the 89% of them were employed as domestic workers in the main Italian cities (Scalzo, 1984). As Marchetti reported (2011, p.111), the Italian missions and churches in Eritrea played a decisive role in the Eritrean domestic workers' migration paths. Besides their role as labor *brokers* (p.100) with institutions and bourgeois families in Italy, they had also been a central space in the process of postcolonial Italianization in Eritrea (Chelati Dirar, 2007)⁹. All along the Italian colonial and postcolonial presence in Eritrea, the Italian catholic boarding schools reproduced a proper *colonial authority* (Bhabha, 1994) by teaching the cultural norms and values of the colonizers to colonized subjects¹⁰. Italian education in Eritrea worked as a tactical tool to gain access to the Italian hegemonic socioeconomic context in Eritrea (Marchetti, 2011, p. 79). Domestic workers' children, who grew up in highly Italianized contexts, were among the main recipients of this postcolonial-religious education. Once these children moved to Italy with their mothers (as in Yonas' case), the main religious institutions operating in Ethiopia and Eritrea as Capuchins, Combonians, Consolata, Pime (Cataldi, 2015) reproduced their postcolonial function in Italy. From the first 70's on, in Milano most of the domestic workers' offspring, whether they were born in Italy or not, were placed all around Lombardy in the religious boarding schools originated from the convergence between religious organizations and voluntary sector involvement¹¹. Before the transition of domestic work from residential to a paid for hour work, a phenomenon that had grown increasingly from the mid 80's on (Mezzetti, Stocchiero, 2005, p.20), residential boarding schools (on the same model of the postcolonial schools in Ethiopia and Eritrea) represented one of the main sources to face the "first" second generations childcare issue (Martignoni, 2016). Their formation in the boarding schools, by the way, had been strongly connoted by racial differentiation. The colonial fracture reproducing hegemonic representations of

⁹ For a deeper account on the present function of the postcolonial Italian education system in Ethiopia see Chapt. 6.

¹⁰ For detailed accounts on the Italian boarding schools in Asmara see: Ben-Ghiat, Fuller, 2005; Marchetti 2011, Ghidei Biidu, Marchetti, 2010.

¹¹ Children of Ethiopian and Eritrean domestic workers were sent to mixed boarding schools or in residential structures appositely founded to face their presence; one of the most important in the collective memory of both Ethiopians and Eritreans in Italy was the "Fondazione Pernigotti", that in 1980 opened the "Collegio San Marco" with the aim of sustaining the children of Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants. (Cologna Breveglieri, 2003).

Italianness mirrored in the boarding schools' organizational patterns and in the ways to manage the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' presence.

Alex, an Italian of Ethiopian origin in his 40's, clearly exposes the differential treatments in the boarding school he and his friends received during their youth. Alex told me about the boarding schools out of Milano and the difficulties he found in living out of the familiar context. Boarding schools were all around Lombardy (he talked about "collegi" in Monza and in Bergamo and in both of them there were more than 50 Ethiopians and Eritreans). He was allowed to see his mother once a week. Most of the times at the boarding school, he was only with Ethiopians and Eritreans despite of the different ages or time of arrival. Alex justified the division between *Habesha* and *Italians* in the boarding schools by calling into question a shared language and the fact of feeling stronger in a group¹².

In the experience of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins at boarding schools, it is possible to trace back the forerunner of a socially determined second-generation condition. Boarding schools' organization had a relation of continuity with the postcolonial patterns reproducing the relation between Italy and the Horn of Africa. The mechanisms of concentration of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and the processes of separation from the wider Italian audience produced a social space of differentiation. In this perspective Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins discovered themselves as a social group: a group produced through the differential lens of the hegemonic representations of Italianness in a structural continuity with their mothers' racialized, gendered, and class oriented working activity.

2.2.2 Precondition pt2: downward assimilation. Why a Milanese Habesha should speak Neapolitan?

The condition of structural invisibility of the first-generation migrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea until the mid-80's and their institutional differentiation in terms of access to the welfare state represented a primary problem in the ways they built their social life in Milano. In 1978, only 10-15% of Eritreans and Ethiopians could afford a private flat to live in. The others used to share rooms with compatriots or relied on boarding houses, religious communities, and public dormitories (Martignoni, 2016, p.130). A very widespread phenomenon was, furthermore, the irregular occupation of empty houses. In 1982, around 35-40% of the Eritreans in Milano used to squat (Ambroso, 1987), with the help of the leftist movements in Milano¹³. Ethiopian and Eritrean

¹² Fieldnotes, Milano, 15.05.2016

¹³ The 1983 resolution of Milano council, allowed migrants to be eligible for council housing. In this perspective, squatting turned out to be a tactic of visibility in order to have a council house assigned (Martignoni, 2016 p. 131).

migrants housing instances followed the paths of the Milanese proletarian class, which were mainly composed of southern Italian migrants who, from the 50's onwards, kept moving to northern Italy (Boffi, Confini, Ginsanti, Mingione, 1973). Similarly to southern Italian immigrants, the phenomena of squatting or renting crumbling buildings in the city center represented the immediate solution to their housing problems. The council housing assignment, that from the mid 80's on started to include Ethiopians and Eritreans, generated a dispersion in the Milanese suburban areas and expelled lower classes from the ongoing gentrifying city center¹⁴. This process of expulsion reinforced the isomorphic relation between migration status and social class that had been initiated during the 1980s. Milanese suburbs turned out to represent specific social units disconnected from the wider Milanese social fabric, structurally lacking social services and facilities, and mainly inhabited by southern Italian migrants. The context where the most of the children of Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants were born and raised, therefore, configured as a ghetto, as a historically determinate, spatially-based concatenation of mechanisms of ethnoracial closure and control" (Wacquant 1997, p. 343). During my fieldwork, I had the possibility to notice the widespread connection between the ways they represented themselves and the social setting they were born and raised in. This process usually emerged at the beginning of a social relation with Italians of Ethiopian or Eritrean origins, as soon as they heard my accent connotating my southern Italian origins. It was quite common for me to receive questions about my hometown. They often mentioned their "Neapolitan" closest childhood friends, or even started to talk with a Neapolitan accent. There was a widespread use of the derogatory term *Terrone* (a term used to insult southern Italians) as a source of recognition. As Magda, an Italian of Eritrean origin in her 30's told me:

I do not want you to misunderstand me when I use the term *Terrone*. This is not an offence to me. We are very similar in culture. I grew up with my neighbors from Aversa. I think we Habesha are Terroni as well¹⁵. My geographic origins, paradoxically and unexpectedly, resonated with their social condition (Wikan, 2013 [1992]) and represented a mechanism of social distance reduction. This process is strongly indicative of the relation Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins created with the Milanese social space. Structurally excluded from the hegemonic representations of the city, they grew up in the marginal context of the Milanese suburbs, associating to the structural condition of marginalization connotating the historiced southern Italian underclass living in Milano. As Gupta

¹⁴ Ethiopians and Eritreans mainly concentrated in the areas around the city centers built from the 50's on. The main concentrations can be found in the council houses of the neighborhoods of Barona (north of Milano), Maciachini (East of Milano), Corvetto (South of Milano), and Especially San Siro (West of Milano).

¹⁵ Fieldnotes, Milano, 13.04.2015.

and Ferguson (1997) stated, place production, far from being based on the recognition of a cultural similarity or a social continuity, is the effect of a classificatory system founded on various forms of exclusion and of the construction of otherness that defines personal and collective identifications (p.13). The mechanisms of exclusion aimed at reproducing the Milanese hegemonic representations of the city produced a condition of structural subalternity, whence new social configurations and affiliations arose.

Southern Italian housewives, for example, were a source of crucial importance in the early stage of children of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' life, representing a solid and cheaper alternative to catholic boarding schools. Those who were born from the mid 80's to the first 90's (meeting the Andall's definition of "new" second generation) mainly raised in southern Italian families and socialized in the southern Italian's migrant setting. The structural lack of policies to face the coming age of a multicultural society in Italy, led to informal practices of assimilation where marginalized Italian groups served as a vector of Italianness. This process was highly performative on Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' social positioning. First of all, it acted on their linguistic competence: far from Tigrigna, they were exposed to the Italian language or to southern dialects in their early life stages. As Adiam, an Italian of Eritrean origin in her 30's who is now running a PhD on Eritrean *second generations* stated:

Our linguistic competence is mainly due to our summer holidays in Asmara. The more you were there as a baby the more you learned Tigrigna. I think very few of us learned Tigrigna in Milano as children. On the contrary, in Milano we forgot the little Tigrigna we learned in Asmara¹⁶.

Boarding schools and housing issues, two of the main narratives forging the Ethiopian and Eritrean presence in Milano, played a decisive role in the making of the second-generation condition as a discursive space of structural differentiation from the hegemonic paradigms sustaining Italianness. The assimilation to a socially connotated setting structurally differentiated from the hegemonic representations of Milano, especially for males, performatively worked on their social positioning.

2.3 Racial differentiation, gender, class. The making of *Habesha second generations*

2.3.1 *Ragazzi di zona*. The class connotation of the Habesha identification

Those people are still doing the same things they did when they were 16. They remained "*ragazzi di zona*". They just think about smoking joints, having holidays, buying a car, spending their days doing nothing. They

¹⁶ Fieldnotes, London, 14.06.2016.

say I am a betrayer of Eritrea but they do not even know what Eritrea is. It is crazy if I think I was like that until some years ago¹⁷.

Tesfay, an Italian of Eritrean origins, pronounced these words while talking with me about the threats he received from some of his old friends because of his involvement in refugees reception in Milano¹⁸. Tesfay explained to me the motivations that led them to classify him as a betrayer, by blaming their condition of “ragazzi di zona”, an expression that it is possible to translate as ghetissards¹⁹. In his opinion, their restricted view of the world led them to reproduce a fake and uncritical nationalism without any real consciousness of the Eritrean complexity. I will deepen the ways nationalist politics acted on the production of a second-generation condition in the next paragraph. I will now consider the ways the Italian males of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins grew up as “*ragazzi di zona*” and the social meaning it entailed.

Talking about the Black-White structural asymmetric relation, Fanon (2008 [1952]) underlines how a black man in a white society is required to fit a series of social expectations to perform his condition. Those expectations are structurally incorporated into the process of individualization where racial attribution coalesces with class and gender. Italian men of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins born and raised as *blacks* in Milano had to confront themselves with these processes since their transition from childhood to adolescence.

In the following lines, I will report an extract of an interview I had with Johnny, talking about his childhood in Milano. Johnny’s words will serve as a starting point to make sense of the construction of a racially connoted masculinity as a “second generation’s” constitutive feature.

One of my teacher once told me “can you please move out of the blackboard? It is of your same color and I can’t see you”. It was a matter of survival at school. You had to be meaner than the others. If not, you were dead²⁰.

The explicit link between racial attributions and behavioral patterns Johnny underlined, emphasizes the ways his social construction arose as a response to a condition of structural differentiation. From his adolescence onwards, he had to confront his structural condition of marginalization compared to the Milanese setting (on an economic, social, and symbolic level) to the social attributions he had to confront with as a black Italian male. This connection represented a central issue in the individuation process of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. The phenomenon of being asked

¹⁷ Fieldnotes, Milano, 15.03.2015.

¹⁸ I will deepen the relation between children of immigrants and refugees in the next chapter (chapt.3).

¹⁹ Milan is divided into administrative areas. “Ragazzo di zona” is a derogatory term to talk about people who organize their everyday life in the social space of the ghetto.

²⁰ Fieldnotes, Addis Ababa, 21.01.2016.

for documents by the police in the streets, or for drugs by same-age white Italians came to be an integral part of their relationship with the city's social fabric. The suburbs where they had been raised, in these respects, represented powerful places of identification as well as arenas where it was possible to put on stage their social condition. Structurally disconnected from the Milanese hegemonic space, Milanese suburbs offered them the possibility to make sense of their differential condition. The hyperghetto street life (Wacquant, 2008), where legality and illegality mingle turned in a space of social recognition. If from one side it alienated them from the Milanese public arena, on the other it allowed them to produce a site of identification out of the structural differentiation they were confronted with.

The two following sentences clearly illustrate this dialectic relation sustaining the street life in Milanese suburbs as both a site of marginalization and a site of identification.

- Thank god, I grew up in the city center. Who knows what would have happened to me otherwise. A lot of my friends ended up in jail or in drugs stories²¹.
- I am good here, but if I have the chance to come back to Milano I would go back, even without preparing the luggage. I miss home. I knew everyone in the neighborhood. I miss my coffeehouse just in front of my house. I miss my friends. Life was easier. Everyone was calm and relaxed²².

The first sentence was pronounced by Alex, an Italian of Ethiopian origin. His parents managed to buy the house they were squatting in, close by the city center. The position of his building allowed him to join the schools of the city center and to socialize with people of the Milanese middle class. In his opinion that was the luck of his life because it granted him the opportunity both to enlarge his perspectives and to keep safe from the risks connected to the suburban council houses he lived in. The second sentence was pronounced by John, an Italian of Eritrean origin in his 30's who moved to London for good in 2012²³. By talking about his life in Milano, he mainly focused on the neighborhood he was born and raised in, and he depicted it in opposition to his busy life in London as a bartender. Far from relating to his ancestral land, or to the diaspora spaces of the city, he identified as *home* his neighborhood and its social life.

The expression *ragazzi di zona*, under this perspective, represents the marker of a downward assimilation process that forged Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' social behavior, as well as their social positioning compared to the wider Milanese context. As I will show in the next paragraphs, this model entangles with their social identification as *Habesha*. By analyzing the

²¹ Fieldnotes, Milano, 15.09.2015.

²² Fieldnotes, London, 13.08.2016.

²³ On the Habesha mobility to London see chapt.7.

process of translation of the social features they experienced as marginalized Italians into the representations of their ancestral ethnic belonging, it will be possible both to de-essentialize ethni representations and to make sense of the term Habesha as a condition related to Italianness.

2.3.2 The Habesha dark side. second-generation condition and gender divide

Do you know about the Habesha dark side? Or rather, the dark side of the Habesha men? At my graduation party the father of one of my friend complimented me. His daughter would have reached her graduation soon as well. He told me: You girls are the pride of our community. On the contrary, I do not know what these guys have²⁴.

These are the words of Serena, an Italian of Eritrean origin living in London. She introduced the issue of gender differentiation among the Italian of Eritrean origins by reporting the sentence of her father's friend. These words are very indicative to delineate some crucial traits of the Second-generation Habesha condition. On the one hand, they make visible the gender line cutting the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins social experience of the Milanese context. On the other hand, they emphasize the structural distance between the youth behavioral patterns and their parents' expectations.

As Thomassen (2010) stated, the problems related to the integration of 2G immigrants in Italy are specific male problems. Even if they are more 'free' (p.38) on paper, in fact, it is almost the norm that in an Ethiopian or Eritrean Milanese family, young women are usually more educated than men. All along our interview, Serena talked about the strong division between Italian men and women of Eritrean origins. She emphasized how criminality, drug and alcohol consumption, and even suicides have always been a constant preoccupation in Milanese *Habesha* families.

In order to make sense of this gender gap it is necessary to avoid to flatten the analysis on a culturalist perspective, that on the one hand pays little attention to the antropopietic processes (Remotti, 2002) producing what I define as the *second-generation condition*, and, on the other hand, contributes to reproduce and normalize the structures of inequality reproducing the Italian society (Tarabusi 2014). The gender divide running across the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social space is obviously not irrelevant in the ways the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins socially represent themselves, and it emerged several times along the ethnography. In one of my meetings with Serena, we were in a coffeehouse in Brixton, with some of her Italian friends. The coffeehouse was in front of a Habesha club. Some old people were sitting out of the club minding their own business. While we were having our drink, Serena jokingly asked us to finish soon and to move somewhere

²⁴ Fieldnotes, London, 21.06.2016.

else since she had to smoke a cigarette. When I asked her why we had to move, she indicated the Habesha club. I asked her if the reason was that she knew some of the old people who sat outside the club. She said that it was not a matter of hiding but of respect. In her opinion, it would have been disrespectful to smoke in front of old people and she would have created an unpleasant situation²⁵.

The opposing relation between the “control” of women and the “freeness” of men as a constituent feature of Habeshanness, emerged even in the explicit representations of male subjects: a culturalist perspective is often used as explanation of gender division and defined behavioral patterns.

Miki, an Italian of Eritrean origin in his late 20's I met in London, clearly explained this dynamic:

we should be erecting a statue to our mothers. Our fathers, on the contrary, are jerks. They like to go roaming and to spend their times in clubs. Divorce is just normality. What can our mothers do when they see their husbands coming back home late at night drunk almost every day? That is why they would accept me to go around all day long. But they would never allow my sister to do the same²⁶.

The intergenerational continuity Miki represented, however, is far from being the acritical reproduction of crystallized social patterns related to the ancestral land and overlapping time and space. On the contrary, the self-attribution of the social patterns related to the ancestral land can be considered as a proper self-fulfilling prophecy. The incorporation of a continuist perspective allows to hide the ongoing structures of inequality reproducing the so called Ethiopian and Eritrean community in Milano as a discrete unit regardless of the social, legal, or symbolic status of the people involved.

Therefore, what is possible to define as the *Habesha* model of masculinity, what Serena defined as *the Habesha dark side*, far from drawing on their ancestral social habits, developed through the modes of reproduction of Milanese marginalized groups. The result was the production of an undifferentiated marginalized social unit stemming from the process of peripherization aimed at reproducing the center (Callari Galli, 2000). The dominant models, the slangs, the way of representing themselves, therefore, were structurally connected to the Milanese underworld, rather than Ethiopia or Eritrea. Shortly, downward assimilation, together with the structural differentiation they experienced as racialized Italians, forged a culturally defined model of masculinity among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. Those structures of inequality had

²⁵ Fieldnotes, 31.05.2016.

²⁶ Fieldnotes, 06.07.2016.

been incomparably more effective than their ancestral belonging in the ways they sited within the Italian setting.

Actually, the structural continuity with their parents' generation, can be found specifically in the processes of marginalization related to the Italian context. The lack of social mobility, the racializing paradigm they were subjected to, their structural exclusion from the hegemonic representation of the Italian social space produced an impressive immobility across generations. This condition is clearly expressed in the following sentences of Joe, an Italian of Eritrean origins in his mid 30's who moved to London because of the lack of opportunities of the Italian context. Talking about his youth in Milano he said:

Our mothers used to clean up the asses of rich old people. We sold drug to their sons. We had good contacts to find it. And all of us started from here, in a society that have never accepted us. So fuck off school. I sold weed and coke. Some of us went too far with it. But it was a way to show we were something²⁷.

2.3.3 Cultural Translations: second-generation condition and the making of Habeshaness

This is not my life. I have too much to lose to live like that. This is not Ethiopia. This is Milano.

I heard this sentence in a western oriented club of Addis Ababa, by Johnny, thr Milanese of Ethiopian origins in his late 20's I worked with in Ethiopia²⁸. He pronounced these words after a long fight with George, one of his Milanese friends of Ethiopian origins in his late 30's who moved in Addis Ababa for good in 2013. The fight was caused by apparently insignificant reasons. As the most of the nights out with other Milanese of Ethiopian origins, we were in one of the expensive clubs of Addis Ababa. George, the older of the group, and the one who had lived in Addis Ababa longer than the others, used to decide the places where to go and to define the behavioral patterns of the night. All of their movements in the club (from where to sit to what kind of drink to have) had to be aimed at showing off their western status and their structural difference from the wider Ethiopian public of the club. The fight between George and Johnny started specifically because Johnny, in George's opinion, contradicted one of these rules. While we sat by the bar, one of the waitresses gave Johnny the bill of a cocktail he had never drunk. The bill was of 100 Ethiopian birrs, approximatively 4 euros. Johnny started to argue with the waitress saying that he did not want to pay for something he had never ordered. Since the discussion with the waitress started to be tense, George decided to pay the cocktail and plead his pardon to the waitress. After that, he turned to Johnny and he said that his behavior was shameful since he preferred to turn the eyes of the entire club on us rather than paying 4 euros. Johnny, in his defense, said that it was not about money, but, differently than him, he did not want to be "ridiculized by 'locals'". This assertion incited a harsher discussion. George accused Johnny

²⁷ Fieldnotes, London, 16.07.2016.

²⁸ I will deepen the topic of the second-generation "return" to the ancestral land in chapters 4 and 5.

to be disrespectful and ordered him to shut up. Since Johnny kept talking to explain his point of view, George slapped him and they started to fight until the bouncers divided them and expelled George from the club. For the rest of the night, George sent threatening messages to Johnny asking him to go out of the club to settle the score. At that time, Johnny explained to me the reasons he did not want to face George. And he said the phrase I quoted above. In his opinion George was used to behave the way he did because of his adolescence in Milano. Therefore, it was dangerous to face him since he did not care about the consequences of his actions²⁹.

The relation between alcohol consumption patterns and masculinity is a wide shared topic in every field of human studies. The cultural construction of alcohol consumption models transcends ethnic, cultural and class divide, and it is often a decisive element in the reproduction of social groups (Mc Donald, 1994). Despite the fact that alcohol consumption in Ethiopia appears to be well below the relatively low pro capita consumption compared to other Sub-Saharan countries (WHO, 2014) the social relevance of alcohol drinking is widely shared. The social configuration of alcohol consumption as a rhetoric of both masculinity and identification clearly emerged all along the fieldwork in Ethiopia. There was even a joke they told me several times that made alcohol consumption an integral part of Habesha models of masculinity: *once you eat injera, get drunk and have sex with an Ethiopian woman you can consider yourself as Habesha*.

In the ethnographic extract I reported, however, the centrality of alcohol as a tool of masculinity was not related to its consumption but rather to the social imaginaries it enacted. During the nights I spent out with the Milanese of Ethiopian origins, alcohol consumption represented an integral part of a specific behavioral pattern aimed at reproducing a culturally defined Habeshanness. Consumption strategies in fact represented a way to define the field of power relationship they enacted to reproduce their structural differentiation from the average Ethiopian setting (see. Chapt4). Prodigal consumption practices like buying the most expensive bottles of the club and avoid any possible behavior emphasizing social or economic weakness represented a central element in their group reproduction. In Johnny's perspective, as he told me one of the first nights out with other Italians of Ethiopian origins, these behaviors represented a way to feel more powerful and to legitimize their presence in Ethiopia. These practices, by the way, were quite far from his everyday behavioral patterns. All along the fieldwork in Ethiopia, I had the opportunity to notice that the ways Johnny self-represented in the wider social space positionally changed compared to the people he was with. While he had to reproduce an Habesha second-generation's masculinity

²⁹ Fieldnotes, Addis Ababa, 14.04.2016.

with his Milanese friends, he had no interest in reproducing the same behavioral patterns in the cosmopolitan settings we experienced (see. Chapt.4). The social patterns reproducing a second-generation Habesha masculinity among the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, in this perspective, were culturally constructed out of the Ethiopian and Eritrean social space. It was, on the contrary, the reproduction of the models of masculinity they incorporated as differential Italians in their everyday lives in the Milanese suburbs. Through a process of cultural translation (Bhabha, 1994), their condition of differential Italians entered the ways they self-represented as the heirs of a culturally and symbolically defined social world: the Habesha social world. The questions are: how and why this process of cultural translation takes place? How does their condition of differential Italians enter the cultural patterns they reproduced to perform an ancestral identification? And finally: why did they reproduce an ancestral identification like Habesha, which overrode rather than reproduced the national and political paradigms that structurally divided Ethiopia from Eritrea? In order to make sense of this process of production of Habesha cultural identification, as it emerged in this paragraph, it is necessary to break a continuist perspective linking their cultural belonging to the diaspora social space and to analyze the structural reasons that made Habeshaness a space of recognition in the Italian context.

2.4 Translating ethnicity from the ancestral land to the Italian context. Habeshaness as a space of subjectivity

Until my 9th birthday there were at least 50 guests at home every year. From 1998 on, more than the half of them stopped to come³⁰.

These words were pronounced by Jimmy, an Italian of Ethiopian origins who was born in Milano in 1989. Jimmy told me about the birthday parties of his childhood to emphasize the ways social relations changed in the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social space from 1998 on, with the opening of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict. The political upturns in the region that turned the relations between the two states from allies to enemies (Tronvoll, 2009) represented not only a watershed in the recent history of the Horn of Africa (Hepner, O’Kane, 2009), but heavily reverberated on diasporic configurations.

From the end of the 90’s on, a big shift in the communitarian structures sustaining the Milanese diasporic social space took place. The Milanese shared social structures that from the late 70’s on represented the reference point in the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social life gradually lost their attractivity in favor of nationalist structures. The shift from a communitarian to a nationalist

³⁰ Fieldnotes, Milano, 11.07.2015.

configuration, far from being related to the mere political sphere, entailed social, religious, and symbolic structures mirroring the national contrasts in diaspora. As Miriam, an Italian of Ethiopian father and Eritrean mother told me. *I have been lucky. You cannot imagine how many families split up because of the war. People who divorced, family members that stopped talking to each other. It was such a mess*³¹.

The most significant example of the affirmation of this new paradigm was the fate of the mixed Ethiopian and Eritrean church of Via Friuli (chapt.1 – chapt. 6) and the oratory of Via Kramer where young Ethiopian and Eritrean used to meet from the mid-80s to the mid-90's. In the everyday practices related to the Oratory it is possible to trace back the making of a Habesha social identification as a way to deal with their second-generation condition.

2.4.1 Liminoid spaces of Habesha constructions: The oratory of Via Kramer

Until the mid-90s, the oratory of Via Kramer represented a gathering space where different generations of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins elaborated their positionality in the Milanese context. Via Kramer represented a powerful place of hybridization. A place of intergenerational continuity where, close to the ancestral land flows, meanings and practices, new models of identification arose. Those models were all but in continuity to the ancestral lands modes of self-reproduction, but strongly connected to the Milanese social space. More specifically, the Via Kramer oratory represented a space of translation of their differential Italianness (in gender, class, and racial terms) into self-valuing attributes. The so called “first” second generations (those who were born or raised in Italy from the first 70's on) found in via Kramer a site of identification not hierarchically ordered. A site where it was possible to reproduce a social group on the contours of the differential lines they were subjected to in their everyday experience of the Milanese context. Sited in the city center, close by the diaspora neighborhood of Porta Venezia, the Via Kramer oratory exercised a centripetal force on the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. It was a space of social recognition aggregating them from the disjointed Milanese suburbs, where to practice their differential condition as a self-valuing attribute. From the mid'80's to the mid 90's Kramer represented one of the main hip-hop culture places in Milano, and a source of social legitimation to act in the upcoming Milanese black global culture. Downward assimilation and the behavioral patterns it entailed, the racial paradigm they had to confront with, the gender lines dividing the experience of being considered black in a white society (Fanon, 2008 [1952]) coalesced in Via kramer

³¹ fieldnotes, Milano, 11.02.2015.

oratory in a performative model to deal with the Milanese space. In this convergence it is possible to trace back the social production of a second generation Habesha model. The everyday practice of the via Kramer oratory, produced the first most populous “black Italian” social group in Milano. A group that found its social legitimation in the public space as the representatives of a blackness in the 80’s and 90’s black oriented club parties in Milano. The term Habesha, in this perspective, showed its nature of liminoid space of identification (Turner, 1974), expressing in leisure times practices and subverting the structural relations reproducing their differential Italianness.

As Miki, an Italian of Eritrean origin told me, remembering about his youth in the first 90’s:

We brought hip hop to Milano. Any time we went in one of the clubs the owner was so happy. We were more than 50 every time. We had free drinks, free entries and the VIP area of the club reserved³².

The production of a site of recognition and of social legitimacy marked the entrance of an Habesha way of being in the Milanese social space. The focal force of the Via Kramer oratory allowed Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to come together in the disconnected space of the Milanese suburbs and to identify themselves under a common condition.

With the growing hostility between the two countries, the convivence in the church of Via Friuli and consequently in the oratory, became more and more complex. The communitarian function of the oratory, as a bridge between the diaspora and the Milanese social space started to decrease³³. With the rising of nationalist configurations as the main source of diasporic identification, therefore, there was a proper split in the ways the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins built their social positioning as both sons of immigrants and differential Italians. From the late 90’s on, the term Habesha and the social meaning it entailed, disconnected from the political and social dynamics of the ancestral land and turned out to be a marker of the second-generation condition of subjectivity. From the Ethio-Eritrean war on, the reproduction of the term Habesha was marked from the idiosyncrasy between a divided national and political belonging related to the ancestral contexts and the emphasis on a shared ancestral identification as a source to act as a social group in the Milanese social space.

2.4.2 Nationalist winds: the fracture between a second generation Habeshaness and the ancestral lands

When I was 14 I wanted to attend a Tigrigna school organized by the Eritrean consulate. They allowed me to participate but they treated me in a very bad way. My classmates used to say that since I was Ethiopian

³² Fieldnotes, London. 13.08.2016.

³³ With the turn of the new millennium the oratory lost its relevance until its definitive closure. Nowadays it has been replaced by a museum of the Capuchin priests.

I had to learn my national language or to attend a course run by my country. And the saddest thing was that I knew very well some of them. After two lessons, I decided to give up. I could not afford to feel discriminated even to learn my parents' language³⁴.

Serena is an Italian of Ethiopian origin in her late 20's. Her parents, as most of the first wave of Ethiopians in Milano, originated from the Tigray region in the northern Ethiopia (see. Chapt.1), and, similarly to their neighborhood highlander Eritreans (*Kebessa*), they spoke Tigrigna as their first language. Serena's willingness to learn a language she had no chance to learn in her childhood (see. Chapt 2.2) contrasted with the nationalist paradigm rising up in the Milanese diasporic space. As pointed out by the anthropologist Wolbert Smidt (2010), the borders between Tigray region in Ethiopia and the highland Eritrea have always existed, creating different spaces of belonging. Nevertheless, the frontiers, until recently, have always been a dynamic space of interaction. The growing hostilities between the newborn independent Eritrea and the hegemonic Ethiopia (Iyob, 2000) ending up in the border conflict (1998-2000) led to a new configuration of the borderline between Tigray and Eritrea. The border, and its affirmation, turned into a tool of national reproduction rather than a space of interconnectivity. The affirmation of a national paradigm in the Milanese diasporic setting, not only led to a progressive erosion of the shared diasporic structures of everyday interaction (such as the church in via Friuli or the Via Kramer Oratory), but to a production of places structurally ordered on the nationalist configuration. As in Serena's case, who could not go on with the studies of Tigrigna languages, those places reproduced the new Ethio-Eritrean border function, reinforcing a structural divide as a tool of national recognition. Diasporic places of aggregation, in this respect, changed their structural function. Their hybrid function, as both places of reproduction of a diaspora space, and places of recognition to site themselves within the Italian space, disappeared. This process strongly impacted on the so called "second" second generations", those who individualized from the late 90's on: by growing up in a nation-oriented diasporic setting, their diasporic involvement mainly related to national structures, whose main aim was the reproduction of a nationalist paradigm. The result of the nationalization of the diasporic structures, in fact, was the progressive channeling of flows, discourses, and ideas circulating in these places towards a nationalist paradigm. This process implied a structural control over the activities of these configurations, and a *supervision* that positioned the youth groups in a dependent relation from the elders. In the following extract, the dynamic of the structural control over youth activities

³⁴ Filedontes, Milano, 05.04.2015.

is visible in the words of Selam. Selam is an Italian woman or Eritrean origins in her early 30's, that in her adolescence was involved in youth activities related to the Eritrean consulate in Milano.

It was during the second year of the high school more or less, that I started to attend the youth meetings of the Eritrean consulate. At first, we were very few, but, gradually, we started to become more and more. We started to elaborate many activities to talk about Eritrea and Milano. The name of our group was, in fact, Eritrea-Milano. It worked very well. Maybe too much. That is why, when we had to elect a president of our group with the aim of creating a real association, the elders entered in the decision process. They convinced us to elect a guy much older than us who was already involved in Eritrean politics. He had to be an advisor. But he was an advisor only on paper since he changed the way we were together. After a while I stopped going to the gatherings³⁵.

The association Eritrea-Milano Selam joined during her adolescence was transformed some years later in the YPFDJ³⁶ Milano. Differently than Selam, many Milanese of Eritrean (and Ethiopian) origins actively entered diasporic organization based on the nationalist paradigm such as the YPFDJ. The hierarchically ordered flows circulating in these structures, if on the one hand, alimented a second generation's transnational belonging on the model of the first generation's nationalism, on the other hand, undid the ties between their ancestral identification and their present condition of differential Italians. The disconnection between a transnational consciousness (Vertovec, 1999) and the process of acculturation in the host society (Kivisto, 2001, p.571) the nationalist models perpetrated, surely helped to reproduce a shared belonging among the dispersed people of Ethiopian or Eritrean origins³⁷. On the other hand, the diasporic structures lost their function as sites of identification to act within the Italian space. The Ethio-Eritrean conflict, in this respect, represented the big divide in the production of the Ethiopian and Eritrean second-generation condition. The affirmation of a nationalist paradigm in the reproduction of the diasporic structures, in fact, led to a separation of the models of self-definition the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enacted to reproduce their differential Italianness. The production of a mutual exclusive Ethiopian or Eritrean national belonging, in fact, if on the one hand obscured the everyday processes of shared reproduction of the diasporic setting (see. Chapt.3), on the other hand excluded from their ancestral identification the differential content of their Italian condition. The ethnic name Habesha

³⁵ Fieldontes, Milano, 07.06.2016.

³⁶ The YPFDJ (the acronym of Young People's Front for Democracy and Justice) is a nationalist Eritrean Diaspora Youth organization branch of their parent organization, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). Similarly to their parents structure, the YPFDJ propose a transnational nationalism and organizes periodical gatherings where young Eritreans of different nationalities meet and discuss about homeland issues and their social condition.

³⁷ I will consider the second-generation condition as a category of transnational recognition in chapt. 4.

itself, entered in the Ethiopian and Eritrean national discursive space, representing a source of national identification for the former and a term to reject for the latter. In the Ethiopian nationalist discourse, in fact, the term Habesha is used as an hegemonic tool to represent a national unity within a ethnically strongly divided country. In the Eritrean context, on the contrary, the term is not rejected because of its ethnic significance, but for its political purpose, indicating a commonality with the Ethiopian hegemonic group. The rejection of the term Habesha among the Eritreans is a salient element of its nationalist rhetoric. Especially among diaspora youth, where national politics are vehiculated in the transnational virtual space (Bernal, 2005), the distance from the term is very significant. The Eritrean nationalist facebook group "*I am not Habesha, I am Eritrean*"³⁸ counts over 60.000 followers: most of its messages are vehiculated in English rather than Tigrigna to be of easier access among diasporas. In the Milanese social space, as in the whole diasporic space, therefore, the term Habesha is strongly debated and contested. Having said that, in the Milanese case, the structural changes in the ways of dealing with their ancestral identification did not change their position within the Italian space. Downward assimilation, racialization, and the structural problems it implied remained untouched after the Ethiopian and Eritrean nationalist shift. The disappearance of the diasporic structures (such as Via Kramer Oratory) where young differential Italians had, until the mid 90's, dealt with their condition, did not deprive the "second" second generations of the possibility to socially site themselves as a social group in the everyday Milanese social space.

The main difference concerned the ways of reproducing their social condition. Deprived of institutionalized gathering spaces where to reproduce as a social group, young Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins identified in the public spaces of the city reproducing the cultural contents of their differential condition. In the adolescence of most of the "new second generations", the Hip hop informal meeting places of Milano (above all *il Muretto* and *Parco Sempione*) represented powerful sites of recognition. For some of them, central spaces where to reproduce their everyday life. Similarly to the Via Kramer Oratory, these places had a powerful centripetal force. Differently than the diasporic structures, however, these places reunited people from all over Milano of different ethnic and social class backgrounds. In this diverse social space where the only bond was a shared cultural attitude, the everyday life of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins was made of convergences but also dissonances with the general users of these places. Detached from the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic world, and used as a site of symbolic recognition, the term Habesha and its cultural contents arose as the descriptor of a second-generation condition.

³⁸See <https://www.facebook.com/IAmNotHabeshaIAmEritrean/>Last access, 24.08.2017.

2.4.3 Global flows and differentiation. Habesha at the “Muretto”³⁹

I grew up in there but I had no contacts with the people you were talking about. The Eritreans, and the people of African origins generally had few contacts with the Milanese hip hop scene [...] It was not about racism. It was just because few of them were interested in making hip-hop, compared with their cultural background. [...] You should imagine them like in a parallel dimension compared to the Milanese hip-hop scene. While the Milanese hip hop was taking a definite path, they elaborated their own models, even if we all attended the same places or the same clubs. [...] Hip Hop is based on creativity. You have to do, not just to listen. They have always listened to a lot of music. And, nowadays, many of them are great DJ. But they have always made very little music. In this way, it is possible to understand the division of the clubs. In those where you could make music, and not just listen to music, it was very rare to see them⁴⁰.

Chiara, an Italian white woman in her mid 30's, talked about her adolescence in the “Muretto”, the Hip-hop reference space of Milano. Her words depict a strongly fragmented space dividing the autochthons from the Italians of migrant origins within a shared cultural and symbolic space. She explicitly underlined the existence of a “parallel” dimension producing two different fruitions of the hip-hop places of the city. The division she underlined was confirmed by Joe, a Milanese hip hop MC of Eritrean origins I met in London:

Most of us had no interest in making music. Habesha were the kings of clubbing. We made the real club nights in Milano. We did not mix up with whites. We were in two different worlds. They made the hip hop. We were the kings of clubbing. Everywhere we were used to go, we were the kings⁴¹.

The split within a socially shared cultural framework can be placed exactly within the intersection of racial and class structures reproducing the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins condition. The “Muretto”, a place in Piazza San Babila, one of the most central squares of the city, was a part of the square where people could meet and practice hip hop disciplines⁴². The “Muretto” had its acme between the mid 80's and the first 90's, and its main habitués were generally wealthy young white Milanese. Despite its different waves along the 90's⁴³, the social configuration of the place remained the same until the late 90's, when the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin started to daily attend the place. The difference in terms of social, economic, and symbolic structures between the two groups, resulted in the production of a fracture in the “Muretto” configuration, and a

³⁹ Muretto can be translated as “little wall”. It refers to a gathering space where people could sit in the central square of Piazza san Babila in Milano.

⁴⁰ Facebook conversation. Addis Ababa, 12.02.2016.

⁴¹ Fieldnotes, London, 16.07.2016.

⁴² MCing (making music), DJing (creating music), Breaking (Break dance), Writing (aerosol art - graffiti).

⁴³ The place arose and declined according with the waves linked to the Milanese hip hop movement but especially because of the structural interventions in the square (urban renewal) encouraging or limiting Muretto as a gathering space.

peculiar use of the space among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins emerged. As a socially oriented place within the Milanese panorama, “Muretto”, worked as a site of recognition where to reproduce their differential Italianness as a self-valuing attribution. Their class and racial differentiation represented the basis of their legitimacy in the Milanese hip-hop scene. Walking the paths of the “first” second generations, that, from the 80’s on, found in the Milanese black musical scene a source of social recognition, the “second” second generations entered the reference space of the Milanese hip-hop by following the same cultural contents. Rather than encapsulating in the “Muretto” models of cultural reproduction, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins created a “parallel” site within the same cultural container. A parallel site based on their differential Italianness. The “Muretto”, under this perspective, represented a site that made the “second” second generations possible to daily reproduce as a social group. Hip-hop in “Muretto”, similarly to the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic flows circulating in the oratory of via Kramer, represented a self-valuing gauge that enabled them to enact tactics of recognitions to orient their condition. Shortly, the “second” second generations everyday participation to the “Muretto” dynamics, entered in the convergence between transnational factors, and local processes of reconfiguration of the Milanese social space. The process of de-institutionalisation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic convivence following the Ethio-Eritrean conflict, opened to de-institutionalized places as significant sites of social recognition. The divergent paths the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins undertook to enter the “Muretto”, marked the social distance between their own condition and the hegemonic representations of the Italianness. The differences in the fruition of the place produced even different identification within the Hip-Hop social space. Similarly to the “first” second generations, their self-ascribed blackness, turned to be a decisive element in the ways they self-determined in the Muretto hip-hop scene. Transnational media-scapes (Appadurai, 1990), mainly connected to the US hip-hop, therefore, kept on working in the production of a social and symbolic elsewhere compared to the Milanese social space. The isomorphism between their self-representations and the imaginaries of the Black American hip-hop culture, especially for males, worked as a site of translation of their differential condition. Class and racial differentiation they experienced in the Milanese suburbs had its declination in the hegemonic black American hip hop tropes and symbols. Social and behavioral patterns, and even colloquial language itself was strongly oriented from these flows. The most evident phenomenon was the naming process. Almost all of the people I met in Milano during their adolescence gained their own *social* name. In most of the cases the name resulted from the Americanization of their given name (Johannes turned in Johnny,

Josef turned in Jay, etc.). In some other cases, they totally changed their given names and they self-identified with nicknames borrowed from the American popular scenario. The process of name-changing, a central dynamic in self-representation practices of identity (Rymes, 1996), is strongly indicative of how the production of a second-generation condition, rather than following the homeland dynamics, is strongly oriented from the differentiation patterns they experience in Italy. In this social framework it is possible to examine the term *Habesha* as a space of disconnection from the Ethiopian and Eritrean social world and as a site of social recognition to enact their condition of differential Italians.

2.4.4 National division, shared differentiation: Habesha as the marker of a differential Italianness

It is necessary, finally, to examine the contour of the term Habesha, and to place it in the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins everyday life. As pointed out before (2.4.2) The structural division based on their ancestral national identification, is far from being a process merely related to their origins; on the contrary, it strongly affected their growing-up process and their present social positioning in the Milanese social space. For many of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, their parents' gatherings had been a crucial space of social identification during their childhood. Even for those who remained external to the "second generations" social circuits the structural ties to the ancestral land experienced during their childhood may activate as spaces of recognition. This is the case of Jack, an Italian of Ethiopian origins in his 30's, who moved with his father to Addis Ababa in 2013. Jack had always remained external to the social and symbolic circuits the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins built to perform their differential Milanese condition. Rather than attending the Muretto, the club parties, and all of the significant places of the *second generations*, he kept on making his everyday life in the suburb where he was born and raised. The most of his friends were white Italians and he almost had no contact with diaspora dynamics. Nonetheless, Johnny the man I moved with during my fieldwork in Ethiopia, found in Jack a significant part of his reference group to orient himself in his journey to the ancestral land. It was a shared experience in the nationalist gatherings during their childhood, rather than the acknowledgement of a shared social condition who allowed them to mutually recognize as reference points in Ethiopia.

Actually, the mutual recognition based on a shared nationality represented a strong organizational social principle all along the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins lifepaths. The social structures built during their childhood, in fact, configured as the starting point to socially site within the Milanese space as differential Italians. During their adolescence, when they started to attend the social spaces of the Milanese hip-hop scene, they were divided in different crews. National, ethnic,

and political, divisions based on their ancestral identification represented the main principles (together with a shared residentiality) organizing these crews. The result was a fragmented and even an opposite social space of everyday reproduction.

The term Habesha, in these perspective, is far from representing an identification pattern that overcomes the fragmented national and political panorama of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora. On the contrary, it serves as a shifting mechanism, a space of transposition of their stances within the Italian context.

As Amira, a woman of Eritrean origins I met in Milano during my first days in Porta Venezia told me: we Eritreans get on well with Ethiopians. Until we don't drink too much or we talk about politics. In that case, it is a mess⁴⁴.

Amira words clearly transpose the structural differences fueling Ethiopian and Eritrean everyday convivence. In these respect, it is necessary to work on a Habesha social identification among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins as the marker of a second-generation condition. The social configurations that allowed the salience of the term Habesha between children of immigrants are strictly dependent to the Italian context they were born and raised in and the ways these configurations peculiarly intersected with the ancestral land social dynamics.

This social identification is so performative to be celebrated: in all of the significant places of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora it is quite common to regularly celebrate "Habesha parties", where both Ethiopians and Eritreans gather and party all night long. The contents of the party strongly differ from place to place, as well as depending on the organizers. In Milano, Habesha parties differs in their contents and modalities whether they are organized by diaspora people or by Italians of Ethiopian or Eritrean origins. *Second generations* Habesha parties are proper club hip hop nights, spaced out from songs from Ethiopia or Eritrea. The vehicular language is Italian rather than Tigrigna, the dress code is not traditional, neither classic, but predominantly hip-hop oriented. These parties work as proper sites where to reproduce an identification compared to the outer Milanese space. Anyway, national and political differentiations related to the ancestral contexts, are far from being erased in those contexts. In one of the party I attended, a guy explained me that the most of the people were not dancing a song just because it contained the word "Ethiopia"⁴⁵.

Those differences however,, are contained in a space of common identification to deal with a shared social condition. The social function of these parties is very well expressed by Johnny, the Italian of

⁴⁴ Fieldnotes, Milano, 13.03.2014.

⁴⁵ Fieldnotes, Milano, 14.07.2015.

Ethiopian origins I moved with in Ethiopia. In one of these parties he experienced for his first time the “Habesha setting”.

The first time I joined an Habesha party I thought my friends brought me among refugees. I had never seen all those black people together. I couldn’t even imagine there were so many in Milano. I grew up as the only black among my friends. I was the only black in my classroom. Since that time, I understood that I wasted a lot of time. Everything was easier. It was easier with girls. No one asked me stupid questions [...] For the first time I felt powerful and legitimated⁴⁶.

Conclusions

As pointed out by Smidt (2014), the term Habesha, its meaning and its cultural contents, contextually shift depending on the social positioning of the interlocutors. By the way it is possible to note how external classifications may orient the social attributions related to the ethnonym and even reproducing its performativity. In the intersection between gender, class, and racial classifications, the ethnonym Habesha configured as the marker of a second-generation condition. Habesha, represented a way to site within the discursive space of Italianness, a tactic to deactivate its differential contents. It means that the changing of the hegemonic paradigms orienting the Italian discourses over Ethiopian and Eritrean issues, may strongly affect the cultural contents and the manoeuvre margins related to the ethnonym.

To sum up: 1) Habesha represented a source of recognition and identification to face their condition of differential Italians. 2) Despite its ethnic, racial, and cultural connotation related to their ancestral identification, the cultural contents of the term Habesha are structurally dependent from their residing context: as I will show in the next chapters, the shifts in the ways of framing the *second generations* presence in the larger society, may determine a new configuration of the term. 3) Habesha works as a mobility vector, over the immobilizing structures of Italianness. Rather than connecting to the ancestral land social dynamics, it works as a space of legitimacy within the Italian context.

In the next chapter, I will work on the relation between the so called migrant emergency that opened in Italy from 2013 on, and the repositioning of a second generation Habeshaness as a space of common identification with the asylum seekers. In the intersection between asylum seekers forced mobility, the Italian politics of refugees’ flow management, and the role of the Milanese context as a significant space of the Ethiopian and Eritrean global diaspora, it will be possible to explore a process of reconfiguration of the second generation’s Habesha social identification.

⁴⁶ Fieldnotes, Milano, 15.09.2015.

Chapter 3: We are all on that ship: the reconfiguration of a second-generation Habeshaness and the Mediterranean route

3.1 Introduction¹

Italy, and particularly the city of Milano, represents nowadays a crucial transit space of the Mediterranean route towards Northern Europe (Fontanari, 2016). Besides its strategic location as a mobility hub in the European social space, the attractiveness of Milano is due to the presence of well-established migrant national communities who actively engage in the asylum seekers' informal transit. This is particularly the case in the neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia, the main reference space of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora. From the 80's onwards (see Chapt.1), the district has represented a crucial informal mobility hub for forced migrations from Ethiopia, and especially from Eritrea to the north of Europe. Porta Venezia represents what Brah defines as a diaspora space (1996): a location where transnational politics intersect with politics of location (p.632) in the wider space of the city. A space fueled by the different migration waves which marked the recent history of the Horn of Africa. From 2001 onwards, the neighborhood saw the emergence (both in terms of settlement and transit) of the so-called generation asylum (Hepner, 2015): people who fled Ethiopia and Eritrea since the turn of the new millennium and settled in Milano as asylum seekers and refugees. Despite the decennial importance of the neighborhood as a transit space, its connotation turned out to be visible in the Milanese social space only from 2013 onwards, with the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean route in Europe and the public attention on the refugee flow in the Italian public discourse. Within this context, *Committee 3.0*, a group of Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins started to volunteer for Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers transiting in the neighborhood between September 2013 and May 2014. By performing a common Habesha identification with refugees, they organized a public mobilization after the Lampedusa shipwreck of October 3, 2013 (where more than 300 people coming from Ethiopia and Eritrea died) and an informal humanitarian chain in the neighborhood in the first part of 2014. In their activities, they distanced themselves both from the historicized forms of engagement with refugees nourishing the everyday diasporic space of Porta Venezia and from the hegemonic humanitarian paradigm that spread in Milano.

¹ The collaboration and exchanges with Elisa Pascucci, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Academy of Finland in the Space and Political Agency Research Group played a major role in the construction of this chapter's theoretical framework.

In this chapter, I will consider how the mobilization of their ancestral ethnicity in the humanitarian field represented a source they enacted in order to navigate the social structures reproducing their condition of differential Italians (see chapt. 2). Far from being merely a declination of the humanitarian field, or the *natural* outcome of their ancestral origins (Silverstein, 2005), their *ethnic volunteering* goes hand in hand with wider national and transnational structures. These structures, acting on a macro, meso and micro level (Faist, 1997) may activate and orientate ethnic affiliation, social identification and public engagement. Ethnically based mutuality, in this perspective, can be considered, therefore, as a mirror reflecting the structural shifts in the local and the transnational politics over the Mediterranean route. The reformulation of a second generation's Habeshanness, therefore, can be analyzed as a proper space of possibility (Turner, 2017 [1969]) to redefine their social positioning in the Milanese social space. A space of possibility in congruence with the liminal stage, which, at the same time, connotated the Italian (and European) reconfiguration of the Mediterranean route in terms of its securitization and border 'management'. Within the intersection of these structural processes, second generations' Habeshanness turned out to be a tool for the enactment of a politics of difference (Grillo, 1998, p.227) in which political recognition (Taylor, 1994) takes place through a process of socio-cultural differentiation.

The analysis of the rise and fall of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins ethnic engagement in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia and of the structural processes or reformulation of the asylum seekers flow in Italy is two-fold. On the one hand, it will be possible to consider the public identification of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins with the asylum seekers as a way to mobilize their attributed differential Italianness. On the other hand, it will allow us to underline how the hegemonic discourses and practices related to Italianness intertwined in the making and the unmaking of their ethnic engagement.

This chapter draws upon a longitudinal analysis based on narratives of the 2013 commemorative demonstration, and an extensive fieldwork in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia between 2014 and 2015. The analysis, therefore, lays in the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean route in the Italian national politics: from the opening of the operation Mare Nostrum to its dismissal, the inauguration of the European joint Triton Mission², and its effects in the Italian public space.

² The Triton mission (01.11.2014) aimed at defending the European borders rather than searching and rescuing people in the Mediterranean.

3.2 Second-generation condition and the Habesha diasporic space: disconnections

- We are different from immigrants. We speak a different language, we did different schools. I think that this association is pointless³.

- You see this. Until recently it was absolutely impossible for it to happen. We absolutely did not mix with them. It was shameful. I mean... They came by boat and they can barely speak Italian⁴.

These words were pronounced in two different situations by two young Italians of Ethiopians origins. In the first sentence, Sara, a woman in her late 20's, at the beginning of the 2014, talked about the structural difference in terms of social and symbolic horizons between her condition and the Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants of her cohort living in Milano.

In the second sentence, Jack, a man of Sara's same age, in July 2015, commented the composition of the people who joined an *Habesha* party (see chapt.2) I was invited to: almost half of the people were Italians of Ethiopian or Eritreans origins, while the other half were Ethiopians and Eritreans migrants. In his words, it was possible to note that the practice of sharing the same space between the two social groups represented a new and unexpected phenomenon.

In the last chapter (chapt.2), I underlined how the making of an Habesha social identification between the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, rather than reproducing the social meanings related to their ancestral lands, developed along the lines of their condition of differentiated Italians. Furthermore, from the end of the 90's on, the processes of de-institutionalization of the social spaces where to reproduce their social condition, led to a structural detachment of the ways they could reproduce their daily lives from the everyday dynamics of the diasporic social space.

The distance between a *second generation* Habeshaness and what is possible to define as the Habesha diasporic setting, is clearly expressed in the ways they had, until recently, dealt with the Milanese reference space of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora, the neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia. In the following ethnographic extract, Miki, an Italian of Eritrean origins in his 30's, talks about the distance between his social group's processes of socialization and the diaspora context:

Porta Venezia has always been the place of our parents. It was impossible to do anything, even to smoke a cigarette. I used to come to Porta Venezia when I was a kid, but as soon as I started to go out by myself I stopped⁵.

The processes reproducing the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins second-generation condition, therefore, structurally distanced them from their parents' modes of incorporation

³ Fieldnotes, 04.03.2014.

⁴ Filednotes. 15.07.2015.

⁵ Fieldnotes, 04.06.2015.

(Portes, Rumbaut, 2001), and produced a second generation Habeshaness as structurally disconnected from the diasporic context. The relation between them and their same cohort of the so called “generation asylum” had been, until recently, marked from the same principle: divergent horizons, symbols, and practices structurally distanced the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins from the generation asylum. Their Habesha identification, therefore, was far from intersecting the relation between forced migrations and a common ancestral ethnic belonging. The growing presence of migrants of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in Milano from the turn of the new millennium on, on the contrary, had long been framed as a discomfort in their everyday life. This is clearly underlined in the words of Miki, a Milanese of Eritrean origin in his late 30’s, talking about the growing immigrant black presence in the city:

I remember when I was young. It seemed like every African knew each other in the city. And they helped each other. Until some years ago, anytime a black met another black in the streets they used to greet each other. [...] Now it is not like that at all. Even if for the Italians we are all the same⁶.

The lack of a recognition based on a shared ancestral ethnicity and even the production of the hegemonic categories of the Italian public discourse reproducing the opposition between citizens and immigrants (Merrill, 2014) had long been the touchstones distinguishing a *second generation Habeshaness* from the diaspora flows circulating in Milano.

At the beginning of the paragraph, however, I presented an ethnographic extract underlining a process of steady discontinuity from this model of cultural reproduction. The everyday life sharing between Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and the asylum generation (despite in the words of Jack it represented a new phenomenon) it is nowadays one of the salient features of the ways a second-generation Habeshaness reproduce in the Milanese social space (see chapt.8). The process that led to such a big transformation of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins social modes of reproduction (from the absence of connections with the generation asylum, to its social relevance as a constituent group of social identification) need to be explored in the intersection of composite and diverse structural factors. Even in this case, I argue, the genealogy of this process has to be explored within the Italian social panorama. In this chapter, I will underline, how the eruption of the Mediterranean route in the Italian public space from 2011 on, opened new paths of social identification among Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. The intersection between the transnational flows from the Horn of Africa, the Italian national discourses over the “refugee

⁶ Fieldnotes, 26.04.2014.

emergency”, and local politics of location in Milano, paved the way to a process of structural transformation of the *second generation Habesha* modes of self-definition.

3.3 Second generations and ethnic identification with refugees. A reading in the Italian system of regulation of the Mediterranean route

Since the first 70's, with the intensification of the migration paths from Ethiopia and Eritrea (see Chapt.1) the flow from the Horn of Africa to Italy has never stopped. On the contrary, migration chains, and the role of the people of the diaspora has been central in the reproduction of the social, economic and symbolic processes sustaining an Ethiopian and Eritrean culture of migration (Cohen, Sirkeci, 2011). The Ethio-Eritrean conflict, and the emergence of the Mediterranean route as a source of mobility (Belloni, 2016), did not change the function of the diasporic setting. The neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia, since the 80's, represented a crucial hub in the informal secondary movements from the Horn of Africa to the north European contexts (see chapt.1). The flow of the generation asylum, furthermore, despite the ethnic, social, and political divisions it created⁷, rather than being disconnected from the structural organization of the diasporic setting, significantly acted on its reconfiguration and its economic, political, and symbolic relations. The significance of these flows in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, actually, had been, until recently, counterbalanced by a structural invisibility in the Milanese social space and in the Italian hegemonic discourses.

3.3.1 The asylum seekers' flow and its marginality in the Italian public discourse

Forced migrations, until recently, had been quite peripheral in both the European and the Italian public discourses. With a striking equation uniting discursive relevance and locations, the relevance of the Mediterranean route, had been constricted since the late 90's to the geographical margins of the European political space. Cuttitta (2012) in this respect, by working on the island of Lampedusa, emphasized the structural phenomena configuring the island as the prototype of the European border. From the institutional relevance, to the coercive forces implied, from the migrants' ongoing flows to the relation between legality and illegality, Lampedusa, as Cuttitta argues, reproduced a proper “*border spectacle*”, with its own narratives (the emergency rhetoric), its own spectators (the medial representations of the boat-people) and its own actors (the Italian and European institutions of regulation and control of the migration flow). The process of “borderization” of Lampedusa on

⁷ The diaspora configurations following the Ethio-Eritrean conflict changed along the axis of the political and ethnic (as well as national) differences dividing the Ethiopian and Eritrean social space. For a deeper account see Arnone, 2010.

both a geographical but especially a symbolic level (p.188), produced a hyper-visibility of the flow as a structural disconnected process from the core of the European social, political and symbolic space.

In the Italian context, therefore, the Mediterranean route, until recently, laid between public hyper-visibility at the borders of the national space and a structural invisibility right after the end of the *border spectacle*. The national and transnational system of mobility containment and control⁸ allowed to frame the Mediterranean route as a marginal issue within the Italian public discourse.

In the discursive relation between the centrality of the flow in diasporic configurations and transnational familiar networks, and its structural invisibility in the Italian public discourse, laid the social experience of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins.

While the flow (both through formal channels and through the Mediterranean route), had been central in their familiar configurations since their childhood, they never assumed the structural phenomenon of the forced migrations as a source of social identification to act in the Milanese public space. The diaspora engagement in the migration paths along the Mediterranean route (with economic support) and in Milano (organizing their staying or their secondary movements) remained mostly confined within the familiar networks and it almost did not concern the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. This process is clearly expressed by Sami, an Italian of Ethiopian origin with part of his familiar network in Eritrea. He talked about his living experience with one of his uncles from Eritrea when he was a teenager. His uncle had been hosted in Sami's house for the period between his arrival in Italy and his successive movements towards Europe.

I did not understand him. He misbehaved a lot and he had some problems with alcohol. My mother was not confident in leaving me and my sister alone with him. [...] My father told us that he would have spent no more than a few days in our house but he stayed more than one month⁹.

In this extract, the activation of the diasporic structures sustaining the migration chains and the transnational familiar network, far from being a significant part of his modes of social reproduction, represented, in Sami's perspective, a proper "problem".

In this perspective, it clearly emerged that Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins had always been structurally confronted with the diasporic patterns of reproduction of the migration chain: they got to know of the models, the tactics, and the structures to navigate in order to reproduce a successful migration path. Nevertheless, they until recently reproduced an extreme distance between these

⁸ A conscious marginalization of the border (through offshore detention and migration control) and those passing it (as 'clandestini' and invaders). On the institutional production of migrant social invisibility in Italy see Dal Lago, 1999.

⁹ Fieldnotes, Milano, 04.09.2015.

processes and their models of self-identification in the Milanese public space. It suggests to avoid to follow a perspective compressed on their ancestral background as an answer to their recent choice to make the migration issue a central trope of their social identification. It is useful, on the contrary, to set our sights (once again) on the Italian context and the structural changes that took place in the forced migration regimes in the last few years. In the process of intersection of their ancestral background dynamics, with central issues reproducing Italianness, second-generation Habeshanness changed its cultural contours.

3.3.2 The resignification of the asylum seekers flow in Italy

In February 2011, the Italian government declared a state of emergency to face the upturn of asylum seekers arriving on the Sicilian shores through the Mediterranean route after the North-African crisis. Among the extraordinary procedures the Italian government took on, there was the release of humanitarian permits of six-months validity that allowed asylum seekers to move across the Schengen area¹⁰. The Italian initiative¹¹, to some extent, overruled the European system of regulation and control of the forced migrations in the European social space. Since 1990, despite the numerous integrations and changes over time, the Dublin system, regulating the assignment of the asylum seekers in the European space, is still in force: one of its pillars, despite not being formalized in any article, *de facto* assigns the examination of the international protection requests uniquely to the asylum-seeker's first-arrival member state¹².

The state of emergency had been prolonged until the first of January 2013: in this period, therefore, asylum seekers' mobility across the Europe, a process that had almost completely been inscribed in the domain of informality, turned out to be a legal practice. The first effects of this phenomenon, resided in the visibilization of the Mediterranean route out of the European borders. The central squares, the railway stations, and the nodal points of the main European cities started to represent transition spaces for the asylum seekers trying to reach their destination. This phenomenon, by the way, erupted with the end of the state of emergency in 2013, and the normalization of the previous

¹⁰ See. Dpcm 5.4.2011, *misure di protezione temporanea per i cittadini stranieri affluiti dai Paesi nordafricani* (see <http://goo.gl/acsjd2>. Last visit. 24.08.2017).

¹¹ For an ethnographic analysis of the asylum seekers' transit in the European social space following the Italian release of humanitarian permits see Fontanari, 2016.

¹² To achieve this assumption, it is necessary to combine national and supranational regulations. The Dublin Regulation limits the possibility of applying for asylum in one Member State. The establishment of the Eurodac typing detection system obliges Member States to send fingerprints within 48 hours of subjects crossing irregularly the external borders of Europe, cfr. Official Journal of the European Union, Regulation (EU) No 603/2013. (<http://goo.gl/ZxYrQD> Last visit: 29.07.2015). The obligation to photocell is provided in Italian law by art. 5 of the Testo Unico sull'immigrazione (1998). See meltingpot.org <http://goo.gl/IVvH1Y> (Last visit: 28.07.2017).

system of migrant mobility control in Italy. In fact, Institutional normalization did not lead to a reprise of the practices of control and containment the Italian institutions put in place to satisfy the European regulations on asylum-seekers identification. More precisely, a process of differential treatment of asylum seekers (Ong, 2005) based on their nationality entered in force. The 2014 Italian data on the relation between arrivals (170.100) and asylum requests (64.886) showed the emergence of a structural phenomenon in the Italian system of asylum seekers management. The following table, confronting the first five nationalities declared at the moment of the landing with the data of international protection requests, suggests to consider the activation of a selective process in the ways of reproducing the Mediterranean flows: the possibility or not to cross the Italian national space on the basis of the nationality¹³.

Tab. 1 - Italy: The relation between arrivals and asylum requests 2014

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Arrivals</i>	<i>Asylum requests</i>
Syria	42.323	505
Eritrea	34.329	480
Mali	9.908	9.771
Nigeria	9.000	10.138
Gambia	8.691	8.556

Such a configuration, which was as informal as much as it was effective, alternated control and containment to a proper invisibilization of the asylum seekers' presence. Its main aim was the limitation of the possibility to grant international protection on Italian territory. The differentiation between those who were identified and contained to those who were *invisibilized* (escaping the Eurodac system, hence Dublin regulations), in fact, depended from a structural factor: the total recognition rate (TRR), which indicated the possibility to obtain international protection on the basis of national origin. The enormous discrepancy between numbers of arrivals and asylum requests lies precisely in the differential recognition rate connected to asylum seekers' place of origin: while Syrians and Eritreans (the first two nationalities who arrived in Italy in 2014)¹⁴ are granted with the

¹³ For a deeper analysis on the emergence of differential system in the Italian management of the Mediterranean route see Grimaldi, 2016.

¹⁴ See Ismu.it, *Sbarchi 2014* (<http://goo.gl/iIC5wV>. Last visit: 03.08.2017); Interno.gov.it. *Dati asilo 2013-2014*.

recognition of international protection respectively in 94% and 89% of the cases, Malians, Nigerian and Gambians have a TTR of respectively the 8%, 13% and, 9%¹⁵.

Laying in the intersection between national and transnational structural factors, the re-configuration of the Italian system of refugees' treatment is the necessary premise in the understanding of the re-signification of the Mediterranean route in the Italian social space. Asylum seekers' flow, in fact, reproduced through an idiosyncratic relation between public hyper visibility in the European social space and institutional invisibility. Invisibility, as stated by Carter (2010), concerns a flexible employment of power, politics and social positioning that must be configured as a kind of routine practice capable of being reinstated into the flow of everyday events (p.6).

The opening of a transit space for asylum seekers trying to cross the Italian borders in order to reach North European contexts, sparked the refugees' issue in the core of the Italian social space.

Among the asylum seekers crossing the European social space, Eritreans and Ethiopian asylum seekers, due to their high recognition rate (89% for the Eritreans and 53% for the Ethiopians), strongly navigated the transnational transit space that opened along the Mediterranean route. In doing so, they activated the transnational ties binding them to the European diasporic contexts, counting on their structural function within the migration paths. The diaspora neighborhood of Porta Venezia in Milano, from 2013 on, turned out to represent a powerful nodal point of the *new* informal transit of the Ethiopian and especially Eritrean asylum seekers trying to reach the North European contexts. Asylum seekers' institutional invisibility, therefore, was counterbalanced by their hyper-visibility in one of the most central neighborhoods in Milano.

In summer 2013, shortly, there was a situation of ongoing growing importance of the refugees' issue in the Italian medial representations as well as the Milanese public space. The Mediterranean route, its meanings, its effects, lost its peripheral discursive (as well as spatial) value. Parallely, the ongoing shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea assumed a growing importance in the Italian public and media representations and turned out to represent a crucial space of confrontation within the hegemonic Italian public discourse. The salience of the flow in the public discourse, raised the issue of the European inactivity concerning the drownings in the Sicilian channel¹⁶. The Frontex¹⁷

¹⁵ See. Unhcr.org. *Asylum status determination*. (<http://goo.gl/VAfGvg>. Last visit: 04.09.2017).

¹⁶ For a genealogy of the Italian institutional approach concerning the rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea until Mare Nostrum Operation see. Panebianco, 2016.

¹⁷ Frontex is the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union and operates since 2004 in patrolling the European external borders.

defensive approach aimed at controlling the European frontiers rather than rescuing people, started to be contested in the public opinion (Panebianco, 2016, p. 79).

Within these shifts, I argue, it is necessary to site the reconfiguration of a second-generation Habeshanness, as a site of identification linking Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to the Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers involved in the Mediterranean route.

3.4 Mediterranean route and second generation's Habeshanness in the liminal. We are all on that ship

"On the 12th of October, 2013, for the first time in Milano, Ethiopians and Eritreans marched together as brothers. We are all on that ship".

This sentence was the slogan of the Committee 3.0, a spontaneous group of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, who organized the mobilization "We are all on that ship" to commemorate the victims of the forced migrations in the Mediterranean Sea. The commemoration represented the first step of a process of a wider engagement that lasted until the second half of 2014 where Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, volunteered for the asylum seekers crossing the neighborhood of Porta Venezia. The march "We are all on that ship" had a big participation of the Milanese citizenry, and it was considered as the Milanese contribution to the Italian national debate on the Mediterranean route. Five days after, on 18th of October 2013, the Italian government launched the *Mare Nostrum* Operation, the military and humanitarian operation aimed at tackling the humanitarian emergency all along the Sicilian channel.

Despite its success, the demonstration, that concluded in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, created strong tensions within the Ethiopian and Eritrean Milanese diaspora. Many of the elders (including the parents of the organizers), deserted or openly boycotted the mobilization. The "asylum generation" itself, had a very limited participation. As Amira, one of the members of the committee 3.0 said:

Most of my friends' parents did not want their children to join the march. Some of them were really angry and openly tried to scare us or to boycott the manifestation. But most of them simply told us that our intentions were good, but that kind of mobilization was totally useless and counterproductive"¹⁸.

The main representations the organizers of the mobilization offered to explain the generational divide were rooted in the political rhetoric of the Ethiopian and especially Eritrean long-distance nationalism: young people justified the lack of participation among the elders on the basis of their

¹⁸ Fieldnotes, 10.04.2014.

fear of offering a negative representation of the homeland. As Hellen, an Italian of Eritrean origin who participated in the demonstration, stated:

Most of the diasporas mind their own business. They are afraid to talk. It could have been dangerous even to participate to a commemorative march¹⁹.

To avoid any form of identification within the fragmented Ethiopian and Eritrean political panorama, the organizers chose to ban any flag or symbol associated to a specific political side. In this perspective laid their choice to identify under a common Habesha ethnic belonging: from one side, it was a way to emphasize a political disengagement from Ethiopian and Eritrean internal issues, and from the other side they conveyed a message of brotherhood uniting the Milanese diaspora to the homelands. As one of the organizers stated during an interview on a national newspaper covering the mobilization:

We are the same people, Habesha, we are brothers as well as the people crossing the Mediterranean. I have been lucky because my parents made different choices during their youth. Otherwise, I could have been one of those people drowning²⁰.

The account of the mobilization I have just presented, represents a powerful upturn in the ways the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins reproduced their condition of *Habesha* second generations compared to the Italian national paradigm. Three main elements emerge. First of all, the reposition of their ascribed Habeshanness as a space of common identification with the asylum seekers crossing the Mediterranean, represents the basis of their mobilization. Furthermore, they gained social legitimation within the Milanese public discourse about the refugees' issue. Finally, there was a strong dissonance between their action and the diasporic space with the explicit hostility of both the generation nationalism and the generation asylum about the mobilization. Shortly, by turning upside down the cultural contents of their second generation Habeshanness (see chapt.2) Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, paradoxically, rather than getting closer to the diasporic social space, became actively involved in the Milanese hegemonic discourse over the Mediterranean route, entering a social space that had always been structurally neglected to them.

In order to make sense of this process, it is clear that it would be simply naïve to inscribe the isomorphic relation the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean built with the asylum seekers as the "natural" outcome of their ancestral background. As I pointed out before, while the refugees' issue has always been a central dynamic in the reproduction of the diaspora space, it had been almost

¹⁹ Fieldnotes, 04.05.2014.

²⁰ Milano.corriere.it Eritrei, Etiopi e Somali per la prima volta in corteo "Lampedusa, siamo tutti su quella barca" <https://goo.gl/H7Xhak>

completely absent from the second generations' ways of social reproduction until recently. It is then necessary to make sense of their ethnic engagement within the structural and social processes reproducing their differential Italianness, and the new configurations intersecting the Ethiopian and Eritrean forced mobility along the Mediterranean route. In the last chapter (chapt. 2), I pointed out how what is possible to define as the Habesha second-generation condition stems from a process of differentiation connoted by social as well as spatial and temporal immobility compared to the hegemonic structures reproducing Italianness. Second-generation Habeshaness, on the contrary, had been mainly fueled by socially connoted spaces representing sites of disconnection from the wider Milanese social space. However, the process of institutional redefinition of the Mediterranean route management in Italy and its effects within the spaces crossed by the asylum seekers opened a suspension of the structural relations between mobility, space and cultural difference that are responsible for reproducing hegemonic Italianness. A suspension that opened a proper liminal space in the processes of repositioning a second-generations Habesha condition. As Horvath, Thomassen and Wydra pointed out (2009), liminality can be a leading paradigm for understanding transformation in a globalizing world. The hyper-visibility of the Mediterranean route within the Italian social space, produced a strong spatial relevance of what had always been a structurally invisible phenomenon. In the suspension of the stable categories reproducing the relation between mobility and space, even the differential structures reproducing hegemonic representations of Italianness entered in a process of instability. The suspension of the hegemonic categories of regulation and control of transnational forced migrations acted on a local level and opened a space of pure possibility: a space whence, following Turner (2017 [1969]), novel configurations of ideas and relations could have arisen (p.97). Second generations identification with Ethiopians and Eritrean asylum seekers represented the mirror of this liminal paradigm, a way to re-articulate the hegemonic discourses on Italianness. The analysis of a second-generation Habesha ethnic engagement rooted in the structural upturns redefining the Mediterranean route on a macro, meso and micro level (Faist, 1997) will allow to consider their ascribed ethnicity related to the ancestral lands as a space of political recognition (Taylor, 1994).

3.4.1 Second-generation Habesha's Ethnic engagement as an Italian phenomenon?

The idea of the march started on the 30th of September, right after the Sampieri shipwreck. Lampedusa came after that. At the mobilization, by the way, all of the people only talked about Lampedusa²¹.

²¹ Fieldnotes, Milano, 15.03.2015.

In this extract, Willy, the main organizer of the mobilization “We are all on that ship” talked about the issues that arose during the march. Willy is an Italian of Ethiopian origin in his 30’s and he had always self-represented as disconnected from both the diaspora dynamics running in Porta Venezia and the asylum seekers flow.

The process of organizing a mobilization, started from a Facebook status Willy posted after the shipwreck of 30th September 2013 in Sampieri (Ragusa). A boat wrecked 15-20 meters from the shore, and 13 people (Ethiopians, Somalis and Eritreans) not able to swim, died. By posting the picture of burning candles²² around a boat sinking he wrote:

I think that if we, the people of the diaspora, who have the power and who rest assured in Europa and in the US, if we do not do anything it will not be the last time. Rest in peace²³.

In his Facebook post, rather than focusing on the effects of the Mediterranean route management, Willy emphasized the power relationship between the homeland and the diaspora as the main issue to face the sieges. By calling in question the European as well as the US diaspora, he interrogated the national paradigms connected to his ancestral land as the main issue to act on the refugees’ flow.

Through the virtual space of the internet, some Milanese of both Ethiopian and Eritrean origins started to get together and to organize a mobilization in order to raise public awareness of the issue within the diasporic context. On the 3rd of October, during the organization process, the Lampedusa shipwreck erupted in the Italian public discourse. Among the 366 people who died trying to cross the Mediterranean, most of them were of Ethiopian and especially of Eritrean origins. The resonance of Lampedusa tragedy in the Italian public discourse was huge. The day after, the Italian government proclaimed a day of national mourning, and state funerals were organized on the island. Lampedusa shipwreck, with the international coverage it received, represented the watershed in the European politics on the Mediterranean route (Pinelli, Ciabbarri, 2015). The ongoing peripheral features of the Mediterranean route in the Italian public discourse turned in a core issue. The defensive function of the Italian (and consequently European) border itself resulted as completely changed. On 18th of October, the Italian government promoted the Operation Mare Nostrum, a mission of search and rescue in the Mediterranean Sea, that replaced the Frontex paradigm aimed at controlling the European border.

²² The burning candle, represents a symbol of mourning in christian Ethiopia and Eritrea. During the 2013 Mediterranean sieges, it had been strongly utilized worldwide as a symbol of mourning. The burning candle became the symbol of the October 3 2013 Lampedusa shipwreck.

²³ Willy facebook post, 30.09.2013.

This configuration, strongly influenced the destiny of the mobilization the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins arranged. The mobilization gradually changed its paradigm, and from a way to intersect the ancestral lands' issues, it turned into a way to question the structures regulating the flow. As Martignoni (2016) pointed out, the conflictual space due to national and political divisions on the diasporic level did not allowed them to take an explicit position within the diasporic space (p.162). The aim of the mobilization, therefore, had been to ask for a change of the Italian and European structures of management of the Mediterranean route.

The public and media attention in the Milanese social space, and the formal endorsement of the Milanese institutions, besides leading to a significant participation of the Milanese citizenry, structurally intersected with the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins engagement, and turned the march in a "*second generation*" mobilization. Their ethnic engagement, in fact, filled the disjuncture between the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social life and the Italian discourses on the Mediterranean route. A common identification with refugees (despite being Italians), created a space of political legitimation, where their emphasis on their ancestral belonging, hence, their perceived cultural doubleness (Silverstein, 2005), turned out to represent a vantage point to gain social recognition within Milanese public debate on forced migrations. The repositioning of their Habeshanness, turned out to represent a way to navigate the politics of difference (Grillo, 1998, p.227) reproducing their social and spatial differentiation (Soja, Hooper, 1993, p.181) within the Italian public discourse.

In these respects, it is very indicative to consider the destiny of the name they chose to represent themselves as a political unit. Their name was Committee 3.0 (three point zero), underlying their differences with the public and political rhetoric on the second generation representations in Milano (such as Rete G2, or Citizens 2.0). In most of the media that covered the organization and the conduction of the march, however, the name of the committee changed from "three point zero" to "3 October". By assuming that the march was the outcome of the 3 October Lampedusa shipwreck, the media misunderstood the graphic symbols of the Committee name, conveying the cultural dynamics that led to the second-generation mobilization within the hegemonic discourses on the Mediterranean route.

In this configuration, where their differential Italianness turned in a source of legitimacy, the mobilization represented the first step of a wider engagement in the Milanese refugees' issue. From April 2014, in congruence with the asylum seekers' arrivals in the Southern Italians ports, committee

3.0, together with social and political activists of both Italian and Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, arranged a humanitarian chain in the midst of Porta Venezia.

3.5 Second generation volunteering for refugees

3.5.1 Italianness and the making of Porta Venezia as an informal reception space

The feeling of impotence I have by looking at what my people have to face is one of the most frustrating things that have happened to me in my whole life. They are over one hundred, there are women and children in the street and it seems like it does not matter to anyone. I cannot go to Porta Venezia anymore, I cannot even look at them in their face. I am too ashamed²⁴.

Rachel, an Italian woman of Ethiopian father and Eritrean mother, talked about the discomfort she experienced following the spread of what in the Milanese public discourses would have been defined as the refugees' emergency in Porta Venezia. From April 2014 onwards, the overturning in the management system of the Mediterranean route led to a strong increment of the arrivals and produced a stand-off situation in the main hubs of Italian transnational mobility. The possibility to cross the Italian national space and the structural impediment in the border crossing process, transformed public spaces in spaces of transition. The translation of the borders' imaginaries in the hearth of the Italian public sphere led to a progressive institutionalization of the humanitarian discourses and practices in the hearth of the Italian main cities and hubs. In the city of Milano, the central railway station turned out to represent the main hub where the institutions and the third sector channeled their efforts in the institutionalization of a humanitarian paradigm²⁵.

Despite the huge number of asylum seekers crossing the neighborhood on a daily basis, the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, on the contrary, remained in the shadow of the institutional action. Differently than the central railway station, the reception paradigm that developed in the neighborhood assumed an informal connotation. In order to make sense of the differentiation between these two transit spaces, it is necessary to consider their degree of adherence to the hegemonic imaginaries connected to the asylum seekers transition processes.

The Central Station, in fact, has a very powerful symbolic value and it adheres perfectly to the discursive rhetoric reproducing the transition process: the concentration of migrants at the railway station structurally incarnates the concepts of arrival, waiting and departure. By representing a collectively organized transit space, therefore, the Central railway station may configure as

²⁴ Fieldnotes, 03.04.2014.

²⁵ For a deeper account of the institutionalization of the central railway station as a transit space in the flow of asylum seekers, and the differences with Porta Venezia see Grimaldi, 2016.

structurally disconnected from the wider public space. Within the emergency paradigm developed in the Italian public discourse, the central railway station could have well been representing a space of exception (Agamben, 2003) where to site the institutional treatment of the asylum seekers' flow. The neighborhood of Porta Venezia, on the contrary, with the concentration of a racial connoted flow inserted in the everyday life of one of the most central districts of the Milanese space, shortened this representation, and broke the separation between public space and crossing space. Porta Venezia asylum seekers' flow, shortly, crushed one of the pillars constituting collective membership in the contemporary nation state rhetoric: the isomorphism between space, community and citizenship (Wimmer, Glick Schiller, 2002).

In 2014, while the central railway station started to configure as the institutionalized Milanese transit space, the Ethiopian and Eritrean asylum seekers' flow in Porta Venezia increasingly became a public security concern. Under this perspective, it is now possible to understand the apparent hiatus between the informality of the humanitarian chain in Porta Venezia and the activation of a proper humanitarian machine in the central railway station.

Among the informal committees, the leftist political associations and the private citizens, who volunteered to support the flow in Porta Venezia, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins assumed a central role. In the analysis of their ethnic engagement, together with the growing contrastive discourses arising in the neighborhood, it will be possible to underline the ways their second generation Habeshanness intersected the hegemonic discourses about space and differentiation. A process that encapsulated them in the differential space of the generation asylum.

3.5.2 Second generations engaging for refugees. Differential Italianness as a source of legitimation

Do you believe in *genius loci*? Do you know what it is? It is the church of Lazzaretto. That of the *Promessi Sposi*. [...] Do you realize that today, after 400 years, marginalized people are here again?²⁶

In this ethnographic extract, Stefano, a Milanese architect residing in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, used a Manzonian parallelism to describe the condition of the Eritrean asylum seekers. From April 2014 to mid-2015, an informal help chain was set up by a group of Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins sited Largo Bellintani, the square in front of the church of Lazzaretto. The place represented the symbolic center of the neighborhood, and the area around was the core of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora space.

²⁶ Fieldnotes, 20.04.2014.

The engagement of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, played a genuine complementary role and, at the same time, integrated with the structures responsible for the organization and the management of forced migrations. Their activities were mainly three-folded:

1) Daily activities ranging from food supply, to the supply of basic clothes and medical care genres, providing a proper alternative to the institutional machine of the first reception.

2) At the same time, they constantly interacted with the institutions involved in the formal management of the transit. They confronted with the municipality structures, especially to look for night accommodations for the asylum seekers. Under this perspective, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins were perceived as proper cultural brokers (De Jong, 2016)²⁷ between the asylum seekers and the Milanese institutions. They should have been reassuring the asylum seekers about the absence of identification practices in the institutional night centers, as well as granting the centers the right amount of asylum seekers according to the accommodation capacities.

3) Lastly, the humanitarian chain of Porta Venezia intersected the informal network of the diaspora in supporting the mobility of asylum seekers in Northern Europe. The activities went to help in contacting people in the diasporic networks, up to the assistance of train tickets purchase and the indication of the most suitable rail routes to cross the Italian border.

By considering the main activities of the informal help chain, two main features arose. On the one hand, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins performed their perceived structural doubleness (Silverstein, 2005) as a source to represent themselves as stakeholders legitimating their presence in the Milanese public discourse over the refugee flow. On the other hand, in the first months of the reception, due to the growing attention of the flow in the public discourse, they struggled to turn the refugees' issue into an affair concerning the whole Milanese public space. This process is clearly expressed in the aims of the Comitato 3.0. In their official presentation they state:

We are a group of young Milanese aimed at defending human rights as well as the rights of the asylum seekers. We want to make the coming Italian community more sympathetic and antiracist²⁸.

Shortly, the structural suspension of the European regimes regulating forced mobility (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013) mirrored in the opening of a liminal space where a second-generation supposed ethnic know-how served as a gauge to legitimate their differential Italianness as a source of recognition. People who until that moment were structurally distant from these discourses and practices had a big part in the help chain. This should be explained with the intersection of micro-

²⁷ De Jong intends the cultural broker as a figure stemming from a process of structural othering (p.53). I will deepen the figure of the broker in the next chapters (see. chapt.5, chapt.7, chapt.8).

²⁸ Comitato 3.0 Facebook presentation <https://www.facebook.com/comitato.trepuntozero>. Last visit, 04.08.2017.

meso-and macro structures, entangling one another and opening a space of possibility in the mechanisms defining their differential condition. The structural dependency between the processes of redefinition of an Habesha's second-generation condition and the structural processes intertwining in the construction of the Mediterranean route can be clearly found even in the processes that led to the end of a second-generation help chain in the neighborhood.

3.5.3 The end of the reception. Second generation Habeshaness in the post liminal and the reintroduction of a differential paradigm.

Since the second half of 2014, parallelly to the institutionalization of the neighborhood of Porta Venezia as one of the main Hub of the asylum seekers reception in Milano, the committee 3.0 started to decrease its participation to the public debate on refugees. From the opening of the Mare Nostrum operation on, the configuration of the Mediterranean route as a central issue in both national identification and civic participation, generated powerful political, economic, and symbolic circuits²⁹. In this context, two main opposite paradigms arose in order to make sense of the asylum seekers' presence in Italy: humanitarianism and securitarianism. The entanglement of these two forces in Milano, overwhelmingly affected the refugees' reception in Porta Venezia. From mid' 2014 on, the neighborhood turned out to be the battlefield of opposed political factions: residential and shop owner committees publicly engaged to protest against the asylum seekers' presence. It is strongly indicative the protest of a restaurant owner in via Lazzaro Palazzi, one of Porta Venezia's streets with the higher concentration of asylum seekers: he exposed some protest banner at the entrance of the restaurant, publicly positioning himself against the asylum seekers' presence in the neighborhood, where he talked about the "African degradation" they led in the district³⁰.

Porta Venezia, properly institutionalized an opposite rhetoric between "Us" and "Them", based on the hegemonic classification reproducing a racially connoted Italianness. The neighborhood turned out to be the home base of far-right Milanese political movements, and there was a spread of differential narratives connoting the neighborhood as an unhealthy place as well as a space of illegality.

The takeover of differential discourses over the refugees' flow in the Italian public space, mirrored even in the reconfiguration of the neighborhood as a space of engagement for the city political

²⁹ The reconfiguration of the Mediterranean route in the Italian national politics led to the dismissal of the operation Mare Nostrum, and the opening of the European joint Triton Mission (01.11.2014), aimed at defending the European borders rather than searching and rescuing people in the Mediterranean.

³⁰ For a deeper understanding of the dynamics that developed in the neighborhood concerning the asylum seekers presence, see Grimaldi, 2015.

activist groups and humanitarian associations. The growing presence of humanitarian professionals led to a progressive externalization of the asylum seekers presence from the neighborhood dynamics. This process, has been clearly expressed firstly on spatial terms: since the summer of 2014, the informal reception had been redirected in a park immediately out of the neighborhood, with an almost stable presence of the police aimed at avoiding gatherings in the district's area.

The humanitarian logic that developed in Porta Venezia, furthermore, led to a disjunction of the Mediterranean route from the wider Milanese social space, whose central point laid in a process of structural othering (De Jong, 2016) of the "helpers" compared to the "helped".

Shortly, the politics of recognition the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enacted in their Habesha ethnic volunteering with refugees, were surrounded by hegemonic representations of Italianness: the refugees issue and its management became soon *too Italian* to represent a space of public legitimation. The resignification of the Mediterranean Route within the European space, mirrored the reactivation of the structures reproducing an immobile second-generation differential Italianness, and its structural marginalization within the public space.

Conclusions

The process of repositioning of a second generation Habeshaness as a form of ethnic engagement in the refugees' flow, clearly shows the interconnection between wider transnational structural processes and local redefinitions of the social space and the patterns of identification.

The transnational upturns that led to the opening of a liminal space in the national and transnational system of management of the Mediterranean route, mirrored in a space of possibility for the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, where to tackle their differential Italianness.

The public recognition of the asylum seekers' transnational mobility issue, intertwined with the local reconfigurations of the paradigms of mobility and immobility (on both a social and spatial level) reproducing a second-generation condition. Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' ethnic engagement in Porta Venezia intertwined with the central function of the neighborhood in the Milanese public imaginaries. The refugees' issue, under this perspective, made the neighborhood a centripetal site where the second-generation condition intersected with the discourses about Italianness. The enactment of their ancestral identification as a form of legitimacy to act on the flow, made Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' differential Italianness a source to redefine the structural relations acting on their everyday life.

The reactive processes recomposing the paradigm of the difference as the main configuration to make sense of the asylum seekers' flow, structurally expelled the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean

origins from the public debate on the Mediterranean route. However, the end of this liminal stage, was not ineffective: on the contrary it opened a new stage in the processes of redefinition of their second-generation condition.

Their ethnic engagement, in fact, allowed them to incorporate the diasporic dynamics fueling the neighborhood of Porta Venezia as a constituent part of their everyday life. Structurally detached from the Milanese public discourse on the refugees' flow, they started to get used to the historicized (as well as invisible) diasporic practices of flow management.

At the same time, the diaspora space of Porta Venezia, that had always represented a space of disconnection from their modes of self-definition in the Milanese public space (chapt.2.1), turned out to be their reference space where to share a common identification, both with their parents' generation and the asylum generation.

This process of ethnic identification with the diaspora dynamics allowed me to open the analysis on a proper epistemological paradigm in the examination of the second-generation condition. The historicized forms of marginalization sustaining the structural immobility of the discourses and practices reproducing an hegemonic Italianness, called for tactics of mobilizations of their differential condition. A mobilization to perform precisely out of the discursive space sustaining an hegemonic Italianness. In the following chapters, I will consider the patterns of mobility Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enacted in order to make sense of the processes of differentiation due to their second-generation condition. I will investigate this process in the social space of the ancestral land (focusing on the "second generations return in Ethiopia), in the transnational diaspora space (considering the diaspora context of London) and in the places they were born and raised in (by analyzing their identification in the Milanese diasporic dynamics).

In the following chapters, it will be possible to consider how historically wide and geographically deep processes (Farmer, 1992) intersect in the redefinition of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' social condition. From the postcolonial structures reproducing the relation between Italy and the Horn of Africa, to the system regulating transnational mobility, from the long-term effect of the Mediterranean route in Europe to the redefinition of an Afroitalianness abroad, all of these processes define the possibilities as well as the constraints of a *second-generation* Habesha mobility. The following chapters will show the ways transnational, national, and local dynamics involving the Italian, the European and the Horn of Africa space, constantly interact with each other in the redefinition of a second-generation Habeshaness.

Chapter 4: Performing difference, reproducing *Habeshanness*: status and *second generations return to Ethiopia*

4.1 Prologue. A Research companion

You know, this is the worst place in Ethiopia, both for us and them. It reminds us that we have to leave, and it reminds them that they can't leave¹.

When Johnny pronounced these words, I was with him at the entrance of Addis Ababa international airport. His uncle Michael had to take a plane to Stuttgart after a short visit to Mekele, his hometown, so we dropped him off at the airport. Marta, an Ethiopian-Italian woman (born and raised in Rome) we had met few weeks before, drove us to the airport with the car of the Italian NGO she was working with. Before the flight, we all had an Italian farewell dinner in one of the many western style restaurant of the *Bole* neighborhood². Sarah and Hellen joined us. Sarah is one of Johnny's cousins from Mekele, who moved to Addis Ababa after she graduated in architecture. Hellen, the daughter of a close friend of Johnny's father, is a 19 year old Italian girl of Ethiopian origin, born and raised in Milano. She moved in Addis Ababa at the age of 13 with her parents³.

These few lines can be very useful to approach the ways of experiencing Ethiopia from the perspective of people like Johnny, an Italian citizen who was born and raised in Milano by Ethiopian parents. The distinction Johnny makes in the initial quote between "Us" and "Them", places the Addis Ababa international airport into a material representation of the social, economic, legal and symbolic boundaries between Ethiopians living abroad and locals. Two different social categories emerge from Johnny's words: the "*movers*" and "*those who stay behind*"⁴.

In Johnny's airport experience, a peculiar way to be a mover in Ethiopia emerges. The people Johnny invited, the spaces he chose, the program he arranged to accommodate his uncle's departure from Ethiopia, show the set of structural processes orienting his experience: multiple locations and different (even contrastive) historical and biographical trajectories. Nonetheless, these factors intertwine in a deep web of structural connections depicting the specificity of Johnny's condition.

¹ Fieldnotes, 13.03.2016.

² The neighborhood of Bole is one of the most important symbolic center of the Ethiopian developmental paradigm spread in the country in the last decade.

³ Fieldnotes, 13.03.2016.

⁴ Johnny's "Us" and "Them" contain a multitude of different and often even contrastive social worlds, a huge variety of ways to frame the very concept of *homecoming*: gender, class, religion, ethnicity, are only a few of the many structural forces intersecting in the mobility processes towards the ancestral land.

His familiar network, his ethnic identification, his political view on Ethiopia, as a matter of fact, conflate with him being an Italian citizen born and raised in Milan. In Johnny's experience the term second generation was not only a source of identification, but even the very analytic category that brought him to his ancestral land. As a matter of fact, Johnny was a student in cultural anthropology and he focused his field research on the *return practices of the second generations of the Ethiopian global diaspora*.

Following Johnny's journey as an Italian of Ethiopian origin investigating the concept of second generations, I had the opportunity to get involved in the complex and multileveled web of networks, ideologies and social positioning he had to cross in order to orient his research and his experience of ancestral land. Besides representing my research companion all over the fieldwork in Ethiopia, Johnny was a gate keeper that allowed me to access the fieldwork as well as the main subject of the ethnography. The ways he built his everyday life, the networks he allowed me to join, and, above all, the relationship he allowed me to develop with the few Milanese who returned, undermined the perceptions of the homecoming process that guided me during the fieldwork in Milano. To accommodate his return, he conjugated his *Habeshanness* in very counterintuitive trajectories. In this chapter, I will draw on a sited view of the ancestral land/children of immigrants' relation: as an Italian male of Tigrayan origins, Johnny's understandings of Ethiopia were based on peculiar national, ethnic and gendered perspectives. The analysis of the multiple spatial, cultural, and historical categories intersecting Johnny's experience of his ancestral land, however, allowed me to explore the complexity, the multiplicity and the instability beyond the apparent uniform process of the *second generations' journey towards return*.

4.2 In between-ness and children of immigrants. The predicament of a *third space*

4.2.1 This is not my Ethiopia: Habesha, Ferengi and Diaspora

During our shared research experience in Addis Ababa and in Mekele, Johnny often insisted with his friends and relatives on a sense of unfamiliarity with a social setting he was not used to. In fact, it was his first time in Ethiopia out of the summertime (January – April), in a period where the presence of children of immigrants is significantly lower. Johnny complained about the lack of vibrancy and the absence of his usual reference group: he felt disoriented and he repeatedly affirmed that this context was not the Ethiopia he knew. Johnny's words and positioning on his ancestral land immediately seem to suggest a kind of disentanglement from the local setting. This attitude seems to completely reverse the patterns of cultural reproduction, orienting his social life in Milano: in

fact, the cultural and symbolic modalities reproducing a diasporic *Habeshanness* (see. Chapt. 2) seem to be less relevant to him once in the ancestral land.

His specificity as a person born and raised out of Ethiopia with a western cultural background, however, seems to emerge as the most important feature to identify himself and to define his reference group. In Johnny's words, his experience of Ethiopia seems to be fueled from the outside, to be based on a structural difference with the local context, and to be bonded to the liminal space of the vacation.

Framing the children of immigrants as seasonal movers seems to be a wide shared topic in the studies focusing on the *second generations'* relation to the ancestral land. As King and Christou pointed out (2010), most of the analysis on the children of immigrants' mobility patterns to the ancestral land, have widely been focused on short term visits for vacation purposes, depicting the return as both a way to cut from their everyday life and a way to culturally reconnect to their ancestral land. The liminal space of the vacation is obviously fueling a well-established epistemological perspective in diaspora studies. According to this point of view, the ancestral land would represent a *third space* (Bhabha, 1994): a space to negotiate their presence in a frame of structural difference.

In her work on the *Eritrean second generations* short term mobility to Asmara, Bettina Conrad (2006) poignantly showed the relationality between resemblance and difference by analyzing their patterns of identifications within the ancestral land. They were locally labelled as *Beles*, a tigrayan word for "prickly pear". Prickly pear in Asmara is harvested during the summer season, when children of immigrants return to the ancestral land. Therefore, the term *Beles* indicates the seasonal nature of their presence in Eritrea: a presence based on their structural differentiation from the local context⁵.

However, this way to frame the experience of the ancestral land through a constitutive relation between resemblance and difference, represent a widespread trope even in the literature on children of immigrants' paths of long term mobility⁶, out of the liminal space of the vacation, where the *second generations return* turns out to be a proper *counter diasporic project* (King, Christou, 2010). Despite this perspective reflects the children of immigrants' widespread explicit

⁵ This difference represented one of the main reasons that led Conrad (2006) to provocatively define the *Beles* as the 10th Eritrean ethnic group.

⁶ The emphasis on the structural differences they live within it is a shared trope in the social analysis. For some significant, but not exhaustive examples See. King, Christou, 2010; King, Christou, 2014, Wessendorf, 2010; Wessendorf, 2016.

representations on the issues of home, belonging, identification, (I myself collected many narratives about the cultural divide the children of immigrants' experience in their everyday life), it is in my opinion necessary to frame their structural condition of being bounded to two different contexts (their *inbetweenness*), not as the starting point of the analysis, but an object of enquire itself. As Soysal pointed out in her work on Germans of Turkish origins in Berlin (2002), an in-between perspective on children of immigrants underscores, as its constitutive premise, the structural separation between two different spaces, two different cultural worlds and even two different temporalities.

By following this perspective in the analysis of Johnny's complaining about the lack of *western second generations*, we should assume that it is exactly the constitutive difference between him and the local context that made him say: "This is not my Ethiopia". Within this structural difference, the term *second generations* itself should then be framed as discrete and relentless category of identification (Soysal, 2002), fueled by a shared diasporic *Habeshaness*, and at the same time, by a shared western background. From this perspective, second generations should be representing the coincidence between two structurally incommensurable settings, configuring nor as locals, neither as foreigners, but as liminal subjects. These structures of representations perfectly reflect their position within the Ethiopian public discourse. The categories of resemblance and difference, as a matter of fact, are commonly expressed through the terms of Habesha and Ferengi; despite their opposite public meaning, in the second generations experience of the ancestral land the terms Habesha and Ferengi conflate.

4.2.2 Habeshaness through Ferenginess

In the Ethiopian public discourse, both the term Habesha and Ferengi are strongly polysemic. Habesha from one side is a proper hegemonic category of the Ethiopian nation state: the term Habesha, ethnically indicating the people of the highlands (See, chapt.1), turned out to represent the whole national space in the public governmental rhetoric, configuring as one of the bones of contention in the present ethnic tensions arising in the country⁷. On the other hand, in the everyday use of the term I experienced during my fieldwork, the word Habesha represents a source of recognition that goes beyond the categories of identification and difference on ethnic, biological or cultural basis, and, contextually assumes different declinations. Similarly, the explicit representation

⁷ On the making of the term Habesha as an hegemonic construction see Markakis, 2011, p.4.

of the term Ferengi⁸ designates a very definite social category (the white, western foreigners); in its everyday use, by the way, it can be representative of a condition of distance from the local cultural values, far beyond its biological and ethnic designation.

Following the declination of these two terms, the same person can be framed or represent himself contextually as Habesha or Ferengi; this condition in betwixt and between seems to be constitutive of the second generation counter diasporic paths of mobility to the ancestral land. A shared genetic makeup and the identification with the ancestral land clashes with their social, economic, and symbolic structural differences compared with the locals. By sharing the fieldwork with Johnny (the son of a chief member of the TPLF and a firm supporter of the present government) I had the opportunity to see in action several times the interplay between identification and differentiation in the way he sited in his journey to the ancestral land: his undefined condition came up both within his familiar network, where he was often mocked because of his lack of knowledge of the language and of the cultural behaviors, but even in apparently insignificant interactions. In his everyday shopping, as example, he constantly runs the risk to fall in the so called *Ferengi price*, commonly used by local retailers to increase the prices of their products to the foreigners. Especially in Addis Ababa (where the official language is Amharic)⁹, it was quite common that the person in charge to ask for prices in the shops or to contract a taxi was me and not him¹⁰. It was the easiest way to avoid to explain every time the apparent idiosyncrasy between his physical looking as *Habesha*, and his lack of knowledge of the language, his way of dressing, that immediately posit him as *Ferengi*. There was a sentence that he often repeated during his random talks with locals, to justify these discrepancies: *Ikeltà, Amarigna tinish tinish. Father Mekele, Mother Axum. I was born in Italy but I am Habesha 100%*.

However, despite the everyday issues connected to his undefined position, Johnny never experienced his condition as a stigma. On the contrary, he, as almost all the Milanese of Ethiopian origins I met during the fieldwork, sited themselves out of the average local way of living, trying to represent themselves the most western they could by enjoying the most expensive and western oriented spaces of the city on a daily basis.

⁸ The term Ferengi, in its different declinations, it is used in a wide area ranging from the Middle-east to the Asian south east.

⁹ Johnny spoke little Tigrigna, the shared language with Eritreans and the most spoken in Milano Porta Venezia, and almost no Amharic.

¹⁰ Taxis in Addis Ababa are called *contracts* in the everyday slang, because of the necessity to contract price and direction before dropping in.

Therefore, if children of immigrants frame their western background as a source of differentiation from the local setting, their structural difference can be considered as a proper outcome of their counter-diasporic paths of mobility rather than its premise. A compression of their behavioral patterns within a structural *inbetweenness* risks to make cultural incommensurability as the central analytical perspective to frame their relation with the ancestral land: in this perspective their counter diasporic journey turns out to be a way to adapt to their cultural distance from the local context, and the emphasis on their western background an answer to make sense of a space they longing for as *Habesha* but they are unable to experience if not as *Ferengi*. From this point of view, *inbetweenness* would lead us to an epistemological dead end, configuring as an essentialization of *second generations hybridity* (the Bhabha third space) within two essentialized incommensurable cultures and it would be an ironic paradox that a useful paradigm to overcome culturalism, would assert it as a given.

To de-essentialize children of immigrants counter-diasporic projects it is necessary to de-essentialize their paths of differentiation, framing their behavioral patterns as tactical positioning to better perform within their ancestral land; in this perspective the social practices they share in common with *Ferengi* turns out to be a way to reproduce their Habeshanness. However, these tactics (De Certeau, 2011 [1980]) of Habeshanness reproduction are not a hybrid way to make sense of their differences, but intersects a plurality of social structures. The processes of reproduction of the Ethiopian nation state and its ethnic rhetoric (4.3), the relations between the cultures of migrations (Cohen, Sirkeci, 2011) sustaining the Tigrayan diasporic networks and their individual projects (4.4), the racialized structures of differentiation reproducing Habeshanness itself (4.5) conflate to reproduce an incorporated pattern of social practices fueling a sited social positioning within the ancestral land. Under this perspective, it will be possible to reconsider their counter diasporic paths of mobility out of cultural fragmentation, but as the figure of the way they define and redefine the structural processes orienting their differential condition of Italians of Tigrayans origins born and raised in Milano.

Keeping this in mind, it is possible to re-analyze Johnny disentanglement from the Ethiopian average way of living and his identification with the global second generations not as the outcome of his structural difference with the local context but as a way to reproduce his diasporic Habeshanness.

4.3 Inside the diaspora. In-betweenness as a structural process

Diaspora and transnational concepts often relate to the observation that, when it comes to understandings of the political, human mobility may reinforce and recreate all kinds of beliefs and –

isms, including nationalism, patriarchy, sexism, sectarianism and ethno-nationalism. (Faist, 2010, p.15).

4.3.1 They are not real diaspora. Cultural difference as an hegemonic discourse

From the first steps in field research in Ethiopia I have been able to note the enormous popularity that the term *diaspora* has enjoyed within the public space. The term, in fact, is nowadays a central category in the reproduction processes of the nation state. Since 1991, with the fall of Mengistu and the raising of the EPRDF as the hegemonic force in Ethiopia, the institutional attention to the people of Ethiopian origins worldwide have constantly grown, overturning the centralist attitude of the Ethiopian nation state (Iyob, 2000) and its little attention - and its often overt criticism - to its dispersed population. This process clearly institutionalized after 2001, with the end of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict, the affirmation of a developmental rhetoric, and the opening of the Ethiopian nation state to transnational investors (Lyons, 2007). In 2002, the first governmental office fully dedicated to the diaspora was created - the Diaspora Coordinating office - to mobilize the Ethiopian abroad and to attract knowledge and capacity building (Kuschminder, Siegel, 2013). Contextually, the Ethiopian origin ID card was created, the so-called *diaspora card*, designating the “*foreign rational, other than a person who forfeited Ethiopian nationality and acquired Eritrean nationality, who had been Ethiopian national before acquiring a foreign nationality; or at least one of his parents or grandparents had been*”. After more than 10 years of specific regulations advantaging diaspora in their economic engagement to Ethiopia, in 2013, an official manifesto was ratified in order to advance the Diaspora’s official engagement in the nation building process. The document uses a very broad definition of the term diaspora, indicating as possible members - and possible beneficiaries of the specific programs of diasporic engagement - both citizens and non-citizens of Ethiopian origins living abroad. The emphasis of the Ethiopian government on diaspora policy made the term diaspora a specific category of recognition within the Ethiopian public space. This process contributed to produce the diaspora as the referent of specific social attributes, as the material representation of the developmental paradigm reproducing the present Ethiopian nation state narratives. Far from framing a social condition, the hegemonic conjugation of the term diaspora is nowadays indicating a set of socially connoted behavioral patterns to gain public recognition in the Ethiopian public space. This process institutionalized a proper cosmological representation (Belloni, 2015) of diasporic destinations where the more diasporic contexts fit the global hegemonic

paradigms of mobility and development, the more diasporic subjects are expected to perform their differential status (Nieswand, 2011) in the homeland¹¹.

The public reconfiguration of the term diaspora as the referent of the developmental paradigm orienting the Ethiopian hegemonic discourse is a crucial factor in the analysis of children of immigrants' counter-diasporic patterns of mobility. Their structural differentiation in terms of social, economic, linguistic and symbolic values compared to the Ethiopian social setting, far from representing an obstacle to their presence, turns into a self-valuable attribute in order to comply to their diasporic status.

Alongside the binary pair "Ferengi / Habesha", *diaspora* is a third category of classification, where an *elsewhere*, or rather, a hegemonic imagination of the *elsewhere*, is a constituent element in which to build a social positioning in the ancestral land. Diaspora, as a nationalist construction, thus draws exactly on the hegemonic categories of identity and alterity and their cultural and symbolic connotation, recomposing its significance in a shared social framework. The term diaspora, in this way, rather than representing an institutional instrument, assumes social significance as a category of recognition and identification within the Ethiopian public space. This configuration assumes a great relevance in the construction of the children of immigrants' patterns of mobility to the ancestral land.

Their structural diversity compared to the context of ancestral origin in linguistic, social, and symbolic terms, in fact turns out to be part of a proper cosmological representation. In this way, the term *diaspora* becomes a space of social legitimacy aimed at overcoming the dialectical relationship Habesha /Ferengi.

The founding tropes of the Diaspora institutional category, thus, fuel the reproduction of a homogeneous recognition space within the diaspora category, defined as "second generations". Far from being culturally uncomparable with the ancestral background, the construction of the ascriptive category of *second generations of the Ethiopian global diaspora* can be framed in a particular declination of nationalist discourse, stemming from the adherence to the developmental paradigm on which the hegemonic category of diaspora is founded. This self-valuing representation, that makes children of migrants activating counter diasporic mobility paths the summit of a true anthropopoietic project (Remotti, 2013), has emerged on numerous occasions during fieldwork. In

¹¹ It is no coincidence that the diaspora of the Middle East, while falling within the institutional diaspora category, and having the highest rate of returns, do not carry with them any imagination of modernity, as they are generally represented, even at the institutional level, as victims of trafficking and exploitation in the Middle Eastern contexts (Kushminder, Seigel, 2013).

this regard, Johnny's attitude to the clothing habits of the local youth in the central streets of Addis Ababa and Mekele was indicative.

They want expensive clothes even in Mekele. Even here they want to dress well. Until a few years ago, the most of the people wore the soccer jerseys of 10 years before. When we arrived they recognized us 100 meters away. Now it is no longer so immediate.

It was possible to note the same process of reproduction of a structural differentiation as a space of *second generation's* legitimation even within the macro-category of diaspora itself. In the following ethnographic extract, it is possible to see the activation of a real social boundary distinguishing the categories of *second generation* from the diaspora.

I was at the restaurant with Johnny. Next to our table there was a group of youth who spoke a colloquial English using strong slang expressions. Johnny's comments are very indicative:

Did you realize the ways those people talk? Fuck here, Fuck There, Bro. They think to be cool. And they are just ridiculous. Maybe they spent 2 or 3 years outside. They come back and they think to be the masters. It is the same of the diaspora Festival. The most of the people I met there they had nothing of diaspora. They just came to have the flight discount pretending to be cool. But they are not real diaspora¹².

Johnny's connection to the Mekele diaspora festival, besides showing the differential structures within the diaspora category, opens up a further fundamental factor in the process of the Milanese of Ethiopian origins engagement with ancestral land. A Tigrayan ethnic belonging.

4.3.2 Assimilating Tigrayness in the hegemonic category of diaspora.

The performative value of the hegemonic category of Diaspora, is particularly effective in reference to the people abroad identifying themselves as Tigrayans¹³. But, seemingly to the attributions I have just outlined, the union of Diaspora and Tigrayness is not extensive and it applies especially for those who moved from the early 70' until the end of the 80's, the "generation nationalism". The strong ties between this peculiar category of movers and the hegemonic category of diaspora could be traced in the social events that determined the political configuration of the present Ethiopian nation state. The TPLF diasporic organizations operating both in Europe and the US, played an important role in the overthrow of the DERG (see. Chapt. 1), supporting the Ethiopian civil war on a political and economical level. The diasporic branch of the TPLF operated not only as a political

¹² In order to enhance the Diaspora's participation, the Ethiopian government have drafted a policy that strengthen the Diaspora's participation in Ethiopia. Every year there is a Diaspora National Day in a selected Ethiopian regional State capital. As an incentive, Ethiopian Airline provide every year a consistent discount of the current fare price. See <http://aigaforum.com/news2016/amhara-festival-promo-060616.htm>; Kushminder, Seigel, 2013.

¹³ Geographic ancestral origins are not the main category of ascription between children of migrants, but highly depends from familiar positioning and diaspora dynamics. Ethno-regional identification positionally may serve as a category of social ascription as well as a tool to reject in favor of more inclusive categories. See chapt. 1.

entity revolved to the homeland issues, but it served also as a strong pattern of identification to orient the everyday life in diaspora. The centrality of the political discourse in diaspora served as a way to connect the people originating from the Tigray region to a new national configuration, transforming Tigray's marginal position (Young, 2006) in the cornerstone of a new paradigm of nation building. In this respect, this peculiar configuration of Tigrayness arising from the civil war against the DERG, served as a way to connect the people in diaspora to an Ethiopian national belonging, and, consequently, to differentiate, within shared diasporic contexts, from the diasporic political life of the Eritreans struggling for independence. The institutionalization of a juxtaposition of a diasporic tigrayan ethnic identity in the present Ethiopian nationalist rhetoric accelerated after the fall of Mengistu and the takeover of the TPLF as the hegemonic force in the region¹⁴. The process completed after the 1998 border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. With the ceasing of any formal relationship between Tigray and Eritrea, one of the main effects of the conflict, was the assimilation of the Tigrayan ethnic belonging in the Ethiopian nationalist rhetoric (Tronvoll, 2009). The exasperation of the contrastive relationship between Tigrayan and Eritrean political discourses, split the diasporic contexts as well, and completed the transformation of the Tigrayans abroad in the flag-bearer of the Ethiopians in diaspora. From 2001 on, with the Ethiopian neoliberal turn, the involvement of the Tigrayan diaspora as a nation building vector strongly increased: many tigrayans abroad, beside their transnational investments aimed at their familiar context in Tigray¹⁵, drew their attention to the capital Addis Ababa as the reference space of a stable return to the homeland. Especially for those who were strongly engaged in the diasporic branch of the TPLF, the return to Addis Ababa represented both the coronation of a nationalist project, but especially an opportunity of social and economic mobility.

4.3.2.1 Returning to Addis Ababa: Mekele is stressful

Beside the institutional framework implemented on a national level to encourage the return of the diaspora, the Ethiopian government provided further benefits for those who played a key role from the diaspora during the civil war against the DERG and the border war against Eritrea. By following Johnny's trajectories to orient himself in Addis Ababa, I had the opportunity to meet some of these returnees coming from Milano. From Milano alone, there are at least 13 families of Tigrayans origins who returned to the capital to "build the nation". The most of these returnees have been granted

¹⁴ In 2005, the EPRDF, a coalition of the 4 main Ethnic political party of Ethiopia took the power. However, the key political and economic roles in the country were held by TPLF (Balcha, 2007).

¹⁵ the most common are the housebuilding investments in the main cities of the region. See Grimaldi (forthcoming).

to live almost for free in government owned houses or condominiums with western standards and facilities: furthermore, they received institutional aids, both on an economic and a political level, to run their new business activities. These returnees could be considered as the avant-garde of the process of juxtaposition of the political categories of Tigrayan and Ethiopian diaspora I outlined before. A process that, amongst other things, translated in Addis Ababa (so, out of the ethnic place of belonging) the reference space of a long-term return from the diaspora, centering the life projects in a national paradigm. This new configuration clearly emerged during the fieldwork, in reference to the Italians of Ethiopian origins patterns of mobility to their ancestral land: Addis Ababa, is nowadays the main reference space of every kind of return, from the vacations to the long-term projects. It is very indicative that all the people of the Milanese Tigrayan diaspora I met during the research were based in Addis Ababa; Mekele, despite its hegemonic role in Tigray region (Grimaldi, forthcoming) it is considered as the place of the familiar ties, a symbolic source of belonging¹⁶, but not the reference space during the journey to return.

In the following ethnographic extracts, the representations of both diasporas and second generations clearly posed the differential relation between Addis Ababa and Mekele:

Johannes, a returnee from Milano who moved in Addis Ababa in 2008 and is now a successful business man, answered me about his decision to avoid Mekele as a place of living:

Can you imagine me in Mekele? What should I do there? How can my child grow in Mekele? How can I do my job? In Mekele I have got a house. We rent it. And my mother lives there. All the rent is for my mother, to cover her living costs. My life is here now. Mekele is fine when you are old¹⁷.

Jack, a 30 years old Italian of Tigrayan origins who moved with his father in Addis Ababa in 2013, reacted on my question about the reason to live out of his place of ancestral origins in an even stronger way.

Mekele? Are you crazy? Every time in there is like a torture. Everyone in the family is only asking for money. There is absolutely nothing. I could go crazy in there. My father often goes there for work. But since I arrived, I have been there just twice. And it is enough, trust me¹⁸.

This ambivalent relation with Tigray is not only present during the journey in Ethiopia, but it is however part of the representation in diaspora: as Mussie, an Italian of Tigrayan/Amhara origin told me about his way to arrange his vacations in Ethiopia:

¹⁶ As a matter of fact the most of the Tigrayans in diaspora owns a house in Mekele (Grimaldi, forthcoming).

¹⁷ Addis Ababa, fieldnotes, 14.03.2016.

¹⁸ Addis Ababa, fieldnotes, 29.01.2016.

M. Every time I go back to Ethiopia I stay in Mekele no more than one week. It is ok, it is lovely to be with family. But you get stressed. You are controlled. And you have a lot of obligations.

G. What kind of obligations?

M. As example, before you go away, you have to say goodbye to all your family. And in every house you go, you have to eat *injera*. You can't refuse. It is a big offence. [...] you can tell... I go on vacation to relax. Mekele is very nice. But you get more stressed than in Milano¹⁹.

In the previous narratives clearly emerge the strong association of the urban space of Mekele with the familiar local network. A circuit that, as I will show in the following paragraphs (4.4.3), have a crucial value to orient the counter diasporic projects.

4.3.2.2 Defending Tigray. Defending the nation

Finally, the juxtaposition of ethnic and national dynamics, nowadays, plays an important role in the Ethiopian nation state present configuration. With the eruption of the uprisings of 2015 and 2016, run by Oromo and Amhara ethno-political organizations against the hegemony of the TPLF in the Ethiopian government²⁰, the Oromo and Amhara diasporic organizations played a crucial role in echoing and supporting the protests. The wave of protests, emphasized the huge fragmentations of the diaspora, disrupting the nationalist representations of unity; at the same time, in the wake of the ethnicization of the political discourse in diaspora, the adherence between Tigrayness and the present Ethiopian state-configuration have strongly reinforced. This process is nowadays constitutive of the ways the Tigrayans in Milano site themselves within the Ethiopian political discourse, and it is very effective especially for the second generations, basing their political positioning mainly on the diasporic political rhetoric. The juxtaposition of ethnic and nationalist categories, as example, is blatant in the words of Abe, an Italian man of Tigrayan-Eritrean origins, talking about the effects of the protests within the neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia.

I am very tolerant, I can understand the protests. But this (the Oromo protest) is racism... I read some posts about Tigrayans on Facebook, written by people I see every day. This is an ethnic cleansing incitement. This is terrorism²¹... I am not nationalist. But I stand with this government, I have to defend my people²².

On the other hand, Johnny in Mekele had to confront with the disjuncture between ethnic and political identification within his local network. Many of his relatives and acquaintances of his own generation were strongly critical with the present government, complaining about the lack of

¹⁹ Milano, fieldnotes, 19.09.2016.

²⁰ The long standing ethno-political protests led to the government decision on October 9, 2016, to declare a state of emergency.

²¹ Terrorism is the term the government uses to deal with the protests.

²² Fieldnotes, 27.09.2016.

renewal of the ruling political class. Particularly, Abel, one of his closest childhood friends, was used to strongly blame the TPLF for the lack of services and facilities, the low wages and the scarce opportunities of social mobility. Johnny and Abel had several debates during our research period in Mekele, sometimes even very harsh. In one occasion Abel accused Johnny to be unfair, because he noticed that Johnny talked with his older relatives about young people complaining. Johnny violently answered that the elders need to know that their sons were neglecting the blood that their fathers shed for Tigray freedom. Then he added that he had to stop talking as a Kenegit²³, and giving a false image of the government action. After a long discussion, when the tones became more conciliant, Abel told Johnny: *as Malcom X said²⁴, patriotism sometimes makes you blind²⁵.*

This ethnographic passage, from one side shows the generational divide in the ways they locally frame politics and, on the other hand, Johnny's adherence to the dominant diasporic political narratives regardless of his generational peers' criticism.

Shortly, the union of the hegemonic national categories of modernity and mobility and the juxtaposition of ethnic and national belonging, two constitutive traits of the Tigrayan long distance nationalist rhetoric, depict a field of representations of central importance to understand the ways the second generations put themselves in relation to their ancestral land. By emphasizing a peculiar way to perform their diasporic condition as a self-valuable cultural trait, the very category of second generation, as a transnational construction, can be reproduced in the public discourse. These representations, are strongly performative, and are expressed in a set of sited social practices, structuring a definite social world.

4.4 Performing the status.

4.4.1 Out of the "real" Ethiopia

Taitu Hotel is one of the oldest building in Addis Ababa, and it was the former residence of Taitu queen, the wife of the Emperor Menelik II. It is sited in the neighborhood of Piazza, one of the most touristic zones of the city. I was there with Johnny and Jack, because they had to meet Andrea, an Italian-Italian acquaintance of Johnny from Milano, who was back-packing around Ethiopia with his girlfriend Serena, an Italian woman of Ethiopian origins who was adopted from an Italian family. A few minutes after we met, Johnny started to laugh at Andrea and Anna because of their hotel choice. He asked them the reason why

²³ Kinijit is the Amharic name for the C.U.D (coalition for union and democracy), the political coalition against the EPRDF in the election of 2005. C.U.D. denounced the falsification of the electoral results and started a protest that prompted to mass arrests and killing by the Ethiopian federal police. For further analysis on the C.U.D see. Tegegn, 2008.

²⁴ The sentence of Malcom x is: you're not supposed to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it."

²⁵ Fieldnotes, 26.02.2016.

they chose an old, untidy and dirty place, with no hot water and without a proper toilet. He added that in the neighborhood of Bole, they would have found many better places for lower prices. Andrea replied by saying that they came to Ethiopia to experience the country and discover the cultural setting, and that he was not interested in comforts. He added that he had not been yet in Bole, he just saw it from above²⁶, but he was not interested in going there because of the spread of concrete, the traffic and the high pollutions. Serena agreed with him and she said that she wouldn't have felt comfortable in Bole, facing the contrasts between its sumptuous hotels, restaurants and skyscrapers and the extreme poverty of the people in the streets. In this regard, Andrea said that he lived the whole trip in Ethiopia with a strong ambivalence between the beauty of the landscapes and the nature, and the shock for the extreme harsh life conditions and the children begging in the streets. Johnny and Jack reacted with amusement during Andrea and Serena descriptions, but they did not reply. After almost one hour of holidays pictures and a debate on the massive touristic flows altering the social habits of the Mursi ethnic group²⁷, we wished Andrea and Serena the best for their trip and we left the hotel. As soon as we were in the car, Johnny and Jack started to comment the meeting we had. Johnny complained about the time we wasted to talk with Andrea and Serena and he begged Jack's pardon for such an unpleasant situation. Jack said he did not expect something different from an Italian but he was really surprised about Serena; he couldn't accept she had the same opinion as Andrea about her own country. In his words: "She is *Habesha*, even if she has been adopted. She is totally brainwashed". Johnny agreed with him, then he referred to me and told me that Andrea is the best example of what he was talking about, when he laughed at me about my uneasiness in the first days in Addis Ababa, experiencing the contrasts of a privileged lifestyle in a context of strong social imbalance²⁸. In Johnny words: "he came here to experience the *Real Ethiopia*. He will go back in Milano and he will say he slept in the oldest hotel of the city without hot water, no internet and no proper toilet. His goal is to go back home and confirm that Ethiopia is all about beautiful landscapes and underdevelopment, *cikka* houses²⁹, native tribes, people starving and Korkorro³⁰slums. Basically, the "*We are the world*"³¹stereotype 30 years later"³².

²⁶ Addis Ababa lies at the foot of Mount Entoto. From its lowest point, around Bole International Airport, at 2,326 meters above sea level in the southern periphery, the city rises to over 3,000 meters in the Entoto Mountains to the north.

²⁷ The Mursi are a Nilotic pastoralist ethnic group in southern Ethiopia. Andrea and Serena traveled there for a 5 days reportage on marriage rituals, but they were asked for money for every photo they took and every question they asked.

²⁸ During the first days of the research, I was quite surprised by the ways Johnny sited himself in the city landscape. He was looking exclusively for the openly western contexts of the city and avoided both the popular spaces and all that was emphasized as "cultural". I had to adapt to a western lifestyle, incorporating the social posture of being "privileged", and avoiding to empathize with the social groups of lower classes. When I tried to site myself out of this very definite cultural context, Johnny always laughed at me, asking if I was on the field to find the "*Real Ethiopia*".

²⁹ *Cikka* (a mix of mud and dung) is the building material of the traditional houses of the Ethiopian highlands.

³⁰ Korkorro (literally corrugated steel) is the Amharic and Tigrigna word to designate the urban slums areas.

³¹ "We Are the World" is the charity single recorded in 1985 by the supergroup United Support of Artists (USA) to fund a relieve campaign in Ethiopia after the 1983-1985 famine.

³² Fieldnotes, 24.01.2016.

This ethnographic passage shows, once again, that to better understand the ways children of migrants produce a *second-generation* status in the ancestral land, rather than drawing attention to the structural differences between the local setting and their western background, it could be helpful to investigate the structural reasons that make their differences “work”. In this regard, the clash of representations that made Johnny accuse Andrea (an acquaintance) and Serena (an Italian woman of Ethiopian origins) to reproduce the “Real Ethiopia” – in its conjugation as a western hegemonic longing for exoticism (Said, 1978) - can be very helpful. As a matter of fact, the different views of people who share the same birthplace or even (as in the case of Serena) the same ancestral background, points out the need to investigate the ways children of immigrants perform their second-generation condition in the ancestral land, without a straightforward link to their western birthplace. In this regard the concept of *Real Ethiopia* Johnny reported has a double value: from one side it shows (once again) the fragility of an *in-between* paradigm (in this case it shows the conflictual dynamics underlying a pretended shared western background) as a theoretical tool to frame their mobility paths; from the other it underlines a clear social boundary (Barth, 1998) made of practices and representations in the making of a *second-generation* counter diasporic mobility. This process shows the importance to critically extend the theoretical and empirical angles of *second-generation homecomings* beyond the notion of an emotionally compelling existential project that mythologizes the diasporic subject’s longing to be ‘home’, to that of a social project of return to the ancestral homeland (Stefansson, 2004; King, Christou, 2010).

Their longing for the modern imaginaries spread in the Ethiopian public discourses, and their choice to avoid as much as they can any contact with the local lower classes, in this perspective, serves precisely as a gauge to build a definite social status to orientate themselves, as well as to be socially recognized within a complex and stratified social world. In other words, their structural condition of being western citizens of Ethiopian origins, rather than representing an obstacle to a presumed full assimilation within the Ethiopian society (what Johnny labeled the “real Ethiopia”), *works* precisely to reproduce their staying. Reversing both the structural marginality they experience in the peripheral neighborhoods of Milano (chapter 2), and the social dynamics of the *Habesha* neighborhood of Porta Venezia (chapter 3), the Italians of Ethiopian origins perform what Nieswand (2011) defined “*the paradox of the Status*”.

4.4.2 Differential status and *cultures of return*

In his research on Ghanaian returnees, Nieswand (2011) explored what he defined a *paradox* in the ways the social status is shaped in transnational migrations. Nieswand shows the ambivalence of

the status of the returnees (labelled in Ghana as *Burgers*³³) to their homeland by considering from one side their economic capacity, and, from the other, the lack of prestige due to their low social position in the receiving context (p.135). To face their status inconsistency³⁴ (the discrepancy between cultural, economic and social capital) returnees need to emphasize their positive attributions, therefore, a perceived economic capacity they achieved in the receiving context. In fact, as Nieswand noted:

“Although status identities rely on resources—in contemporary societies particularly on wealth, educational degrees and office—they are not entirely determined by them. As status has to be claimed, acknowledged, performed and negotiated, it is an ordinary social and relational ascription” (p.125).

Shortly, transmigrants shape their relation with their homeland through a definite set of socially recognizable practices. Nieswand put on the table the concept of *impression management* (Goffman, 1990 [1959]) to explain the ways the status is performed in migration: despite the structural differences between first generation Ghanaian transmigrants and Italians of Ethiopian origins, it is possible to find quite striking similarities about the ways to attain their status. As I mentioned before, by asserting their presence in the ancestral land through a set of recognizable practices of differentiation, children of immigrants distance themselves from the locals and ascribe their status to a definite social world. In this perspective, by following (as Nieswand did) a Goffmanian approach, the ancestral land can be defined as a proper stage to perform a well-defined way to present the self. By looking more deeply, despite the limits and the contradictions of the Goffmanian dramaturgical model as an interpretative tool, its use as an operative fiction (Schmidt, 2001), may be a useful starting point to explore the way these practices of differentiation orienting Italians of Ethiopian origins in Ethiopia are produced. The theatrical metaphor, oblige us to concentrate on what Goffman labelled the “scripts”, the structures orienting the everyday practices³⁵. The nationalist declinations of the categories of Diaspora and Tigrayness I have outlined before, are obviously of great value to frame the practices of differentiation in a shared framework. But it doesn't explain the ways these practices are made and reproduced, or what makes the differentiation a cultural habit. If we assume that these social practices are not the mere

³³ *Burgers* directly derives from Hamburg, the German reference space of the Ghanaian labor migrations (Nieswand, 2011, p. 135).

³⁴ For a classic theorization on Status inconsistency see. Lenski, 1954. On the relation between Status inconsistency e migrations see, Lee, Toney, Berry, 2009.

³⁵ Goffman considered of big value the improvisations and the deviation from the script to understand everyday life social relations. As long as I think the same, this is not the right place to deepening this concept: for wider analysis on the relationality between script and improvisation See: Sawyer, 2001.

reproduction of their western background, therefore, it seems necessary to consider deeper structures of incorporation.

The following ethnographic extracts can be helpful to shed some light on this process: during the fieldwork, Johnny wanted me to go with him to the places where he spent the summer vacations when he was a child (he used to go there almost every summer during his childhood), well before the process of housebuilding from the diaspora became a consolidated practice (from the early 2000's on). His family trips to Ethiopia, as it was for many of the Ethiopians in Milano, were usually divided in a couple of week in Addis Ababa and at least one month in Mekele. They were used to stay in two hotels: the Ghion hotel in Addis Ababa and the Abrah Castle in Mekele; both the places were residences made of familiar bungalows in a wide park, isolated from the outer city, on the model of the holiday resort. Nowadays both the hotels are in decline, but during his childhood they were amongst the few to have western standards and facilities. Johnny told me that he was used to spend the most of his time in these places with the children of the other people of the diaspora. Especially in Addis Ababa, it was quite rare for him to go out of the resort. By remembering his family vacations at the Ghion Hotel, Johnny outlined a strong distinction between the inside and the outside spaces, depicting a proper diaspora city within the homeland: "We were happy here, it was the place where to meet a lot of people from Milano, and my relatives from all over the world". The joyful images of the resort were strongly contrasting with the description of the outer city he bears in mind from his childhood. He used words as "unsafe", "dirty", "empty", to describe the urban space, and he vividly remembers the images of the crowds of people begging in the streets or her mother telling him not to open the car window because every time they went out of the place they had many people around his car asking for money.

I think this ethnographic passage can be relevant mainly to shed some lights on the structural processes making the children of immigrants organize their counter diasporic paths of mobility through the practice of the differentiation. At the beginning of this paragraph I emphasized the strong similarities between the status attainment processes in migration explained by Nieswand, and the ways they site their presence in Ethiopia. In the same way, by analyzing Johnny's narratives about his childhood vacations, is possible to consider how his family's social practices (in congruence with other subjects of the diaspora back for the summer holidays) tended to emphasize their differentiation within the local context. But the choice to stay in a resort with western standards or to avoid as much as possible the outer city (creating in this way a diasporic area spatially separated from the urban context), rather than representing a way to cut with the homeland cultural setting,

served precisely as a strategy of recognition. These social practices, as a matter of fact, are crucial to sustain a culture of migration of the Tigrayan diaspora. By performing a differential social and economic status in the homeland, the diasporic subjects legitimize their role within a transnational familiar network (Cohen, Sirkeci, 2011), assuring a social capital that allows to play a major role in encouraging further migration chains, or to economically sustain those who stay behind³⁶. Following this perspective, the diasporic mobility to the homeland itself, is inextricably linked to the necessity of performing a definite status that meets the expectation of those who stay behind, hence, a congruency with the other subjects of the diaspora³⁷. However, it is a common trope in the Milanese diaspora to joke about the people preferring to fall into debt rather than showing their real economic condition if they have to go back to the homeland.

To summarize, if we go back to the ways the children of immigrants engage in their counter diasporic mobility projects, the “Goffmanian scripts” orienting their differential practices should be considered all but a contextual answer to a cultural clash. Their practices should rather be framed as what is possible to call a “culture of counter diasporic mobility”, a structured and incorporated set of social practices of crucial importance to reproduce their relation with the ancestral land. Same as their parents, they reproduce their presence by performing a definite status with definite and culturally recognizable practices of differentiation. A “culture of return”, in this way, turns out to be a structure of continuity reinforced in every journey to Ethiopia, by following the everyday practices of the returnees, or even in Milano, through the narratives of the “vacation experiences”.

The role of the children of immigrants in the transnational networks, their cultural background and horizons, and even their very conception of Ethiopia, actually, are structurally different from the first generation migrants. The continuity with the diasporic space, therefore, are counterbalanced by a structural discontinuity connotating their second-generation condition. In the entanglement between these structures children of immigrants reproduce and simultaneously re-semanticize a diasporic culture of return.

4.4.3 Reproducing a culture of return: Ties that strangle

Once established that the practices of differentiations the Italians of Ethiopian origins perform to orient their counter diasporic mobility projects are not the reflex of a cultural inbetweenness, it is also obvious that if we consider their structural condition, it would be even syntactically incorrect

³⁶ On the interconnectedness between the movers and those who stay behind see Gaibazzi, 2015.

³⁷ The performance of the status as a politic of recognition within the local context it is nowadays clearly expressed, as example, in spread of the so-called diaspora neighborhoods, the residential areas with western standards and facilities, built from the diaspora and spatially separated from the rest of the city (Grimaldi, forthcoming).

to frame their paths of mobility through the word “*return*”. First of all, they are not returnees, but first-time emigrants to their parents’ country of origin (King, Christou, 2010). It does imply a totally different perspective in the understanding of their presence in Ethiopia. If for the first generation’s migrants their homeland is inextricably linked to their role within the transnational networks, in their children experience social positioning is much more ambivalent. Differently than their parents, they are almost totally unrelated to the practices of reproductions of their transnational networks, playing no role within the migratory chains or the remittances process from Milano (Grimaldi, 2016). Even if during their stay in Ethiopia, they can be identified as “the sons of” within the local network, configuring as the representatives of the social position their parents attained, they are structurally unable to reproduce that status in the same way of their parents’ generation: if first generation migrants link a socially acceptable return to the homeland to their achievements in diaspora, the Italians of Ethiopian origins I worked with during my fieldwork, totally reverse this perspective. Their motivations to move in Ethiopia, as a matter of fact, lie precisely in a structurally neglected social mobility in their country of origin (see chapt. 5). Under this light, their ancestral land represents a possible site of a project of self-realization, a way to achieve (and not to affirm) upward social and economic mobility. In this perspective, the local network, far from representing the acid test of their status attainment, turns out to be a crucial web of support for the realization of their mobility paths (Reynolds, 2008; Silvey, 2006). Nevertheless, their counter diasporic projects can be crucial in the reproduction of the transnational network dynamics. Their presence in Ethiopia, in fact, turns out to be a way to mobilize the local network, activating a circuit of reciprocity that is crucial to sustain the transnational network³⁸ (Faist, 2000). The circuits of reciprocity, on the one hand, confirms the status attainment of their parents and their social position within the network. On the other hand, it serves for the *locals* as a practice of recognition, and a way to reproduce the set of social and moral obligations sustaining the transnational circuits of kinship and affinity. A circuit locally made up on non-movers relatives, as well as transmigrants and returnees of the global Tigrayan diaspora. In short, in children of immigrants counter diasporic paths of mobility both the sides of the migratory chain conflate (Carling, Erdal, 2014): undoubtedly, they can be framed as migrants in their relationship with ancestral land; on the other hand, they perform their staying by reproducing the cultures of mobility of the Tigrayan diaspora. In this perspective, the circuit of reciprocity and obligations they activate, turns out to be a tie binding together a transnational space (Reynolds,

³⁸ On the reciprocity in the formation of transnational network there is a big amount of literature. For a preliminary overview see: Coleman, 1990.

2008). This space, however, lies in a structural complexity and needs to be navigated between familiar expectations, social norms, and processes of individualization.

During the fieldwork in Mekele, I focused on the processes of reproduction of transnational familiar networks by following Johnny in his trip to his place of ancestral origins. In Mekele I had the opportunity to see in action the different and overlapping forms of mobility (de Bruijn, van Dijk, Foeken, 2001), sustaining a culture of migration of the Tigrayan diaspora.

Johnny activated his familiar network, well before our presence in Mekele. While we were in Addis Ababa, he had frequent phone calls with his parents in Milano to know where to accommodate once in Mekele. During his vacations in Mekele, Johnny was used to go to his grandmother house, but this time the room he used to share with his cousin had already been taken from his uncle Michel, who was living in Stuttgart and came back in Mekele for the holidays. Furthermore, I was Johnny's guest in Mekele so he wanted to find a proper accommodation to both of us. His mother gave him the contacts of Magda, one of her best friends during the 80's in Rome. Magda was a Swedish citizen originating from of Axum³⁹ who decided to build her diaspora house in Mekele; since 2013 she has been living between Stockholm and Mekele, where she shares her house with part of her local familiar network⁴⁰. Magda left Italy long before Johnny was born, and he met her only once during a trip to Sweden with his family. Although she was almost a stranger to him, he used to call her "auntie"⁴¹, and he felt perfectly confident in accepting her invitation to the house. Magda left us her own room, and we resided in her place during all our stay in Mekele, while she slept in the service⁴² with her domestic staff. Every time Johnny tried to offer something, she refused, arguing that we were students, and we needed to save money. She used to say that she was happy if she knew he was happy, and her only request was for Johnny to call Mila (Johnny's mother) and tell her everything was all right.

By hosting me and Johnny, Magda accepted to fill a set of social and moral obligations arising from the recognition of her status within the transnational network: as a matter of fact, by asking Magda to host her son, Johnny's mother legitimated her role, and activated a circuit of reciprocity

³⁹ Axum is one of the main cities of Tigray region, and the same place of origins of Johnny's family.

⁴⁰ Magda built her diaspora house far from her birthplace. For a more detailed analysis on the apparent discrepancies between the return practices and the imaginaries of the homeland See. Grimaldi, forthcoming.

⁴¹ Magda was a so called *Habesha style kin* for Johnny. Despite its analysis goes far beyond the scopes of this work, fictive kinship, based on relations of friendship or affinity across the Ethiopian and Eritean diaspora, have a central value in the reproduction of the diasporic social field.

⁴² Magda's house, as almost all of the diaspora houses in Mekele, was built on the pattern of the Ethiopian aristocratic houses. It was composed of an enclosed big courtyard, a three-floor main building (but only one of them was habitable), and the service, that is a series of small constructions close to the main building and normally designated to the servants.

sustaining their life paths in migration. During our stay in Magda house, Magda often told us about her migration paths, and the crucial role that Johnny's mother had during her first period in Italy, when they were together in Rome and Milano. Referring to Johnny, once she said:

"I used to cry every day, because I wanted to come back. Had it not been for Mila, I would have given up [...] She used to sustain me, and she got me many presents to cheer me up. I remember she brought me my first pairs of elegant shoes".

A friendship relation built during the 80's and fueled by occasional meetings and contacts along the years was enough to host Johnny (and me -his guest-) and treating him like a family member.

From his side, Johnny, was not simply the activator of these structures of reciprocity, but he played a significant role in their reproduction. In fact, Johnny performed his stay in Magda house's by following a precise role, behaving in a congruent way to his position of guest and "son of" one of Magda best friends. During his staying in Magda's house, Johnny had to fulfill an attributed status, performing a set of practices and representations to present himself in a socially acceptable way. He exaggerated his deference to Magda and adapted his status to the position of protégé; at the same time, he emphasized his adherence on different cultural codes and symbolic values comparing to the processes of social recognition he pursued all along his permanence in Ethiopia. The practices that Johnny performed to conjugate his new positional status implied a wide range of social activities and moral obligations: from a strict observance of the religious dietary laws (an observance he performed only when Magda was around), to the acceptance of Magda's control on his routine and public social behaviors. One of Magda's interferences concerned the definition of a precise hour to go back home at night, a point that astonished me the most, considering that even Johnny's same age relatives of his local familiar network considered Magda's concerns too exaggerated: as a matter of fact, even if Magda never imposed a definite timing to come back, every time we were a bit late after 9.00 pm, she used to call Johnny to be reassured we would have been home soon. I asked Johnny why she was so concerned about our observance of this "curfew"; Johnny told me that it was a matter of "respect" to her.

"I accept this for Magda. To avoid she has problems. According to Magda, we could have got back at dawn every night. Her daughter in Sweden is younger than me and she does whatever she wants. It's not about Magda, it's about the others (her local familiar network living with Magda in her house). If we get back home late, they have something to talk behind her back and they can say that she is hosting a troublemaker"⁴³.

⁴³ Fieldnotes 21.02.2016.

Therefore, Johnny's concerns were about Magda's legitimization: him not accepting a socially recognized social norm (get back at 9.00 pm), would have affected Magda's social position within her local network. But his patterns of behavior would have been potentially dangerous even out of the local context. A curfew violation would have been deleterious not only for Magda but even for his family back in Milano. If Johnny kept on practicing the strategies of legitimation he was used to pursue, he would have been recognized as a "*troublemaker*" in the local network, and it would have affected Johnny's mother social status, delegitimizing her authority and, at the same time, putting in danger her relation with Magda. As a matter of fact, if Johnny avoided to perform a precise incorporated pattern of social reproduction during his stay in Magda's house (Mila's son), his very role of active subject within the transnational familiar network would have been compromised. By showing deference, and observing a strict cultural and behavioral code, Johnny from one side confirmed Magda status attainment within the transnational network, and from the other valorized her mother reputation, legitimizing and reinforcing the circuits of transnational reciprocity.

Actually, Johnny did not ally this set of cultural codes and moral obligations to every subject of the transnational network; on the contrary, the way he performed his role within the local context mirrored the relationships of dependence and intimacy within the network.

During his staying in Ethiopia (especially in Mekele) Johnny contextually conjugated his social position, from deference, to intimacy, to indifference according to the social position of the subjects within the network, and the relationship they had with his parents. An unstable and nor once for all defined relation (Carling, Erdal, 2014): generally, the main arguments transforming the familiar relationships are strongly connected to the reproduction of the transnational familiar network as the process of housebuilding from the diaspora and the way it was handled, the remittances management, or the issues within the familiar migratory chain (family reunification disputed choices, or paths of transnational mobility ended badly).

In short, the process of reproduction of the regimes of mobility of the Tigrayan diaspora (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013) strongly affect the counter diasporic journey, obliging children of immigrants to take a definite position within the network, to face the choice of following or not following their parents' way to site in the network and to situationally adapt their social role to the different settings they experience. Under this perspective, the way they perform their social position within the familiar local network turns out to be a slippery slope where their local practices reverberate transnationally, and where both the sides of the migratory chain are at stake. This condition can be challenging and stressful (4.3.2.1); the transnational network can be crucial in accommodating the

second generations counter diasporic mobility paths and have a strong value in the reproduction of the social capital within the network (Raynolds, 2008). But its pervasiveness can be unbearable. In other words, transnational ties sometimes bind so much that they can strangle.

This is one of the reasons that made Johnny choose not to rely on his familiar network for his stay in Addis Ababa. Johnny, during his vacations, was used to be a guest of an aristocratic branch of his family, residing in a big villa in the central neighborhood of Bole. He described the house as a golden prison, where he could have found whatever he wanted, but where his freedom was limited. With his choice to find an accommodation on his own, Johnny sited himself out of the pervasiveness of the familiar network, deciding when and how to perform his socially defined position within it. This choice (that led Johnny to challenge his role within the familiar network) is a clear example of the tension between individual and collective dimension, a constitutive feature of the children of immigrants paths of mobility to the ancestral land. In this perspective, the practices of differentiation they perform in the public space, coexist with their role in the familiar network, configuring as a crucial aspect of their relation with the ancestral land.

4.4.4 Play the difference. The nightmare of not being different

“This is the first time in my life I haven’t been allowed to enter a place in Ethiopia”.

These were Johnny’s words straight after he was bounced at the entrance of a night club in the westernized neighborhood of Bole in Addis Ababa. Johnny argued with the bouncer because he wanted to get in to inform his friends inside we had to go away, but he didn’t allow him. While Johnny explained his reasons, the bouncer told him to stop talking English by telling him that he was in Ethiopia and he had to speak Amharic. Johnny started to scream at him that he was not pretending to be a foreigner by speaking English, and that he really didn’t know the language. But the bouncer was uncompromising, so we had to leave the place. Once we reached the car, Johnny told me that he did not get mad with the bouncer because he denied him to get in. On the contrary, it was a good thing: in his opinion, it meant that there were enough local people who could afford to spend a night in one of the most fashionable club of the city. And in his opinion, it was a sign of the arising development in the country. He got angry with the bouncer because he didn’t trust him about the fact he was not able to speak Amharic. In this way, he felt accused to pretend to be a foreigner just to have more possibilities to get in⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Fieldnotes, Addis Ababa, 11.03.2016.

This ethnographic passage shows the reverse of a perspective reproducing the second generation return as a space of social and symbolic continuity with ancestral land dynamics they reproduce in diaspora. Johnny's differential status, for the first time, disactivated and he was treated in the same way as a local. In this perspective, Johnny's harsh reaction to the bouncer accusation of pretending to be a foreigner is very revealing and needs to be placed in a wider context: as a matter of fact, it can be very helpful to better understand the reasons that make the process of assimilation within the larger society a real threat to the children of immigrants counter diasporic project. As I showed before, by emphasizing a set of self-valuable social attributions, second generations represent themselves through a definite set of social practices within the Ethiopian public space; it makes them possible to occupy a definite social position, and to be socially recognized within a growing stratified society. It appears that the Ethiopian urban contexts, and especially Addis Ababa, are facing a huge process of social and economic stratification, creating enclaves for the "elite" who are able to afford an high-status lifestyle, thus exacerbating the division within the city (Klosterboer, 2017, p.62). In this western oriented scenario, the English language itself represents a source of identification. In Addis Ababa, a good competence of the English language (that is often bound up with a lack of competence and a reluctance in using their mother tongue) is commonly connected to a definite social world, indicating a high social and economic status. I have experienced an indicative example of the social value of the English language within Johnny's familiar aristocratic branch in Addis Ababa. His young cousin, since kindergarten attended a private American school and, at the time of the fieldwork, he was not able to read and write neither in Tigrinya (his family language), nor in Amharic (the Ethiopian national language), and he could barely speak them. This phenomenon is so widespread that even in the TV fictions a fluency in the English language is emphasized as a connotation of high status and a social gap marker within the larger society⁴⁵. In addition, English is considered as a self-valuable trait within the arising young educated urban middle class. The use of the English language in their everyday conversations (mixing sentences in English with sentences in their mother tongue, or using English words within a sentence in their mother tongue) constitute an integral part of the adhesion to the western oriented model of self-construction arising in urban Ethiopia. In this perspective, Johnny's worries about being bounced in the club were directly connected to a perception of status lowering: the bouncer's perception of

⁴⁵ In the Ethiopian fiction industry, a common trope of romance movies is the classic tale of the poor boy meeting the rich girl, falling in love after an initial apparently social insurmountable clash. The features of the rich girl are tendentially associated to a western oriented cultural world, with the English language as a primary source of communication.

how Johnny used English as a source of differentiation to affirm his status, assimilated him in the category of “local”, and deactivated his self-valuable patterns of differentiations. Under this light, the incorporated structures of differentiation Italians of Ethiopian origins perform in the ancestral land can be framed as social practices of wider politics of recognition. The reproduction and the maintenance of those differences, represent a crucial source to enjoy a socially recognized privileged social position and, as Christou (2006) stated, prevent their journey to the ancestral land to turn into a nightmare. In her work on the return of Americans of Greek origins to their ancestral land, Christou emphasized the difficulties of the *second generations*’ resettlement process, from the relationship with local institutions to the clash with the local behavioral patterns of cultural reproduction (840-842). In this perspective, the structural differences they experience in their journey towards return represent a way to redefine their “Greekness”, as well as their “Americanness” (p.840). If we consider the structural conditions of the Ethiopian nation state, from welfare to job opportunities and salaries, from the facilities to the bureaucracy, the process of (re)settlement to the ancestral land for Italians of Ethiopian origins takes place in a structural inhospitable context. However, the exponential growth of the urban contexts, the cultural and economic flows crossing Addis Ababa, and the presence of transnational NGO and corporations represent a strong opportunity of neoliberal self-realization. This ambivalence is well expressed by Italians of Ethiopian origins, as well as the subject of the diaspora from Italy I worked with, through widespread narratives about a defined economic status. In fact, there is a direct link between a good income and the possibility to live in Ethiopia, underlying how their ancestral land can be both a paradise and a nightmare depending on money. By tying these two features together – the structural uncertainty accompanying a life project in Ethiopia, and the necessity to perform a definite social position – it is possible to make sense of the lack of counter diasporic mobility paths to Ethiopia⁴⁶. At the same time, the analysis of the structural condition of their stay in Ethiopia is helpful to understand the lack of a direct link between the cultural competence of the local context and the choice of moving to the ancestral land. Under this perspective, the strategies of differentiation Italians of Ethiopian origins perform to site themselves within the westernized transnational and high-status niche of Addis Ababa represent the constitutive feature of their stay. On the contrary, the incorporation of the cultural, social or behavioral patterns of the local context

⁴⁶ To overcome the constitutive uncertainty of their condition in Milano, rather than moving to the ancestral land they activate new paths of long term mobility to the welfare centered and economically opened markets of the north European contexts (see chapt.7).

(including language knowledge) are contingent strategies to better perform their differential status. Among the few Italians of Ethiopian origins who moved from Milano to Addis Ababa, there was only one who was able to write and read in Amharic. Jack, who moved in Ethiopia in 2014 to work in his father construction company, had to learn the Ethiopian national language once in Ethiopia. The motivations he gave are a clear example of the instrumental acquisition of cultural patterns as a way to better perform a differential status:

I had to learn Amharic for my job. Every time I had to go to the bank or in Kebele⁴⁷ for a permit I had to fight with the officer because he couldn't speak a word in English and obviously there are no documents in English. I had to pay a translator every time and it was very irritating. I was losing my time and my money. So I started to study⁴⁸.

On the other hand, since he moved in Ethiopia, Jack improved a lot his English skills: in fact, the most of his reference group included young western expatriates (the so-called *ferengi*) mainly working in Addis Ababa in development or Ngo companies and living in the westernized contexts of the city. Under this perspective, Addis Ababa, rather than configuring as the site of the diasporic longing for roots, represented to him a possibility to join an international circuit and to legitimize himself as a cosmopolitan citizen (Linklater, 1998), realizing what was denied to him in Milano.

So, turning to Christou's metaphor of the journey to return as a possible nightmare, it is possible to note that the nightmare starts precisely when the possibilities to practice the difference fall. A differential status that implies a set of social practices aimed at distancing from the local setting and its low status imaginary. A differentiation that strongly resonates with racial categories. In the following paragraph, I will work on the ways the reproduction of a proper racial paradigm in the construction of the *second generations return* turns out to represent a tool to perform a sited Habeshanness.

4.5 Racial categories and social status

Johnny: In here you can enjoy your white privilege.

Jack: Aren't we privileged as well? Man. Look around you. These are the places of the white blacks of this country.

This exchange between Johnny and Jack took place at the entrance of one of the most renowned western oriented clubs in Addis Ababa. Johnny was mocking me because at the entrance of the club, who had a strict policy admission, they let me get in although I did not meet the dress code. Johnny

⁴⁷ The Kebele is the administrative municipal office.

⁴⁸ Fieldnotes 18.03.2016.

was used to talk about my condition of being white in Ethiopia within a framework of differential power relations, so he did not miss the chance to let me notice my “white privilege”. Jack, that the most of the times used to emphasize this condition as well, this time answered ironically to Johnny, identifying his and Johnny’s condition within a framework of whiteness. That was the only time during the fieldwork that whiteness explicitly appeared as a category of ascription. Nevertheless, this sentence opened a proper Pandora box: it allowed me to reconsider many of the differentiation practices the children of immigrants men perform to make sense of their counter diasporic journey within a strongly racialized symbolic paradigm. As a matter of fact, the practices of distancing themselves from the average local setting, implied not only their adhesion to the elitist niche of Addis Ababa, but the incorporation of a proper racial paradigm. The question, therefore, is: would it be possible that the differential practices the children of immigrants reproduce in order to orient their counter diasporic journey, incorporate the hegemonic racial paradigm they are excluded from in Italy?

4.5.1 Racializing the difference: status as ontological division

By analyzing the *second generation return* paths of Bajan Brits to the postcolonial context of Barbados, Potter and Phillips (2006) shed light on the racial categories at stake within what Said (1978) defined the *Occidental-Oriental binary framework*: this distinction, based on a European way of thought, produces an ontological and epistemological otherness that represents the acid test to reproduce a self-valuable western identification. As Potter and Phillips pointed out, the category of *western* and, furthermore, the ways the Bajan Brits performed their Britishness (from the English accent to the behavioral patterns) within their ancestral land, represented a source of legitimation to define a differential status. A status granting them a position of economic and social privilege within the Barbadian post-colonial context (p. 913). The ways Bajan-brits reproduced their differential status implied a proper racialization of the local “others”, and the ascription of a “symbolic” whiteness. The narratives Potter and Phillips collected (pp. 914-919), show the racialized representations of the local setting within a framework of differential power relationships. Bajan-brits second generations explicitly represented through the hegemonic values of the colonizer (determination, organization, proactivity), in a relation of contraposition with the disvaluing tropes of the colonized (laziness, disorganization, fatalism). Second generation positioning, under this perspective, assumes a hybrid function, granting them a privileged status but, simultaneously, preventing them a full assimilation within their ancestral context (p.920).

There are striking similarities between the process Potter and Phillips underlined and the ways Italians of Ethiopian origins built their relational field within the ancestral land. The representation of a racialized local otherness clearly emerged during the fieldwork. The racial clichés of opportunism, dirtiness and dishonesty were constitutive of the field of representation that Italians of Ethiopian origin enacted to attain their status. A field of representation implying a proper legitimization of their differential behavior patterns in their everyday life. The choice to not eat in the “local” restaurants, for example, was often explained through the risk of getting sick because of the scarce hygienic conditions of the food. The processes reproducing the “local” as structural others emerged even in explicit forms, through processes of proper dehumanization. It happened quite often that both children of immigrants and returnees from Italy used words as “donkeys” or “dogs” to refer to local behavioral patterns they considered as uncivilized. These “uncivilized” behavioral patterns included ways of driving or crossing the street, inadequate work ethics, lack of taste in food or clothing choices. At the same time, the reproduction of a differential power relationship emerged implicitly, with the attribution of a set of racialized categories mirroring the relation between colonizer and colonized. This was aimed to stress the division between them and locals: during the fieldwork, this process was evident in the way Johnny positioned himself when he needed to trust locals, and to rely on their expertise. While we were in Mekele, Johnny had troubles with his smartphone and he had to repair it. We went with his cousin to one of his friends’ shops to try to fix it. As soon as the shop assistant started to work on the smartphone Johnny started to stare at him suspiciously, and, after a brief check, the shop assistant told him that he had to leave his smartphone there since there was a lot of work to do. Johnny immediately said that he couldn’t leave the smartphone there, so he asked him to put the pieces back together and we left the place. As soon as we left the place Johnny confided me that he didn’t trust the ways locals deal with technology, that he thought he was not able to fix it, and that he stared at him during the process of disassembling because he was convinced that he could have stolen some of the smartphone pieces to resell them.

Finally, the inscription of a local otherness in a field of power relations strongly emerged in the definition of a *second-generation masculinity* (see chapt.2) and its social reproduction in the ways of dealing with local women. By joining one of the most widespread representations of the relationship between the white colonizers/black colonized (Fanon, 1967), they objectified and hypersexualized the female body in order to reproduce both their differential status and a shared pattern of masculinity. One of the main topics of discussion among the Italian males of Ethiopian

origins I worked with was the possibility to have as many women as they wanted, precisely by performing social attributes connected to their “symbolic whiteness” and the differential power category it implied. As I have been told in a club by John, a Tigrayan who attended the Italian school in Addis Ababa⁴⁹, and moved to Rome at the age of 13 (he was in Addis Ababa for vacations purposes):

We are walking visa in here. We are a life opportunity. So you can have every woman you want. But you don't even imagine how many people I met that went crazy because they were not used to such beautiful girls. They lost money and they lost families. You have to be smart⁵⁰.

This framework may be reproduced not only by pretending to own the female body, but even rejecting it, imagining the average local body as impure or sick. In the diasporic context of Milano, the fear of venereal diseases and especially of AIDS is a widespread topic among children of immigrants talking about Ethiopia, representing even a way to mock someone about his excessive sexual habits. This fear can even bring to the decision to avoid any sexual contact with low class Ethiopian women. As Salomon, an Italian man of Tigrayan origins I met in London told me:

When I am in Ethiopia I look for Ferengi girls. First of all, it is too easy with locals. And secondarily, I assume Ferengi are clean. Since I was a child my father brainwashed me about the risks of AIDS. So now I don't even feel attraction to them⁵¹.

By relegating the locals in a structural otherness, and by reproducing the woman body within a paradigm of power relationship, the ways the Italians of Ethiopian origins perform their differential status seems to exactly match the postcolonial framework that Potter and Phillips depicted to talk about the Bajan-Brits symbolic and “token” whiteness.

Actually, I think that this interpretative key, if applied to the Ethiopian context, would offer a picture very far from the actual comprehension of this process. As a matter of fact, we should frame the children of immigrants differential practices as an incorporation (or an attribution) of the colonial and postcolonial discourses that connoted the Italian presence in the Horn of Africa⁵². This perspective would lead us to underestimate wider structural processes acting on othering reproduction in the Ethiopian social space. The impossibility to frame the second generations' performance of racial categories in the binary opposition colonizer-colonized, lays exactly in the specificity of the Ethiopian context. The Habesha historicized nation building rhetoric, its founding

⁴⁹ I will deeply talk about the importance of the Italian school of Addis Ababa during the next chapter.

⁵⁰ Fieldnotes, 21.01.2016.

⁵¹ Fieldnotes, 5.07.2016.

⁵² I will deepen the role of Italianness within the Ethiopian context in chapt.5-6.

colonial and postcolonial narratives, and the present ethnic discourses spread in the country, in fact, converge within a wider and historicized structural division running across the Ethiopian context. This division reproduces a status based hierarchical structure that can be framed as a coherent way to perform a socially sited Habeshanness.

4.5.1.1 *Shadows of slavery*⁵³ and social status

Daniel was my uncle's *berbegna*⁵⁴. My uncle took him from the streets when he was three years old, and treated him as a member of his family. I used to play with him when I was a kid, and he was one of my main reference points when I came to Ethiopia [...] In 2013, during my last vacation, I discovered that my uncle sent Daniel away. When I asked him why, he replied by saying that Daniel did not respect him anymore, and that he started to be lazy and going out drinking without permission. He told me that he could not let people say that someone living in his house stayed out all night long, or got drunk. Can you imagine? He had been taking care of Daniel since he was 3 years old, he raised him as a son, and after 15 years he sent him away in the streets without money and without any regret, just because he wanted to get a normal life⁵⁵.

Johnny told me about the story of his uncle's relation with Daniel, straight after a strong discussion with one of his aunt's *berbegna*. The motivations that led Johnny to get mad with the *berbegna* were apparently of little importance:

Johnny brought some clothes to wash in his aunt's house, but when he came back to collect them, the *berbegna* told him he could not arrange to wash his clothes because of the bad weather condition. Straight after Johnny heard his explanation he started shouting at him, saying that he could accept he did not have time or that he just was too lazy to wash his clothes, but it was unacceptable that he was making fun of him. After that, Johnny took the dirty clothes back and we left his aunt's house while the *berbegna* tried, in vain, to stop him. As soon as we got out, Johnny told that he behaved that way to give him a lesson. In his words, by not doing his job, and especially by lying at him, the *berbegna* disrespected not only him, but especially his aunt. Then he added that the *berbegna* tried to stop him by any means because he knew that if Johnny talked with his aunt, he would have been sent away⁵⁶.

These extracts could represent a useful starting point to analyze the structural condition of exploitation the domestic workers face within the Ethiopian urban context⁵⁷. However, it is

⁵³ I mutuate the expression from the University of Milano Bicocca based Erc project "Shadows of Slavery in West Africa and Beyond (SWAB): a Historical Anthropology", bridging together past slavery and present forms of marginality. For a further analysis on this relation see Bellagamba, 2016; Bellagamba, Greene, Klein, 2013

⁵⁴ *berbegna* is the term indicating the males serving in patronal houses.

⁵⁵ Fieldnotes, 30.01.2016.

⁵⁶ Fieldnotes, 30.01.2016.

⁵⁷ For Further examinations on domestic workers exploitation in urban Ethiopia See. Erulkar, Mekbib, 2007.

significant for the purpose of this work for another reason. The ethnographic passage is a clear (and extreme) representation of the ways the local categories of hierarchical othering reproduction work to assert membership within a hegemonic group. Both Johnny and his uncle, in their behavioral patterns, carried on a process of discursive dehumanization and devaluation, reproducing differential power relation as a structural property (Harris, 1993). These processes exactly match the discourses on which racial divide is produced and reproduced. The racialization of domestic working, after all, represented a constitutive category founding the colonial and postcolonial relationship between the Italian colonizer and the Habesha colonized (chapt.2). Similarly to the colonial racialized context, the ethnographic situation I have outlined (a situation I experienced in many of the high status houses I visited during my fieldwork both in Addis Ababa and Mekele) reproduces the same othering processes. Usually, domestic workers live in structural different parts of the houses (the service), and do not have access to commensality or social events unless they are invited from the house owner. The house owner is responsible for their education and their social life, and often in high status families, domestic workers enter the houses during their childhood. Despite the othering processes I have outlined apparently followed the same patterns reproducing the relationship between colonizer and colonized, the ascribed hegemonic position of Johnny and his uncle was not claimed through a color line (Du Bois, 2008 [1903]). On the contrary, these people identified themselves in the same nationality (Ethiopians), in the same ethnonym (Habesha) as well as the same ethnic group (Tigrayan).

These representations, actually emerged during the fieldwork in every aspect of the relationship among different social classes. High status people I worked with, used to live in spatially separated and (especially in Addis Ababa) enclosed areas of the city, surrounded by walls and wire fences and patrolled by armed guards. This structural separation (a proper representation of the relation between purity and contamination) represents a constitutive feature to attain a defined social position. The pretended racial paradigm I outlined in the last paragraph, under this light, can be well framed within this structural divide overcoming national and ethnic identification occurring in the local urban contexts between high and low status people. In the following ethnographic passage, this process is clearly expressed in the ways Johnny behaved in a supposed robbery from a taxi driver during our first day in Mekele.

Johnny thought he lost his smartphone in the taxi; I tried to call his number but the cell-phone was off. Johnny immediately thought he had been robbed and called the police. As soon as the officers arrived we were brought to the police station to make a report. After few minutes, Johnny started to get impatient

and told the officer that if we would not have gone in the streets to look for the taxi driver we would have never found the cell-phone. We stepped in the car and we started to drive around Mekele, looking for a random taxi driver. Johnny was sure that all the taxi drivers of the city knew about the smartphone robbery so he started to shout at the police officer that he should have stopped one of them randomly, and should have beaten him until he would have told us where the man with his cell-phone was. Then he added: you can't talk with these people. The only language they know is violence⁵⁸.

This passage⁵⁹ is very revealing of the incorporation of this status based structural divide. By reproducing the differential rhetoric of the locals profiting of diaspora people, Johnny flatten the Mekele taxi drivers to the level of potential associates in crime; basing his reasons on this disvaluing assumption, he wanted the police to act out of law regime, to defend his status. A status that was nor based on ethnic, or racial divide since all the people involved were Tigrayans. Johnny's reaction, even in this particular situation did not come out of the blue, but represented the best way he could ascribe his pretended incorporated hegemonic role within the local context.

In order to understand the ways this structural divide is incorporated and reproduced, therefore, it is necessary to call in question a set of deeper structures sustaining the class divide as a proper ontological distinction. A distinction that calls into question the structural factors that have been regulating (and still now regulate) power relationships within the Ethiopian context.

Ethiopia has been, until fairly recently, a rigid feudal⁶⁰ society with finely grained perceptions of class and caste (Finneran, 2013), where stratification between upper and lower social status has been a central characteristic regardless of the ethnic provenience (Levine, 2014 [1974], p.57). Levine (p. 58-59) introduces two central and cross-cutting categories to analyze the Ethiopian social configuration⁶¹: the professional castes or "submerged classes" and the slaves. This structural configuration has been ethnicized and racialized in the contemporary Ethiopian public debate⁶². The Ethiopian slavery system represented one of the main social and economic sources in the making of the modern Ethiopia (Tibebu, 1995). Nevertheless, in its present narratives, the classification of the master-slave relationship turned out to incorporate ethnic and racial connotation (Afro-asiatic

⁵⁸ Fieldnotes, 11.02.2016.

⁵⁹ Fortunately, the situation had a happy ending: Johnny found his cellphone in the house few hours later, and the police did not prosecute anyone.

⁶⁰ The feudal declination of the Ethiopian system however is disputed See Donham. 1999.

⁶¹ Levine work, *Greater Ethiopia: The evolution of a multiethnic society*, despite its crucial impact on the Ethiopian studies and its detailed data, represents a disputable effort to trace the legitimacy of the "Greater Ethiopia" XIX century political project in a presumed millenary multiethnic society.

⁶² The isomorphic relation between social status and an ethno-racial paradigm, in fact, serves to make sense of both the hegemonic conjugation of the term Habesha in the present Ethiopian social space, and the Tigrayan led ethno-politics of the present government.

Habesha over Bantu phenotypical traits). A good example of this classification lays in the use of the word “Barya”, originally an ethnonym of a Nilotic ethnic group that turned to represent the referent of the concept of “slave” in both Amharic and Tigrayan language (Levine, 2014 [1974], p.57). An analysis that considers race as the primary factor in the understanding of the Ethiopian relation between hegemony and marginality, therefore, reproduces a western led discourse that underestimates the social structures of the Ethiopian society (Tibebu, 1995, p.61). The process of enslavement, actually, was a cross cutting phenomenon interesting the whole Ethiopian modern configuration regardless of ethnic origins or racial classification. In 1914 between 1/3 and 1/4 of the entire population was classified as slave (Tibebu, 1995): in the wake of the Ethiopian process of modern nation state formation, (all along the 19th century), slavery represented the main export item, playing a central role in the Islamic red sea slave trade. As Tibebu pointed out, especially for Ottomans, the Habesha phenotypical traits turned out to be a “slave race” in between the *Whites* of the black sea regions, and the *Blacks* from east Africa; the term *Habesha* itself in the Ottoman empire, similarly to the word Barya in Ethiopia, turned out to represent a metonymy to indicate a slave (p. 63). Within this structure, the divide between high status (owner) and low status (owned or potentially owned⁶³) people represented the most important social boundary to reproduce. Racial and ethnic categories⁶⁴ spread in the present Ethiopian public discourse cannot obscure the simple fact that noble and slaves, regardless of their ethnic origins, represented the extreme ends of the social divide (Tibebu, p.59).

The status divide, despite being hidden in the public discourse, still plays a crucial role in the present Ethiopian social configurations: this is especially effective in urban contexts, where the neoliberal paradigm accelerated the processes of social stratification. A social stratification in which the assertion of a defined status turns out to be crucial to define social positioning. Low classes, regardless of their ethnic origins, represent a structural otherness. After all, considering the *Yabarya tebay* (the slave character) in the widespread representations of the Amhara and Tigray society (Tibebu, 1995, p.58) we can see how the social attributes of the slaves (untrustworthiness, proneness to lying, stealing, hypersexuality, cheerfulness, laziness, etc.) perfectly match the

⁶³ Setting apart the slave population reproduction, captive and raids among low status people were the main ways to reproduce the process of enslavement.

⁶⁴ The main line of distinction between slave and non-slaves, actually, did not follow phenotypical but cultural and symbolic lines. Christian religion, in example, differently than ethnic or racial classification, represented a category of common identification ideally excluded from the enslavement processes. (Levine, 2014 [1974]; Tibebu 1995; et al).

representation of the lower classes that both high-status locals and diaspora subjects showed to have during my fieldwork.

In this perspective, where status is directly linked with the production of subjectivity, Italian of Ethiopian origins enact differentiation processes to make sense of their counter diasporic project, rather than to represent an incorporation of the colonizer/colonized paradigm. This differentiation, based on the reproduction of a hegemonic Italianness, can be framed as a sited way to perform their diasporic *Habeshaness*.

4.5.2 Blackness and social status

The fact that the practices of differentiation the Italians of Ethiopian origins perform to make sense of their counter diasporic project cannot be framed within a racial paradigm, do not exclude that racial categories matter in Ethiopia. The term Habesha itself, among its other meanings, represents a racial signifier to frame Amhara and Tigrayan speakers as a separate *non-black* entity within the Ethiopian context (Chapt.1). Children of immigrants are not immune from this paradigm. The reproduction of a hegemonic racially connoted Habeshaness, therefore, overlaps with the processes of incorporation of the racial structures reproducing their second-generation condition compared to the Italian context. This relation paves the way to the analysis of a further apparent idiosyncrasy entering in the children of immigrants' counter diasporic journey: the reproduction of the hegemonic Habesha racial and ethnic order, and, at the same time, the incorporation of their diasporic blackness.

During the first days of the ethnography the discovering of this double positionality was quite disorienting compared to the narratives I collected from Milano: the representations of the journey to the ancestral land, in fact, were marked by the diasporic representations of color blindness (Potter, Phillips, 2009). In children of immigrants' narratives, a supposed flat racial classification represented even a source of identification with the ancestral space, and conversely, a device to distance themselves from the Italian racial paradigm. It was a quite common trope among Italians of Ethiopian origins, to assert that one of the first feelings they experienced once back in Ethiopia was the relief to be the same of all the other people, and to avoid the pressure related to their skin color.

These representations are indubitably effective. A different (and self-valuing) perception of skin color has a central value in the experience of the counter diasporic journey. However, the narratives of racial sameness connoting the Ethiopian context seem to be more connected to the racial

structures they experience in Milano, rather than to the incorporation of the Ethiopian racial categories.

The ways children of immigrants practice their definite and culturally recognized Habeshanness marks a structural difference with the Ethiopian average setting. In this perspective, by siting themselves within the Habesha hegemonic discourse they face the constitutive intersection between racial classifications and social class reproducing the ethnonym itself.

In their counter diasporic journey, therefore, Italians of Ethiopian origins have to navigate a proper “local hierarchy of color” (Potter, Phillips, 2009; Western, 1992, p.48) defining and internally stratifying Habeshanness.

4.5.2.1 Am I too tanned? Black Italians and local hierarchies of color

I was talking with David, one of Johnny’s closest childhood friends from Mekele, about the migration patterns of the young Tigrayans within the Ethiopian space. He told me that, despite most of the people of his generation and social class dreamed to leave Ethiopia for western contexts, most of the people from all around Ethiopia moved to Addis Ababa. Then he added that some of them, if possible, prefer to go south, for example in the Gambela region⁶⁵, and look for jobs in the growing industrial sector or in agribusiness. When I asked him about the motivations, he told me that it was possible to easily gain high profile jobs in Gambela. In his representations, the region, was a virgin land with abundance of resources to use. But people from that region were not able to profit from that. He added that Gambela people still go around half naked and paint their face, and it would be impossible to them to integrate in the new Ethiopian economy⁶⁶.

By associating a set of racialized attributions to a definite ethnic group, David emphasized the Habesha (as an ethnic, racial, and cultural signifier) hegemonic position within the Ethiopian social space, and self-ascribed as a representative of this hegemonic paradigm.

The color hierarchy running through the Ethiopian society, however, could strongly act within the Habesha category itself, representing a potential source of symbolic exclusion. In the following ethnographic situation, ethnic and racial categories again intersected in the definition of power relationship; but this time David himself was the target of the Habesha racial categories.

Once we arrived in Mekele, as soon as Johnny met David, he told him that the more he got older the more he looked like “Gambela”. Johnny often used to name David in this way all along our presence in Mekele. So,

⁶⁵ Gambela region is considered in the Ethiopian public opinion as one of the most marginalized and underdeveloped Regions in Ethiopia (see Praeg, 2006).

⁶⁶ Fieldnotes, 06.03.2016.

after some weeks, I asked him the motivations. Johnny told me that since they were children he used this joke to make David get angry, emphasizing David darker skin color compared to him and the other children of his familiar network⁶⁷.

By association skin color to a perceived lower ethnic group, Johnny symbolically contested David's Habeshanness, therefore, his hegemonic position in the Ethiopian ethno-scape (Appadurai, 1990). Actually, the local hierarchy of color, and the ways to perceive it in relation to a definite status represented a critical issue even in Johnny's experience of the ancestral land. One of Johnny's concerns during his stay in Ethiopia was about his skin color. He frequently asked me or his friends if he was becoming too tanned. The position about this issue was very ambivalent. In his representations, he was happy to get a tan, because the darkening of his skin color represented to him a way to look more similar to the locals. The association of darker skin with locals, strikingly reproduce the intersection of race and social class constitutive of the Habesha rhetoric. Throughout the fieldwork experience (in Ethiopia, as well as in Italy and in London), I registered a widespread rhetoric among the children of immigrants I worked with to represent themselves as lighter than locals due to their lesser exposure to sunlight. In this sense, skin color turns out to be a proper space of signification to reproduce distance with the local setting: associating themselves to a lighter skin gradation, they posit their second-generation condition within the local hierarchies of color.

4.5.2.2 Did you come to Ethiopia and you don't know Tupac?

The significant value of the local color hierarchies in children of immigrants experience of the ancestral land, nevertheless did not fit at all with the ways they culturally performed their social status. Similarly to Milano, their manifested adhesion to a black global culture (from the outfit, to the way of talking, to the way to act publicly), actually, represented one of their main self-representational patterns.

There was a joke between me and Johnny that started one of the first days of the fieldwork when he discovered that I knew almost nothing about the rapper Tupac. He looked at me with incredulity and he told me:

I can't believe it. You did come to Ethiopia and you don't know Tupac? How can you?⁶⁸

From that day, Johnny repeated this sentence almost every time we met with some people of Italian origins, and it almost became his way to introduce me to new people. Even if most of them were not so shocked as Johnny was, it was undeniable that Hip-hop, and especially Old school black

⁶⁷ Fieldnotes 27.02.2016.

⁶⁸ Fieldnotes 16.01.2016.

American hip hop and its cultural social and symbolic meanings, represented a primary source of legitimation for the Italians of Ethiopian origins I met in Addis Ababa.

Their behavioral patterns, under this perspective, creates the impression of a further clash related to a perceived hybridity: the cultural attributes of their incorporated Milanese blackness, turns out to be a structure they cannot abandon despite their adhesion to the hierarchies of color spread in the Ethiopian public discourse. However, this perspective, once again, risk to essentialize not only the children of immigrants' practices of navigation of their social identification, but especially the conjugation of blackness as a social discourse, and the multiple meanings it can assume traversing national borders (Celeste, 2016 p. 4). To better understand this process, it is necessary to preliminary underline that black global culture, as a world culture, is strongly associated to a sited representation of the urban American image-ideal (Guillroy, Green, 1998 p.256). This starting point is central to understand the conjugation of a travelling blackness (Celeste, 2016) within the Ethiopian context: by framing a peculiar declination of the black global culture within the social spaces Italians of Ethiopian origins navigate in order to make sense of their experience of the ancestral land, it will be possible to analyze the ways blackness is appropriated and performed (Johnson, 2003). It means to articulate the western blackness cultural traffics (Diawara, 2005) within the spaces that, in their imaginaries, represent sites of global possibilities (the westernized contexts of the urban Addis Ababa). In a perspective that makes blackness a central source of status recognition, it is necessary to question the ways this association articulates in the experience of the westernized youth, high status, social segment arising from the last decades' Ethiopian neoliberal turn. It can be very interesting, in this respect, to report the experience of Hellen, a 19 years old Italian girl of Tigrayan origin born and raised in Milan who moved in Addis Ababa at the age of 13 with her parents. During my fieldwork, Hellen attended her last year at the Italian school of Addis Ababa, once an institution reserved to the postcolonial Italians, nowadays a space where Italians citizens and the emerging westernized Ethiopians meet⁶⁹. In my first interview with Hellen, I wanted to explore her diasporic Habeshaness more than her present condition as member of the arising Ethiopian westernized class: I asked her about the ways she dealt with her Tigrayan origins in Addis Ababa, but her answers immediately drove me to different binaries. Hellen told me that she knew almost nothing of her Tigrayan background and she could barely speak Tigrigna. At home with her

⁶⁹ Italian school, together with the other international schools of the city (the French, the English, the American school) represents an indicator of the high-status Ethiopian society. I will talk deeply about the crucial function of the Italian school of Addis Ababa in chapt.6.

parents she was used to speak Italian and, rarely, the Amharic she learnt at school. With her friends she often used to speak English (see. 4.4.4). Then she added that even among her classmates, ethnicity was not an issue: the only times ethnic origins emerged was during the “cultural week” organized by the Italian school where everyone could wear traditional clothes to celebrate their different ethnic origins. Ethnicity, as well as Ethiopian politics were out of the average discourses. As she told me, they preferred to discuss about “more modern topics”, like homosexuality or sexual prevention. The more I wanted to push her on the issues configuring the present Ethiopian national paradigm (from ethnicity, to religious issues, to the legacy of the colonial and postcolonial Italian presence) the more she distanced from these discourses and, in several occasions, she told me that she was not the right person to answer these questions. Initially, I linked Hellen’s lack of interest in these issues to her western background. We had our conversation in Kaldi’s café, the Ethiopian version of the Starbucks. The way she self-represented looked very similar to many of the Italian women of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I met in Milano: she incorporated the external features fitting the imaginaries on black global culture (from her clothes to the hair style), and strongly differentiated from the hegemonic Habesha discourses on esthetics⁷⁰. During the fieldwork, actually, I had the opportunity to experience that what I initially framed as the reproduction of an incorporated Italian pattern of identification, represented a shared model of identification among her Ethiopian friends and classmates. This process clearly emerged during the Italian school party I attended with Johnny. The setting, the music, the activities they performed were strongly Western-oriented. The vehicular language of the party, was not Amharic, neither Italian, but English. The cultural meanings associated to a black global culture, furthermore, represented an integral part of their joint western behavioral patterns. Among those (like Hellen) joining a black global culture as a self-valuing attribute, blackness did not contrast with the hegemonic Habesha racial order. On the contrary, by producing an isomorphic relation between the black global culture and the western oriented modern paradigm spreading in Ethiopia they reproduced the association of the traditional with backwardness. Within this framework, blackness disentangles from the Ethiopian racial issues, and turns out to be a symbol of what children of migrants defined “progress”, a product of the Ethiopian nation state neoliberal turn.

In this respect, the differential structures orienting Italians of Ethiopian origins processes of incorporation of the difference compared to an hegemonic Italianness (chapt.2) change their structural position. The entanglement between social status and the processes of reproduction of a

⁷⁰ Fieldnotes 23.01.2016.

black global culture in the neoliberal Ethiopia turns out to represent a differential construction aimed at asserting the hegemonic national paradigm. In this perspective, Johnny's association between the rapper Tupac and Ethiopia was more than a joke: it represented a social source aimed at reproducing a sited Habeshanness within the counter diasporic journey.

Conclusions

The exploration of the so-called second-generation return in a mobility perspective, therefore, allows to detach children of immigrants' relation with the ancestral land from a teleological analytical paradigm (Clifford, 1994). In the conjugation of the counter diasporic journey, on the contrary, mobility itself, as a specific attribute connoting a second-generation condition, turns out to represent the crucial aspect regulating their presence, their relational field, their behavioral patterns. The starting point of this perspective lays in an analytical posture reproducing the homeland not as the end of a pretended diasporic journey, but as an interconnected site of a wider mobility space where to conjugate their social condition. This analytical shift allows to overcome an in-betweenness paradigm whose starting point lays in children of immigrants attributed structural doubleness (Silverstein, 2005).

The Italians of Ethiopian origins in Ethiopia, rather than representing their structural condition as a space of incommensurability with the Ethiopian social and symbolic space, navigate their second-generation condition as a source of social legitimation. A legitimation that needs to be explored, in the entanglement of children of immigrants' experience with the structural processes on a micro, meso and macro level reproducing their relation with the ancestral land. Hence, the analysis of the Italians of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic mobility opens an analytical space where institutional processes of nation-state reproduction and historic/political structures intertwine. The present Ethiopian hegemonic ethnic, racial, and discursive panorama, as well as transnational familiar structures, local spaces, networks, enter in the definition of the experience children of immigrants have of the ancestral land. The result of this entanglement, actually, brings to a proper redefinition of the tropes reproducing their social condition, configuring a different meaning of the expression "*Habesha second generation*". The term "Habesha", in fact, rather than representing a space of common identification bridging together children of immigrants with the wider Ethiopian social space, configure as structural order reproducing the present national, ethnic, and racial hegemonic discourse. At the same time, the term "second generation" itself, change its meaning and turns out to represent a category of identification children of immigrants use to socially site in in their ancestral land from a position of privilege. The expression "Habesha second generations" turns out

to be a marker of the entanglement of modernity and mobility, two founding categories of the present Ethiopian neoliberal paradigm, connotating a self-valuing social status. In this perspective, the attribution of a specific differential social positioning in the children of immigrants' everyday experience of the public space, the familiar network, the institutional structures, turns into an ascriptive model aimed at reproducing their relation with the ancestral land.

By framing the *second generation return* as an interconnected field of power relations (Gupta, Ferguson, 1992), therefore, a series of specific social structures arise. In the next chapter I will explore the ways the differential paradigm connotating children experience of the ancestral land intersect the hegemonic structures of Italianness fueling the present Ethiopian postcolonial social space. This interplay produces a field of possibility and constraints and turns out to be the main space of confrontation where to redefine their Habeshanness, and, at the same time, confront their differential Italianness.

Chapter 5: Counter diasporic Italianness: The navigation of a second-generation condition

5.1 Prologue: Foodpaths and Italianness

“Today I want to eat well. You know, in Frankfurt it is very difficult to have a good Italian meal. I have amazing injera¹ almost every day because of my landlady. But it’s been a long time since I had a proper pasta. Here it is cheaper than in Italy and the quality is amazing”².

Johnny pronounced these words after few days of our shared fieldwork experience in Addis Ababa. As I pointed out in the former chapter, it was quite usual for the Italians of Ethiopian origins I worked with to enjoy the cosmopolitan settings of Addis Ababa: restaurants and hotels serving western oriented food were undoubtedly significant places for the people I worked with. They used these places to perform a differential status; a status that sites them in a specific social niche of the city cultural landscape. However, Johnny’s sentence does not seem to exactly match the categories of resemblance and difference I emphasized as a constitutive feature of his social positioning in the counter diasporic project. As a matter of fact, it is possible to see a proper connection between his presence in Addis Ababa and the possibility to have an Italian meal. In his words this possibility is much easier to satisfy in Addis Ababa than in Frankfurt, because of the easier economic access to the Italian restaurants of the city. Under this perspective, Italian restaurants were not just a way to perform his differential status: his socio-economic status in Addis Ababa allowed him to access the Italian restaurants of the city. Furthermore, he emphasized his everyday eating habits in Frankfurt, and particularly the fact that he was used to have injera because of his Ethiopian landlady³, as a justification of his desire of Italian food. From this point of view, among the many meanings that he mobilized to make sense of his presence in Addis Ababa, he represented his ancestral land as a proper site to fill the gap between his mobile lifestyle in Europe and his Italianness. In fact, the practice of going to Italian restaurants was not limited to that particular occasion, but it represented a crucial practice all along the fieldwork; a practice that took different forms across our permanence

¹ Injera (Amharic ኦገጅራ) is a sourdough-risen flatbread with a spongy texture. It is a national dish in Ethiopia and Eritrea. A variety of stews, or sometimes salads are placed upon the injera for serving.

² Fieldnotes 15.01.2016.

³ Johnny found an accommodation in Frankfurt through the Habesha transnational networks (see Chapt.1). I will deeply explain the ways second children of immigrants rely on diaspora network in the making of their transnational mobility paths in chapt. 7.

in Addis Ababa. At the beginning of the fieldwork, we limited our Italian food experience to the occasional visits to the famous Italian restaurants of the city: these places used to be owned by Italian citizens (both white and mixed race) and had high serving standards and expensive fares. However, Italian food became a proper everyday eating habit once we experienced an “Ethiopian-Italian” restaurant in the neighborhood of Bole. Even if the place was run by locals who did not have any explicit connection with Italy and its main customers were middle class Ethiopians, the restaurant served pizza, homemade pasta, and many other Italian dishes in addition to traditional Ethiopian dishes. We were told about this restaurant by Lili, an Italian citizen of Ethiopian origins born and raised in Asmara⁴ who lived for more than 20 years in Milano before moving to Addis Ababa in 2008 with his family. Lili told us that the restaurant was the place where she used to have get-togethers with her old schoolmates of the Italian school in Asmara who moved in Addis Ababa. In her words, the food was as good as in Italy⁵.

The restaurant served not only as one of the main point of reference to orient our dietary habits in Addis Ababa; it turned out to represent a place to meet many of the Italians of Ethiopian origins who moved in Addis Ababa connected with Johnny. During these meetings, it was quite common to comment the quality of the food comparing it to Italy or to the other Italian restaurants of the city: the cooking time of pasta, the tenderness of “Cotoletta alla Milanese”⁶, or the way they prepared pizza, turned out to represent a proper debating point during the meetings. Italian food, under this perspective, represented a source of identification, and it opened to a symbolic space in which exhibiting cultural competence, as well as reproducing a diasporic somewhere else (what Sutton (2001) calls “food memories”) experienced in Italy. The significance of the Italian food as a source of identification is evident in the following ethnographic extract in which Lili talks about his husband Yonas eating habits. Lili and Yonas run a small bar serving different variety of dishes ranging from injera, to club sandwiches and burgers, to pasta. That bar represented one of the reference points all along the ethnography and it happened several times to be there at lunchtime. The first time I ate pasta in there and I asked Lili to make my compliments to the chef, she told me that although she knew the dish was good she never convinced her husband to eat pasta in the bar. She told me that Yonas would have never eaten the quality of pasta they served in the bar, and that in her house they only use Granoro⁷ pasta. Once I asked her how did she get hold of the pasta, she answered by

⁴For a deep understanding of the connection between Asmara, Addis Ababa and Italy see Chapt.1.

⁵ Fieldnotes, 30.01.2016.

⁶ Cotoletta alla Milanese is a fried cutlet similar to Wiener Schnitzel, but cooked "bone-in".

⁷ Renowned label of Italian pasta.

saying that they generally use only “original Italian” stuff when they want to eat or drink Italian style. Then she added that sometimes they directly buy food in the western supermarkets of the city, but, generally, they manage to bring Italian food and beverage directly from Italy, thanks to the people moving between Milano and Addis Ababa. Furthermore, Lili told me that some of Yonas *mixed race* friends were working as employees in the Italian embassy, and sometimes they received presents directly from the food stock of the embassy⁸.

Under this perspective, it is clear that Italian food consumption habits enact powerful structures of identification of crucial importance to reproduce the presence of Italians of Ethiopian origins in their ancestral land. Anyway, the few lines I have just underlined, far from depicting food habits as a mere source of differentiation within the Ethiopian context (see chapt.4) or as a way to deal with diasporic nostalgia (Sutton, 2001), seem to unveil a proper space of interconnection. As a matter of fact, by following the conjugation of Italian food as a tool to convey Italianness (La Cecla, 2007), a variety of powerful social trajectories emerged. By performing their Italian food habits, social actors outlined transnational and regional mobility paths (i.e. transnational and transregional mobility processes between Italy Ethiopia and Eritrea), emphasized different historical processes (i.e. the postcolonial, the pre Ethio-Eritrean conflict configuration), included social actors out of ethnic definitions (i.e. the *mixed race* Italian-Ethiopians, the so-called *meticci*⁹), and referred to unexpected structures of power reproducing an Italianness acting on their everyday life in Addis Ababa (i.e. the embassy). An Italianness to practice and to navigate that - as the Ethiopian restaurant serving “authentic” Italian food clearly shows - seems to be embodied in (rather than disconnected from) the Ethiopian setting. The effectiveness of this intersection turns out to be a crucial factor to frame counter diasporic projects: as Johnny pointed out, months after our research period in Ethiopia, he strongly reconsidered his project of a long-term mobility to his ancestral land after his fieldwork because he felt he had a “too narrow” room for maneuver in Ethiopia. His main explicit motivation lied precisely in his sensation of feeling too tied to people, places, and processes reproducing Italianness. As he said while talking with Marta (a mixed-race Italian-Ethiopian young woman we met in Addis Ababa) during a meeting we had in Milano, he felt he could not make sense of Ethiopia by avoiding the

⁸ Fieldnotes, 28.01.2016.

⁹ The term *meticcio* (mixed race) structurally entails with the production of a racially defined Italianness (Petrovich Njegosh, 2015), and represented the mirror of the Italian colonial and postcolonial paradigm in the Horn of Africa (Giuliani, 2013). The exploration of the structural configuration around this term goes far beyond the scopes of this work. On an historical exploration of the term see Barrera 1996; 2003; 2005. On the problematic nature of the term *Meticcio* see Hawthorne, Piccolo 2016. On the racial navigation of the term in a gender perspective see Pesarini, 2015.

Italian circuits. From one side, he knew that it was the most widespread way for Italians to create a social position in Addis Ababa, from the other, he said he could not tolerate to share his experience of “his country” by risking to end up at the same table with racist Italians explicitly supporting Mussolini and Graziani¹⁰. When Marta said she never had any problems of racism with Italians in Addis Ababa Johnny told her that it didn’t happen just because she looked “white”¹¹¹².

Therefore, the ways in which old and new places connected to Italy intersect with the Italians of Ethiopian origins experience of Ethiopia, seem to be not only performative but especially multifaceted and problematic, composing a proper social field of possibilities and constraints, deeply orienting their practices of the ancestral land. Italianness, shortly, emerges as a central category of analysis in the making of the Italians of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic project. The productiveness of the term “counter diaspora” I use in relation to Italians of Ethiopians origins, under this perspective, is double-sided; from one side, it identifies long term mobility paths that allows to explore the processes of resettlement on a long-term perspective; on the other side the term itself explicitly relates to the place they were born and raised, unveiling its relevance all along the experience of the ancestral land.

5.2 Space and power out of hyphenation. Italianness as the mirror of the second-generation Habesha condition

The performative value of the ties binding Italians of Ethiopians origins to Italianness in Ethiopia not only emerged all along my fieldwork but affected Johnny’s research as well. Despite his research proposals being about investigating the second generations return motivations with a focus on the global diaspora, he had big difficulties to get in touch with subjects out of the Italian networks. As a matter of fact, (out of his kinship local network), the vast majority of his contacts in Ethiopia were closely connected to Italy, and specifically to Milano. From this point of view, the declination of the category of second generation as a specific concept related to the Ethiopian global diaspora (chapt.4) needs to be clarified. Despite its ascriptive value within the Ethiopian setting, and its undeniable institutional discursive performativity in the processes of diasporic nationalism reproduction, the lack of structural connections emerging beyond the inclusive conjugation of the term “second generations” seems crystal-clear.

¹⁰ Johnny refers to the salience of the Club Juventus, and its postcolonial legacy, in the Italians of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic mobility. I will deeply underline this process in chapt. 6.4.3.

¹¹ On the association between whiteness and Italianness see chapt.1.

¹² Fieldnotes, 04.03.2017.

In the contemporary literature on second generations' mobility paths to the ancestral land, it has been strongly pointed out how the representations and the practices connected to home countries emerge as crucial issues¹³. The process of Identification with the home context can emerge whether as a performance of a differential status within the ancestral land (Arnone, 2010), as an external attribution to mark social differentiation (Potter, Phillips, 2006) or as a source to face the structural differences experienced in the ancestral context (Wessendorf, 2016; Christou, 2006; King, Christou, 2008; King, Christou 2010).

These perspectives represent undoubtedly useful analysis of the relation between home context and ancestral land in the investigation of the second generations counter diasporic experience. On the other hand, all of them seem to give little attention on how this relation comes into play. All along these lines of enquiry, the *hyphenation* of second generations belonging turns out to represent a kind of pre-given attribute, activating (voluntarily or involuntary) under specific conditions¹⁴. By assuming the explicit representations of the social actors as the basis of the interpretation, these analytic lines of enquiry risk to be founded on the hegemonic discursive rhetoric of the nation state isomorphism between space and identity, reproducing what Silverstein (2005, p.376) defined as the dialectical relationship between state racial formations and migration studies. Analytical approaches celebrating hybridization as conjunctural performances aimed to navigate a condition of structural differentiation, could underestimate the structural processes of differentiation (Mitchell, 1997) that influence *children of immigrants'* self-representations where individuals see themselves stuck in between two unrelated and discrete cultural worlds. On the contrary, by emphasizing an incorporated hyphenation as an answer to a structural condition of displacement (King, Christou, Ahrens, 2011), these lines of enquiry risks to reproduce a proper racial slot, where second generations become the model of the cultural and racial "halfie" (Silverstein, 2005, p.373). Furthermore, the celebration of the hyphen as a conjunctural space of hybridization, far from de-essentializing hegemonic paradigms of fixity contributes to reproduce them: the hyphenated space of second generations' existence, under this perspective, cannot be anything but perpetually liminal, lacking a context of enunciation that is not the hybridity itself between two

¹³ Among the main contributes on the topic see: Wessendorf, 2013; Potter, Phillips, 2006, 2008; King, Christou, 2011; Christou, 2006; Arnone, 2011.

¹⁴ An exception in this line of enquire is represented by Potter and Phillips (2006, 2008) and the application of a postcolonial paradigm in the analysis of the Bajan-brits return. Despite their attention to the structures of power and race connected to the English colonial rule in the Barbadian society, they framed children of immigrants' tension to English identification as a reaction to the processes of differentiation they experienced compared with the locals. Therefore, the core of their perspective, despite the emphasis on differential power structures, is still an understanding of cultural difference as a pre-given attribute.

bounded cultural orders. In “Beyond culture: space, identity and the politics of difference”, one of the milestones on the relation between space and cultural difference, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) perfectly explain this analytical attitude by framing it as a tendency to analyze cultural difference as a starting point rather than a finished product (p.16). On the other hand, they offer a preliminary way to frame children of immigrants’ experience of the ancestral land differently than incorporated hyphenation. As they outline (p.16):

If we question a pre-given world of separate and discrete “peoples and cultures”, and see instead a difference-producing set of relations, we turn from a project of juxtaposing preexisting differences to one of exploring the construction of differences in historical processes.

In this perspective (p.17):

Cultural difference is produced and maintained in a field of power relationship in a world always already spatially interconnected.

The historicized processes and the axis of power interconnecting Italy to both Ethiopia and Eritrea have been crucial in the making and in the reproduction of the present diasporic configuration (Chapt.1). In this perspective, it seems necessary to investigate the social meaning of this interconnectedness itself, rather than focusing on the conjugation of supposed multiple identifications. This analytical shift allows to re-conceptualize and re-frame the idea of hyphenation itself as a constitutive category fueling a second-generation condition: a re-configuration involving new processes of union, conflation and juxtaposition out of bounded identifications. In fact, Italians of Ethiopian origins should be considered as the main representatives of the relation between of historicized power and politics that hierarchically order a transnational space along the paradigm of difference, rather than representing the flag bearers of a “cultural doubleness” (Silverstein, 2005). Therefore, by shifting the analysis towards the structural processes that reproduce their relationships with the ancestral land as a field of possibilities and constraints, the ascription of conflating power relationship along the boundaries of the nation state represents itself as an outcome of politics of spatial ordering. An ordering in which the power relationships that historically have framed the interconnections between spatially distant locations along a system of structural differences, reconfigure nation state belonging as a crucial source of legitimation. Children of immigrants build their field of existence on that order to navigate as well as to identify and being identified with, within a broader, multiple, and relational space (Massey, 2005). In this sense, in the investigation of the Italians of Ethiopian origins navigation of Italianness as a source to make sense of their counter diasporic project, I will focus on their “practices of Italianness” as the outcome of

the structural processes framing the interconnection between Italy and Ethiopia along the lines of national differentiation. During the fieldwork, Johnny underlined how strange it was to him to rely on Italianness in Ethiopia. He explained this peculiar declination of his relation with the ancestral land by calling into question the fact that it was his first time in Ethiopia outside of the usual holiday period (see chapt.4). It meant he had to spend his everyday life with people who decided to enact medium or long-term counter-diasporic projects, rather than the usual vacationers he had always dealt with. In this perspective, the ascription of Italianness among Italians of Ethiopian origins seems to be directly connected to a deeper expertise of the social dynamics related to the ancestral land. Rather than representing a shelter from cultural clashes, Italianness directly increases its importance with the increasing of their cultural competence of the structural processes reproducing their social condition. Under this light, their performance of Italianness in Ethiopia, as products of different (and even conflicting) historicized processes and differential power relationships (substantiating in definite structural processes and practices as well as in specific places and locations), entangle with their second-generation Habesha condition. In this chapter I will focus on two different counter diasporic paths, focusing on the ways the structures and the representations reproducing their differential Italianness turns out to represent a field of possibilities and constraints in the Italians of Ethiopians origins experience of the ancestral land. By placing the analysis within the juxtaposed axes of power acting on the interconnected transnational space children of immigrants navigate, in this chapter I will consider a *second-generation Italianness* in Ethiopia as a mirror of the structural order acting on their condition not only in Ethiopia but even in Italy. The conflation and the hyphenation of colonial and postcolonial power relationships, neoliberal processes, transnational politics of mobility governance and diasporic transnational structures mirror children of immigrants' social practices of Italianness. These structures differentially order the connection between Italy and Ethiopia, as well as a second-generation Habesha condition (differentiating itself in terms of class and gender) within a transnational social field.

5.3 Marta and the culture-return nexus. Moving as Ethiopian staying as Italian?

5.3.1 Can cultural hybridity stand the test of Ethiopian jokes?

M: I do not want to generalize. This is just a joke. Ethiopians are generally very kind people. If you are in trouble they always try to help you. But I have to say that if everything in your life goes in the right way then they start to be jealous. Since I am here, I use to say almost every time I talk with my mother: I am sorry if I complained about your habits when I was younger. You are definitely the best Ethiopian I have ever met" [...] I don't believe in jinx so I don't mind, but some of my colleagues used to make me jinxes on

my work place. They spoke by themselves while staring at me. They could not accept my wage and my position since I earned 3 times more than them as soon as I was hired. I was very upset because of the way my colleagues used to deal with me and one day I talked with my aunt about this issue. She started to laugh and she said that it was very typical of the Ethiopia, that they are Mek'ñuch¹⁵. Then she told me this joke. One day God came to the hearth. He appeared to an Italian and he said: "Ask me anything. But your neighbor will have twice as much as you". The Italian started to think about God proposal and he said: "I would like to have 6000 Euro per months so I don't have to work anymore". God satisfied his request and in the meanwhile gave 12.000 Euro to his neighbor. Then he went to an American and he asked him the same. The American said he wanted a big villa, with a big TV and a swimming pool. God made it, and his neighbor at the same time had 2 big villas, 2 big TVs and 2 swimming pools. God did the same in every nation. Then he came to Ethiopia and he made the same proposal: "You can have whatever you want but your neighbor will have twice as much as you". The Ethiopian asked to God: "Why my neighbor has to have twice as much as me?" And God answer: "This is the rule". So, the Ethiopian asked: "Please God, make me blind from one eye"¹⁶.

This is an extract of a conversation between Johnny and Marta I witnessed during one of his interviews for his field research. The conversation was about Marta's choice to move from Rome to Addis Ababa, and, specifically, about the influence of her incorporated Ethiopianess as a gauge sustaining her mobility path to the ancestral land. In 2014 Marta moved in South Ethiopia for an international volunteering project, and one year later she was hired from an Italian NGO operating in Addis Ababa. In this respect, Marta can be considered a proper *development agent* (Faist, 2008), operating in her ancestral land. The wide literature on the return migration and development nexus¹⁷ have recently being translated even in the investigation of children of immigrants relations with the ancestral land. As Levitt pointed out (2009, p.1226)

While I agree that the children of immigrants will not participate in their ancestral homes in the same ways and with the same regularity as their parents, I argue that we should not dismiss outright the strong potential effect of being raised in a transnational social field. When children grow up in households and participate in organisations in which people, goods, money, ideas and practices from their parents' countries of origin circulate in and out on a regular basis, they are not only socialised into the rules and institutions of the countries where they live, but also into those of the countries from whence their families come. They acquire social contacts and skills that are useful in both settings. They master several cultural repertoires that they can selectively deploy in response to the opportunities and challenges they face.

¹⁵ The term Mékañuch is the transliteration of the Amharic ጭቀኛች, indicating a person who does not want you to advance in your life. A partial English translation can be "envier".

¹⁶ Fieldnotes, 20.03.2016.

¹⁷ Account of the nexus return-development see Faist, Fauser, 2011.

In Levitt's perspective, as in many eminent studies on the *second generations counter diasporic engagement* (Carling, Erdal, 2014), the implication within an interconnected transnational social field is directly connected to the *embeddedness* of cultural models, social practices, transnational ties and structures orienting their life as "children of immigrants". As Levitt says, second generations "embeddedness" is not necessarily operative; on the contrary, it can be "activated" at any given situation in specific moments of second generations' life paths (p.1228).

Whether individuals ultimately forge or maintain some kind of cross-border connection largely depends on the extent to which they are brought up in transnational spaces [...]. At the point of marriage or childrearing, individuals who previously showed little regard for a parental homeland and culture activated their connections within a transnational field in search of a spouse or values to teach to their children.

Although I think that a transnational perspective is crucial in the understanding of children of immigrants' experience, on the other hand it is necessary to make their *embeddedness*¹⁸ an object of analysis itself, to avoid any cultural essentialization and the "racial slot" of hybridity.

The questions I would like to raise in this paragraph are: why should children of immigrants refer to the ancestral land as a field of possible futures? It is possible to consider their emotional or structural connections to the ancestral land as decisive attributes in the activation of these paths of mobility? And finally, is the counter-diasporic dimension inextricably related to identification and the search for home? In this paragraph, by considering Marta's counter-diasporic paths to Ethiopia, I will try to offer an answer where the structures I have just mentioned represent just a part of a wider frame that it is necessary to consider. As Faist and Fauser noted (2011, p.1) the migration-development nexus it is inextricably related to transnational and national agents, external to migrant transnational ties. I argue that these structures (economical, as well as social and political), representing the results of historicized and interconnected relations of power acting on local as well as transnational level, do not just represent the field of possibilities and constrains the children of immigrants are embedded in (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013). On the contrary, these structures can be crucial in the production of a supposed preexisting cultural identification sustaining the mobility trajectories of the children of immigrants to the ancestral land configuring as proper self-fulfilling prophecies (Grimaldi, 2017).

The extract I outlined at the beginning of the paragraph was a part of a conversation where Marta and Johnny articulated their experience of the ancestral land by continuously shifting their own

¹⁸ *Embeddedness* argument essentializes social relations by reducing them to social capital (see Somers, 2005; Portes, Landolt, 1996), and it essentializes migrant space to a dichotomy between nations-state allegiances (Malkki, 1992; Riccio, 2007).

categories of identifications: Italy as well as Ethiopia could have taken the form of “We” as well as the form of “They”, in a perpetual declination of proximity and distance, configuring the *second generations* experience as a “state of perpetual wandering” (Williams, 1999) between a cultural defined (and interchangeable) “Here” and “There”. Their self-representations of being stuck in between the continuum of a nomadic and a sedentarist metaphysics (Cresswell, 2006) obviously placed cultural diversity (both Italianness in Ethiopia and Ethiopianness in Italy) as the focus of attention.

In the joke I previously underlined, Marta consciously essentialized the term *Mékañuch* as an Ethiopian cultural habit she distanced from. The joke Marta’s aunt told her, under this perspective, represented a proper metaphor she used to explain the difficult relations she had on her work place, as an Italian (of Ethiopian origin) working with ‘local Ethiopians’. Paradoxically, by accepting the paths of differentiation that children of immigrants perform in their ancestral land as a phenomenon based on a pre-existing cultural difference (chapt.4), we should assume Marta’s joke as a starting point of the analysis. Actually, if we assume a pre-existing cultural and structural connection with the ancestral land as Marta’s source of mobilization, at the same time, a pre-existing and essentialized cultural difference compared to the locals did not allow her to elaborate a proper cultural answer to jinxes. It seems quite clear that this point of view, far from representing the explanation of a supposed structural divide orienting children of immigrants’ experience of the ancestral land, reproduces the structural categories (reinforced in the political as well as in the academic discourse) that frames them as the ideal typical model of “racial halfies”. Actually, by considering Marta’s working experience in Ethiopia out of pre-existing cultural identifications, it will be possible to visualize the power relationships (both internal and external, both local and global) she is “embedded” in, as an Italian of Ethiopian origin, and the ways these structures shape her “embeddedness” in an interconnected transnational field.

5.3.2 Cultural competence and counter diasporic mobility. A self-fulfilling prophecy?

T: How was your Amharic before you came in Addis Ababa?

M: I learnt Amharic when I was a child. My mother taught me. although she spoke a good Italian, she preferred to talk with me in Amharic most of the time.

J: That is incredible. It is very rare among Habesha in Milano.

M: She always wanted me to know about the place where she came from. I think she was very clever. I remember that she always told me: “everyone will ask you where you come from. You need to know how to answer”. [...]

J: And do you think your knowledge of the Amharic it is a vantage for you here in Ethiopia?

M: I think that if you want to know more about a place you should be able to communicate with locals.

J: And what about the Job? Did the Amharic help you to find a Job?

M: Not really. In Wolayta¹⁹ the most of the people, especially the elders, spoke very little Amharic.

J: And in Addis Ababa?

M: In Addis Ababa they hired me because of the diaspora card. Language knowledge was not a requirement.

This is an extract of the conversation between Johnny and Marta I mentioned above and it referred to Johnny's (as well as mine) assumption of Marta's counter diasporic project as the result of her pre-existing linkages with Ethiopia, or, in other words, of her embeddedness in the transnational social field linking Ethiopia to Italy. Effectively, Marta's condition seemed to perfectly adhere to the widespread equation between children of immigrants' transnational embeddedness and the activation of counter diasporic projects. Marta was born and raised in Ostia, a neighborhood of Rome on the Tyrrhenian sea. She grew up with her mother (an Ethiopian woman originating from the Amhara region of Gojjam) alone. Her father, an Italian-Eritrean "*meticcio*" whose family was involved in the Ethiopian and Eritrean space since the fascist period, left them when she was only 3 years old. Certainly, Marta grew up "embedded" in a transnational setting; same as the people I worked with in Milano, she was used to call her mother's friends with the term "uncle" or "aunt" (chapt.2), and she was used to spend her summer holidays in Addis Ababa during her childhood. Above all, differently than Johnny and many other Italians of Ethiopian (and Eritrean) origins I met in Milano²⁰, Marta was able to speak a fluent Amharic. So, when she stated that her knowledge of the Amharic was not useful in her job-seeking activities, it sounded quite disorienting to both of us. The conversation was so oriented in finding the connection between her *doubleness* and her counter diasporic project that her following sentence was even underestimated:

M: Actually, I did not decide to come in Ethiopia. I wanted to go to Mozambique. The recruitment office of the international volunteering service chose the destination.

I will soon get back on this controversial sentence, that represents a possible key to understand Marta's commitment to her ancestral land. Preliminarily, I think it is useful to highlight how the conversation between Johnny and Marta ended up: actually, once the assumptions linking her

¹⁹ Wolayita is a Zone in the Ethiopian Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia.

²⁰ Italians of both Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I worked with had a scarce linguistic competence of their ancestral land. Rather than Italy, the different degrees of language competence were strictly connected to the frequent trips in Ethiopia or in Eritrea (see chapt.2).

hybridity to her decision to enact a counter-diasporic project collapsed, the only possible way to come up with her choice turned out to be the emphasis on explicit national identifications:

J: So, you feel more Italian or Ethiopian here in Addis Ababa?

M: I feel totally Italian everywhere, not only here. everywhere I go I always introduce myself as Italian. [...] If I think about my future, I want to live in Italy. If I imagine my ideal partner, he needs to be Italian or at least connected to Italy in some way.

J: That is the deal. After one-hour conversation, we finally made it. For me it should be totally the opposite. I know I will marry a woman related in some ways to Ethiopia. On the contrary, I would have some problems to get engaged to an Italian-Italian woman. I should spend my whole life explaining why I feel Ethiopian even if I was born in Italy. [...] Anyway, I think it is even a matter of repression. [...] some discourses that we do and that *meticci* do. It is totally different. It would have been much easier for me if I was *meticcio* in Italy rather than black. [...] Here it is the same if you go to club Juventus [...] You can claim Italian blood. It seems of no importance to you but I think is crucial²¹.

In this extract, it is possible to point out how the incorporation of the isomorphic relation linking cultural identification to the nation-state, turned out to represent the counterpart of the previous emphasis on cultural hybridity. Under this perspective, during the interview there was a proper oscillation between two opposite and, in parallel, complementary models acting on their second-generation condition. Actually, both cultural hybridity and the equation between nation and culture entered Marta and Johnny's field of representations, configuring as tools used to frame the complexity of social structures defining their counter-diasporic experience in well-established epistemological boundaries. Our lack of attention to Marta's statement about her initial choice to move in Mozambique rather than to Ethiopia precisely mirrors the powerfulness of these structures, that are not only describing but also orienting children of immigrants lifepaths. In fact, cultural hybridity as well as national identifications, apart from analytically obscuring and underestimating crucial processes that reproduce a second-generation condition, risk to represent proper self-fulfilling prophecies. Some months after the interview Marta had with Johnny, I contacted her to clarify the reasons that brought her to choose Ethiopia instead of Mozambique, her initial destination. In her explanation, it is clear how her self-identification as Italian development agent in her ancestral land is inextricably connected to a set of structural attributions of "Ethiopianness" she had to navigate all along her working experience in Ethiopia.

I finally accepted to go to Ethiopia firstly because my mother was very worried about Mozambique. Then, during the selections for the international volunteer service, the recruiters strongly pushed me to go to

²¹ Fieldnotes, 20.03.2016.

Ethiopia. Finally, they sent my CV to an NGO operating in Wolaita. I could have said no, but I had no other options. The alternative was to keep working as a waitress in Ostia. [...] After two months in Ethiopia I understood that it was the best place to gain some working experience. I got in touch with an Italian NGO operating in Addis Ababa and, once I finished with the international volunteer service, I applied for the diaspora card. In this way, they hired me as an Ethiopian citizen paying very few taxes for my contract.²²

Analyzing Marta's working paths diachronically it is possible to see how her initial aspiration of being an "Italian development agent" went through a set of processes of essentialization transforming her in a cultural hybrid to send in her ancestral land and then in a "foreign national of Ethiopian origins" (see Chapt.4) working for an Italian NGO.

As an Italian of Ethiopian origin supposed to work for an Italian NGO in Ethiopia, Marta fitted the imaginary of the cultural halfie (Silverstein, 2005), configuring as the prototype of the cultural broker (De Jong, 2016), the subject in between the developers and the subjects in search of development. In this respect, the celebration of Marta's otherness, underlined a process of structural othering (De Jong, 2016) she was forced in.

At the time of the interview, Marta had already left Ethiopia a couple of months before and she was preparing to move in Sud Sudan as an Italian cooperant. Paradoxically, it was exactly her attributed cultural, as well as national and racial *doubleness* to grant her the possibility to develop her future working career as Italian.

Marta's counter diasporic project undoubtedly represented a field of possibility granting her a job and social mobility: nonetheless it was marked by a set of processes of essentialization, pre-assumptions, and institutional framework forcing her in the epistemologically bounded paradigm of the *hybrid second generation*. Under this perspective, her hybridity rather than representing the starting point of her counter diasporic project, configured as the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy²³. A prophecy emphasizing her postcolonial condition as a source of legitimation and simultaneously obscuring structural phenomenon such as the essentialization of her Ethiopianness in Italy, the Ethiopian policies on diasporic involvement, or the NGO neoliberal strategies she had to navigate all along her experience in Ethiopia. These dimensions, rather than being residuals, strongly influenced Marta's self-identification as "Italian", and played a crucial role in her refusal to emphasize her multiculturalism as a self-valuable attribute. Besides the structural differentiation she experienced in her ancestral land and the emphasis on her Italianness as a source of legitimation

²² Fieldnotes, 11.03.2017

²³ For a wider analysis on the *second-generation return* as a self-fulfilling prophecy see Grimaldi, 2017

and recognition to play in her everyday life, her social positioning can be framed as a proper rejection of the processes of essentialization she had to face to go on with her career.

There is a last aspect in the analysis of Marta's working paths in Ethiopia to take into account: during her working experience, Marta was actively involved in activities of project planning to win European Commission funds addressed to stem irregular migration flows from the Northern Ethiopian borders²⁴. Since 2012 informal mobility across the northern Ethiopian borders to the central Mediterranean Route turned out to represent a major issue in Ethiopian policies. The creation and the implementation of new institutions aimed at controlling the borders and preventing people to leave²⁵ and the interconnection of non-governmental institutions, nation states political agendas, and African and European transnational policies of border control, activated social, economic and symbolic circuits around the phenomenon of forced migrations. In Marta's case, the articulation of the Ethiopian policies on forced migration and the Italian institutional involvement implementing the European trust funds on Migration and Mobility²⁶, turned out to represent a working opportunity and a motivation to extend her stay in Ethiopia. On the other hand, the regimes of mobility interconnecting the Horn of Africa to Italy and Europe and their navigation, have always played a crucial role in the reproduction of the Habesha diasporic space (see chapt.1; chapt.3; chapt.7). In a global scenario marked by an exacerbation of the mobility control, the possibility to move granted by Italian citizenship, but especially the possibility to act on Ethiopian structural immobility navigating the transnational migration regimes can be crucial in the orientation of counter diasporic projects. As I will show in the next paragraph, Italianness, and the intersection of its social and institutional value in the interconnected space of the diaspora can activate parallel circuits of transnational mobility blurring the lines between formal and informal

²⁴ The European Commission trust fund project is called SINCE (Stemming Irregular Migration in Northern and Central Ethiopia) and it "aims to address the root causes of irregular migration in the regions of Tigray, Ahmara and Oromia by enhancing the living conditions of potential migrants and returnees" (see SINCE, European Commission trust fund projects: <https://goo.gl/pLk3LE>).

²⁵ Since 2012, Ethiopian Government transposing the IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework, established the National Council against Human Trafficking and Smuggling. In 2015, the country also promulgated the Proclamation 909/ 2015, "The Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants". In addition to its criminal provisions with regards to aggravated trafficking, this law has provisions dealing with issues related to protection, rehabilitation, and compensation of victims.

²⁶ At the time of the fieldwork, the agreement on international cooperation between the Italian and Ethiopian government (see Cooperazione Italiana informa: *Etiopia, promuovere lo sviluppo contro le migrazioni irregolari*, May, 2016) was in its full definition. In this regard, during my presence on the fieldwork, there was the official visit of the Italian minister of foreign affair (January 2016) and Italian president of the Italian republic (March, 2016) to seal the institutional cooperation between Italy and Ethiopia on border control. In the next chapter I will deeply focus on the social values of the visit of Sergio Mattarella in the production of italianness in Ethiopia and the structural differentiation it enacted compared to a second-generation condition.

migrations. In these circuits, specific gender and class oriented second-generation counter diasporic paths combine with the local projects of transnational mobility. I will consider the phenomenon of the so-called marriages of convenience, involving Italian citizens of Ethiopian origins and locals as an informal source of transnational mobility. By framing this process out of its legal or moral duality, I will question the mobilization of their legal status for economic purposes as an instrumental use of their citizenship, or as a symptom of their structural doubleness. This kind of approach, rather than illuminating on the social meaning of this process, in fact, reproduces the hegemonic paradigms acting on their differential Italianness. On the contrary, by analyzing marriages of convenience in their conditions of possibilities - considering the regimes of mobility they are embedded in, and ethnographically working on the ways the marriages are socially represented - it will be possible to frame this process as a genuine Italian phenomenon. At the same time, it will be possible to analyze how the hegemonic representations reproducing a second-generation condition turn out to represent the field of possibilities to reproduce unexpected constructions of Italianness.

5.4 Children of immigrants' marriages of convenience and the reproduction of Italianness

The investigation of the phenomenon of the children of immigrants' marriages of convenience has necessarily to start from its major outcome: the activation of transnational mobility patterns from Ethiopia to Italy. Therefore, the analysis will start from a preliminary understanding of the Italian regulations over familiar reunification, the process that allows the activation of these mobility paths. After that, I will question the relation binding together this system of transnational mobility and a second-generation differential condition in the Italian setting. I will frame the discursive relationship between their legal status and the way they are socially recognized in Italy, as the condition of possibility to get involved in these informal paths of mobility. Under this perspective, marriage of convenience will be considered a mirror and simultaneously the overturn of the categories of citizenship and cultural identities sustaining a second-generation differential Italianness.

5.4.1 Familiar reunification and children of immigrants. Mirroring the difference

B: When we had our interview, I was in Berlin and she was in Addis Ababa. They asked us the same questions at the same time... They gave me problems with the visa because of one answer. They asked my wife if I preferred to drink tea or coffee. She said coffee but during the interview I told them I preferred tea... I was in Berlin during the interview. I do not like too much coffee there. I drink tea the most of the times. But my wife only saw me in here... Here I drink *bunna* every day, as everyone does, and I like it much more than *chai*. They told my wife: you two got married and you do not even know what your husband prefers between coffee and tea?

J: You know how they make it in Italy...

B: I know. But my marriage is real, why should I act as if it was not?²⁷

This is an extract of a conversation between Johnny and his uncle; they were talking about the trouble he had in the familiar reunification process with his wife. Although he already was a German citizen and at the time of the interview he had already applied for family reunification over one year before, he was still struggling with the German and Ethiopian bureaucracy to obtain his wife's visa. Johnny's uncle experience is strongly indicative of the German government attempts to control and restrict the phenomenon of familiar reunifications. A phenomenon that represents over the 30% of the permanent flows towards the EU (Kasapi, 2016). The European directives of 2003²⁸ on the right to familiar reunification states that "*Member States may conduct specific checks and inspections where there is reason to suspect that there is fraud or a marriage, partnership or adoption of convenience (art.16 phar.4)*". The directive legitimized the strong legislative differentiations among the EU member states and the production of different regimes of mobility. This difference often followed the divergent historicities of the member states about the relation between immigration and emigration. Germany, that since the mid-1950s configured itself as the country of immigration par excellence in Europe (Castles, Miller, 1993, p.127), progressively intensified the controls over the familiar reunification processes (from DNA tests, to the double interviews) framing the phenomenon in a securitarian paradigm (Heinemann, T., Helén, I., Lemke, T., Naue, U., Weiss, M. G, 2014).

The uncle's troubles with the strictness of the German paradigm led his nephew to compare his situation to the Italian setting. Actually, the Italian regulations over the familiar reunification process are extremely distant from the German ones. The overall structure of the discipline is amended from the treaty of Rome (1957) regulating the EU workers familiar reunification process. Since 1986 (legge Martelli), when the first regulation on Extra EU citizens came into place in Italy, the same inclusive paradigm (considering the union of the family a fundamental right) oriented the Italian law on familiar reunification from Extra EU countries (Sirianni, 2006)²⁹. Despite the successive modifications of the law over the years limiting and regulating its applicability, the regulation on the familiar reunification in Italy is still oriented to protect rights rather than securing the borders. The formal dispositive I mentioned before used by German institutions to test the truthfulness of the affective relations in order to concede Visas are not present in the Italian regulation. On the

²⁷ Fieldnotes, 09.03.2016.

²⁸ See Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification, goo.gl/bDdwxi

²⁹ The present legislative dispositions are mainly founded on the 2003 *Testo Unico sull'immigrazione*.

contrary, “self-evident proves” such as the DNA tests, can be used from the applicants as a support to appeal to a previous denial (T.U immigrazione, art.29 comma 1bis). However, the lack of formal dispositive in the identification of possible frauds is counterbalanced from an institutionalization of the legal difference among citizens and migrants all along the application process. In fact, while migrants asking for family reunification in Italy need to satisfy a number of strict economic, social and legal requirements³⁰ (the so called *Nulla Osta* released from *Questura*), Italian citizens applying for familiar reunification with subjects of different legal status are just required to certificate the existence of familiar ties to the Italian consulates abroad³¹. It means that the overall process is subjected to different sets of proceedings depending from legal status. The judgement over “objective impedimental” to proceed with the familiar reunification process, for Italian citizens is only depending from the Italian consulates; on the contrary migrants are subjected to investigations from *Questura* and *Prefettura* as well.

The structures regulating the familiar reunification process in Italy, their inclusiveness and their differentiability, institutionalize the legal status as the dividing line between divergent conditions of possibilities to activate transnational mobility. These structural conditions, for a small number of Italian citizens of Ethiopian origins, may serve as a precondition to enact unconventional ways of reproducing their relationship with the ancestral land.

In the following paragraph I will report the ethnographic experience I had with Max, an Italian of Ethiopian origins in Addis Ababa who turned the Italian differential regulation over family reunification into a Job. The narration of the ways he arranged the marriages, the way he navigated both the Italian and the Ethiopian regulatory system of transnational mobility, and the cultural meanings he enacted to represent his activity will serve as a gauge to explore the entanglement between cultural identity, mobility and space under the citizenship lens.

5.4.2 With brothers is much better. Ethnography of a stakeholder of informal mobility

A. Are you married?

G. I am engaged.

A. So you are not? Maybe we should talk about business rather than my life.

³⁰ Apart the certification of the familiar ties, the requirements for immigrants applying for familiar reunification range from the annual income to the surface of the house and change according to the legal status of the applicant (differentiating between migrants and refugees) as well as for the number of people the application is directed to. See *Prefettura.it*; *Nulla Osta al ricongiungimento familiare* <https://goo.gl/u8ltqC>.

³¹ See Art.29 TU immigrazione.

This is a passage between me and Alma, an Ethiopian woman in her 30s, I met in a party of the Italian school in Addis Ababa. She asked me about my marital status few minutes after I was introduced to her by a group of Johnny's friends I was with. They introduced Alma as the perfect person to know more about the Italian places of Addis Ababa. Effectively, Alma used to be a student at the Italian school of Addis Ababa (she spoke fluent Italian), and she was actively involved in the Italian networks of the city. Furthermore, at the time of the interview, she was about to marry an Italian man of Ethiopian origins and to visit Italy. The possibility to know more about her life path led me not to give so much attention to her "offer". After all, the configuration of the legal status as an activator of transnational mobility represented a steady discursive rhetoric all along the fieldwork (see Chap. 4); in this respect, her allusion seemed to me a way to dialectically mobilize my status due my structurally hegemonic position in the field, as many others were used to do. I avoided deepening Alma's issue about my possible marriage with a joke and I tried to go on with some questions about her experience at the Italian school of Addis Ababa. Actually, few minutes later, we were interrupted by Max, her future husband, who had just arrived at the party. Max was in his 40's and he was born in Rome and raised in Milano by an Italian father (who left him when he was a kid) and an Eritrean woman her father met in Addis Ababa in the 70's. Max lived between Rome, Milano and London until 2011, when he decided to move in Addis Ababa. Since that moment, he has been living in Ethiopia with several incursions in Italy during the year for business reasons. When Alma introduced us, she told him about our conversation and about my research plans. Then she added that I was not married. Max said that I had been in Ethiopia for enough time to fall in love and he started laughing. Then he left. After few minutes he came back and, with the same irony of his previous sentence, he added that I only had to say "*Sì, lo voglio*"³² and he would have done all the rest. When I replicated by saying that I was already in a relationship, he said that I would see my wife only during the ceremony, because she would have much better plans than living with me in Italy for the rest of her life. Although I refused his proposal, he kept on talking with me. He told me about the tough life he had before he moved to Ethiopia and his present situation of wellbeing in his ancestral land. He told me about his projects to go back to Italy with his future wife and to have a fresh start. All along the conversation, he remembered how he made his living as a street kid. He oscillated between the stories of the hip-hop culture differences between Milano and London, or the best clubs in Europe, and his activities as a drug dealer or as a thief to earn his living. The longest parts of his stories, the most vivid and detailed, were about the situations where he found himself

³² "*Sì lo voglio*" is the Italian ceremonial phrase to accept the marriage.

forced to fight because someone disrespected him. He talked about the acts of violence he perpetrated once he found the “guilty person” as well as the tactics, and the traps he elaborated to take revenge on someone. Effectively, all along his monologue he underlined that he only cared about respecting and be respected and that the only damnation in life was to sit doing nothing and complain³³.

Surprisingly, Max was more than happy to speak about his life path. He seemed to have no problems to talk about how criminal activities entangled with his everyday life. On the contrary, he tended to emphasize this aspect of his life as a source of legitimation. The strategies of representation he chose to enact, perfectly matched with my research interests. In the following weeks, we met several times and little by little he transferred the self-representations he initially connected to a previous life to his present condition in Ethiopia³⁴. He used to emphasize that he had no one to rely on in Addis Ababa, and that he had to take care of his future wife. For those reasons, he was forced to make a big amount of money, and in his words, it was impossible with the Ethiopian average income. He depicted Ethiopia as a paradise if you have enough money to live a western high standard life and, conversely, as the worst hell if you are broke. During his accounts, he talked about the various ways he earned his living in Ethiopia, blurring the lines between formal and informal economy as well as mixing legal and criminal activities. During the several meetings we had, he explained me the ways he organized the weddings between Italian men and Ethiopian women, and every time he added new details. Firstly, he spoke about his income as a stakeholder, saying that once he managed to arrange five weddings in one year it was enough to make a living in Addis Ababa. The amount was equally divided between him and the spouse. He used part of his share to cover the fixed costs of the operation, such as the plane tickets for the groom or the revenue stamps to register the wedding or to submit the familiar reunification requests. Max talked about his duties during the process: he organizes the wedding and the transcription at the Italian embassy in Addis Ababa. After that, he sends the marriage certificate to the groom’s place of residence. Once the marriage is officially registered in Italy it is necessary to go to the Ethiopian Embassy in Rome and to apply for the bride’s passport. This procedure may cause problems and delays and Max is forced to travel to Italy to solve it. Once the bride’s passport is ready, at the immigration office in Addis Ababa it is possible to apply for the familiar reunification at the Italian embassy in Addis Ababa and

³³ Fieldnotes, 15.01.2016.

³⁴The following ethnographic extracts stems from frequent and jagged encounters I had between January and March 2016 during my permanence in Addis Ababa.

to have the Visa. When I asked him about the costs he said that it was quite the same as the total amount people have to pay to cross the Mediterranean Sea. But it was safer. Then he added that now prices are decreasing compared to some years ago and that, until 2014, it was possible to make real money with Eritreans, but now they do not allow them to leave anymore³⁵.

One day, Max called Johnny and asked if we were up for a night out. He had to meet with Graziano, a friend of his who just arrived from Italy. Graziano was born in Asmara and moved to Italy in 1974 with his family - who managed to demonstrate Italian ancestors (see chapt.1) - when he was 1 years old. Although he had no memories of Ethiopia (the last time he visited the country, together with Eritrea, was before 1998) he would have stayed in Addis Ababa just for a couple of days: after that, he would have left for a one-month trip around central Africa. All night long Max celebrated himself as the person who made Graziano's trip possible. Anyway, Graziano did not seem to enjoy it. Noticing his lack of enthusiasm, Max tried to generate hilarity in the group. He turned to us and said: *We have to understand the guy. He is nervous because tomorrow he is going to get married. Once the laughs stopped, he added with the same ironical tone: Relax. No one will ask you anything. Just in case, say that your family organized it.*

At the end of the night I asked Max how did he meet Graziano. He answered that he barely knows him and it was one of his contacts who introduced them. Then, when I asked him if he only works with Italian-Habeshas or with Italian-Italians as well, he replied that he has no problems to work with everyone, but with his brothers it was much better.

Once we came back home, Johnny wanted to stress his non-involvement in this process. He said that he, as most of the people he knows in Milano, had nothing to do with marriages of convenience. In his words, he stressed this point not because he wanted to judge people like Max or Graziano, but because he did not want me to have an incorrect representation of the people in Milano. At the same time, he said that he could not deny that these situations existed and some people he knew decided to do it³⁶.

³⁵ This data is impressive if confronted with the marriage registrations between Italians and people of other nationalities celebrated above: with particular reference to the city of Milano, it is possible to note how from 2014 the number of residents who married abroad with Eritrean citizens dramatically decreased. See http://www.sciamlab.com/opendatahub/it/dataset/c_f205_132. Comune di Milano, Popolazione: matrimoni con almeno un coniuge residente a Milano (2011-2015) (last visit, 15.05.2017).

³⁶ Fieldnotes, 9.03.2016.

5.4.3 Italians of Ethiopian origins marriages of convenience as the triangulation of place, mobility and cultural identification

In the previous paragraph, Max's experience surely marked an unconventional way of mobilizing Italian citizenship in a transnational social field. In the understating of its social meaning it is necessary to start from crucial question. The analysis of the motivation that led him to organize the marriages is structurally bonded with the understanding of the reasons that led him to talk about marriages of convenience with a stranger as I was. This question is all but naïve and its answer cannot be found in the celebration of the Malinowskian ethnographic chameleon myth (Geertz, 1974 p.27), the ethnographer's magic (Malinowski, 2002 [1922]. P.5) penetrating the deepest secrets of its study's object. All along the fieldwork, I had to relate with the relation between what was possible to say and what remained unsaid among children of immigrants (Grimaldi, 2015), with the secrecy of vast fields of experience generating "public secrets" that everyone known but no one talked about (Massa, 2016a, p.181). Marriages of convenience can normally be ascribed under this domain: among the Italian men of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I worked with in Milano, it was not rare to hear allusions about this phenomenon. At the same time, at least in my presence, the discussion was always blocked with a series of mechanisms of protection (i.e laughs or jokes) diverting the discourse to other domains. The tactical mobilization of Italian citizenship that makes the marriages possible, under this perspective, represented a form of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 2014 [1996]) I had to be external from. At the end of the previous paragraph, I emphasized Johnny's necessity to clarify his non-acquaintance to Max's social environment and to stress the limited extension of the phenomenon of the marriages of conveniences among the people of his Milanese network. Johnny's position was not just related to his worries about my moral judgments. Max self-representations as a stakeholder transferred the marriages of convenience issue into the domain of the speakable, regardless of its social shared secrecy. The shared choice among children of immigrants in Milano to site marriages of convenience out of the domain of the speakable is all but a form of incorporation of their ancestral ethnic habitus. All along the fieldwork, in fact, first generations' diaspora had always represented the informal navigation of the transnational regimes of mobility as a constitutive part of their narratives. Under this perspective, the generational divide in the ways of framing their informal transnational engagement suggests to analyze the phenomenon from a different perspective. Marriages of convenience can be a powerful lens to investigate the ways Italianness entangle with a second-generation condition.

5.4.3.1 I side: *Marriage of convenience and cultural identification*

In their illuminating work on children of immigrants in Italy, Colombo, Domaneschi and Marchetti (2009, p.60) stressed the common perception among Italian children of immigrants to conceptualize citizenship as a set of obligations and behavioral norms rather than as a formal status. Considering the age-range of the people I worked with, almost all of them had to “gain” (whether from their parents or autonomously) Italian citizenship. Among the formal requirements to apply for Italian citizenship, the ones who were not born in Italy had to provide a certificate of “good behavior”, attesting the absence of criminal records. Under this perspective, for children of immigrants, the process of citizenship acquisition associates the Marshalian definition of citizens as “free and equal members of a political community” to a moral paradigm, formalizing the rhetoric of the good citizen (Lister et.al, 2003) as a precondition to a full formal recognition. On the other hand, the moral connotation of the citizenship acquisition process represents a mirror to reproduce the differential paradigm Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins are embedded in their everyday lives. The conflation of race and cultural identification sustaining the reproduction of Italianness, structurally site them in a condition of moral exposition: the good citizen paradigm represents a gauge to avoid group stigmatizations as well as a de-legitimation of their condition of Italians. Within this structural paradigm, it seems logical to keep the issue of marriages of convenience out of a foreign (and socially connoted) gaze, to avoid what Johnny’s defined as a “false representation”. Cultural intimacy served to prevent the activation of a differential paradigm acting on a second-generations condition, and framing a process involving few Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins through the moral lens of their instrumental use of Italian citizenship, their disloyalty to the national community, their commitment to illegality.

Under this perspective, Max decision to speak openly about marriages of convenience did not only contrast the Italian system regulating transnational mobility, but seemed to infringe a shared social rule. It is then crucial to understand his decision to openly convey his role of stakeholder although he was aware of the sensitiveness of the issue and he was well placed in the children of immigrants social setting of both Rome and Milano. What made him *different* from the Italians of Ethiopian origins I met in Milano? To what extent he decided to break with the “good citizen” paradigm in his explicit representations?

5.4.3.2 II side: *marriages of convenience and (social/spatial) mobility*

Second generation’s theorists have long worked on the relation between inclusion and exclusion in the experience of young people of migrant background compared to their familiar setting and their

embeddedness in a transnational field. The segmented assimilation theory (Portes, Zhou, 1993) and especially the concept of downward assimilation (Portes, Rumbaut, 2001) have long served as a reference point to approach children of immigrants' social segmentation (see chapt.2). Downward assimilation theories places in the dissonance between parents and sons' acculturation in the receiving contexts the risks for children of immigrants to drop in rainbow underclass (Waldinger, Feliciano, 2004). On the contrary, segmented assimilation theory emphasizes the so called selective acculturation, described as the possibility for the children of immigrants to *select* the cultural traits of two different social settings, as the basis to reach successful paths of social mobility due to the progressivity of the acculturation process within an ethnically connotated supportive context (Portes Rumbaut, 2001, p. 54). This model has been widely criticized for its inattentiveness to crucial issues such as gender, class and race in children of immigrants' downward assimilation (Waldinger, Feliciano, 2004), as well as its emphasis on the ethnic background, rather than long term policies, as a gauge leading to successful paths of social mobility (Waters, et al. 2010, p. 1178). Transnational approach on children of immigrants (chapt.4), connecting spatial to social mobility, does not seem to distance from the conjugation of an ethnic paradigm as a gauge for upward mobility, despite its widely demonstrated little evidence (Thomson, Crul, 2007). Max's experience clearly demonstrates it: his counter diasporic journey brought him to enter the diasporic social circuits, and to develop a deep knowledge of the regimes of transnational mobility uniting Italy to Ethiopia. From the structures regulating the familiar reunion process in Italy to the procedures to obtain the Ethiopian passport, to the formal and informal limitations and possibilities on a micro, meso, end macro level (Faist, 1997) acting on transnational mobility from Ethiopia to Italy, Max had to develop a multilayered set of diasporic competences. He used these competences in a field of informality to perform his role of stakeholder rather than changing his condition on the model of the multicultural citizen. On the contrary, he conjugated the ethnic paradigm sustaining the hegemonic representations on children of immigrants for business reasons. Max, shortly, showed the ways a *second-generation* Italian citizenship connecting with a supposed ethnic tension to the homeland and a set of pre-comprehensions turns the concept of culture into normative models (Boon, 1982). While talking with Graziano the night before his *wedding*, Max clearly showed this process: the supposed cultural adhesion to the category of *second generations* may justify a marriage without any previous demonstrated meeting.

The phenomenon of the arranged marriages among schildren of immigrants in Italy has been widely considered as a residual practice (Quierolo Palmas, 2006), and frequently as a gendered and forced

process (Castelli, 2014): on the contrary, the differential paradigm acting on children of immigrants - assimilating their social experience within an ethnic paradigm - sites marriages of convenience in the field of cultural possibility. By turning upside down the *cultural doubleness* paradigm, Max produced a field of economic mobility for people of his same social background. A social background that is certainly not the Ethiopian or Eritrean ancestral heritage: as most of the men I worked with in Milano, Max grew up in the suburbs, in close contact with urban marginality and informality. Far from the “good citizen” paradigm portrayed as the reference point to confront the children of immigrants condition, he experienced Italy as a space where crime and everyday life come together (Pine, 2012). He recruited “his brothers” to arrange marriages of convenience within this reference space: a shared ethnic belonging represented only an added value to facilitate the process on an institutional level. Shortly, his social frame of action was not ethnicity but class. That said, differently than the most of Italians of Ethiopian or Eritrean origins, (as well as of the vast majority of the people living in those contexts), he deliberately crossed the contact zone (p.11) between legality and illegality. In his counter diasporic journey, he only expanded his *art of making do*, the ways he socially constructed as “Italian”, from a local to a transnational level. Shortly, Max’s selective acculturation (Portes, Zhou, 1993) made him conjugate his diasporic engagement as a source to reproduce his embeddedness to a precise segment of the Italian social space.

5.4.3.3 *III side: marriage of convenience and place*

It is now possible to turn to the starting question. Why Max decided to openly talk about his activity of stakeholder? Despite the different individual choices distancing Max from the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I met in Milano, the social setting they were raised in and their condition was very similar. Rather than flattening the analysis on individual paths or concentrating on the structures influencing their social condition (Riccio, Scandurra, 2008, p.211), it could be useful to approach the children of immigrants’ different ways to deal with marriages of convenience focusing on the way their context acted on their self/group representations. In this perspective, the main reason that led Max to talk openly with me was the way he conjugated his counter diasporic path to Addis Ababa. The emphasis on his status, as well as his cultural and racial differentiation, did not only serve as mechanism to distance from the larger Ethiopian setting (chapt. 4). His job, as well as his social reputation, was bonded indissolubly to the recognition of his Italianness. In his experience of the ancestral land, the Italian places of Addis Ababa represented the most significant circuit to reproduce his everyday life. It means that, differently than the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I worked with in Milano, Max self-represented himself as Italian. I site in this process of

contingent differentiationMax's decision to talk openly with me about marriages of convenience. By framing his activity in the cultural domain of Italianness, he had no problems to talk explicitly about that. Rather than allowing me to access the domain of a supposed Habesha second-generation cultural intimacy, Max framed the marriage of convenience as a self-valuable representation to reproduce his Italian *art of making do*.

Under this perspective, marriages of convenience and their representation clearly show how place, mobility and cultural identification, triangulate in the making of a second-generation condition. By changing one of its sides, specifically the relation between place and power in mobility (Gupta, Ferguson, 1992), different understandings of cultural identification arise. Out of a differential paradigm framing children of immigrants as the representatives of cultural, racial and territorial doubleness, marriages of convenience, rather than representing the proof of their insufficient Italianness, turn out to be a way to reproduce a specific, socially sited, and culturally shared process aimed at navigating their differential condition.

Conclusions

Italianness, in this perspective, configure as a structure to socially navigate in order to make sense of Italians of Ethiopian origins experience of the ancestral land. Children of immigrants' mobilization of Italianness, in fact, opens a field of possibilities and constraints, where their second-generation condition turns out to configure as a site of social legitimation, as well as a space of incorporation of the social difference. By analyzing the *second generation return* in a mobility perspective, the interconnectedness between two spatially separated contexts emerges as a constitutive feature of the counter diasporic journey. This perspective allows to shed light to the effectiveness of the structural processes reproducing a second-generation condition in in the ancestral land. At the same time, the analysis can focus on the tactical ways children of immigrants incorporate, contest, or reproduce the attributions reproducing their differential Italianness.

This constitutive relation entangles with the processes they have to navigate in order to socially site in this interconnected space. The analysis, therefore, allows to work on widespread tropes in the investigation of children of immigrants *reutrns* to the ancestral land under a different perspective. The second generation-development nexus, as well as the instrumental use of the citizenship, can be investigated as the result of interconnected axis of power intersecting children of immigrants' social experience. Performative structures that represent the product of stratified power relationship whose investigation allows to overcome an analytical perspective that bounds children of immigrants in an in-between paradigm.

The navigation of the interconnected space of Italianness, actually, does not imply that the structures reproducing the Italian national paradigm represent just transnational reverberation. The structural processes reproducing the Italian postcolonial paradigm in Ethiopia turn out to represent a space of ongoing confrontation, incorporation, opposition, in order to reproduce the Italians of Ethiopian origins experience of the ancestral land. In the next chapter I will draw on these structures reproducing a hegemonic Italianness in Ethiopia, and consequently, the Italians of Ethiopian origins structurally differential condition. In this perspective, the analysis will focus on the ways the structures reproducing Italianness out of the national space, reproduce a second-generation condition in mobility.

Chapter 6: Italianness in Addis Ababa and the making of differential Italians

6.1 Introduction

As it emerged in the previous chapter, the discursive value of Italianness is strongly tangible in the Ethiopian social space. Far from representing a mere source of identification or an attribution, it substantiates in a series of socially connoted cultural practices and places. In this chapter, I will focus on the different meanings Italianness may have in Addis Ababa relating to its social function. Undoubtedly, the Italian colonial and postcolonial presence in Ethiopia structurally forged the imaginaries of the Italianness as a discursive space of structural differentiation from the wider Ethiopian social space (chapt.1), where the *other's* structural subordination represents a key mechanism of its reproduction (Proglio, 2016, p.8). As I will show all along this chapter, this configuration of Italianness is all but disappeared in the present Ethiopian social space: its pervasiveness, on the contrary, is under a process of continuous resignification, according to the structural processes leading to its activation. This perspective, on the one hand, allows to consider how Italianness in its hegemonic connotation connects to a scenario of structural privilege within the Ethiopian social space. On the other hand, it allows to explore the ways it reproduces along its internal lines of differentiation, turning to be a central issue in children of immigrants' counter diasporic experience. Italianness, as an intersection of gender, race, class, and status, reproduces itself as a stratified discourse, where internal differential otherness turns out to be a key factor in its social reproduction as a hegemonic construct. Framed as structurally different, children of immigrants, similarly as the first-generation returnees from Italy to Ethiopia or the so called *meticci* are necessarily confronted with this stratification.

Therefore, this process raises a question: why should differentiated subjects aim at identifying as Italians in their ancestral land? Or why should they join the places where they are constantly confronted with an hegemonic Italianness? In this chapter, drawing from the experience of what it is possible to define as mobile *differential Italians* (first-generation returnees and children of immigrants enacting counter diasporic paths of mobility in Ethiopia) I will try to answer to these questions. In order to make sense of this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to consider Italianness as a floating signifier, whose attributions and performances may turn according to different structural situations. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the ways Italianness may represent a self-valuable source to act in the wider Ethiopian social space. As I have already

underlined (chapt.4), the adhesion of the Ethiopian nation state to a developmental paradigm, made western oriented imaginaries, spaces, and practices, a central source of recognition and a way to perform a self-valuable status. The structural configuration of the Ethiopian social space, therefore, is central to make sense of what it is possible to define as a mobile *differential Italianness*. Rather than a nostalgia for their life in Italy, or an incorporation of practices and discourses they brought back in the ancestral land, their self-ascription as Italians allows them to enact a process of social recognition, to attain their status, to work their Habeshanness. I will call this set of cultural representation as “non-hegemonic Italianness”.

The performative value of this process, rather than being confined in a subjective dimension, is inscribed in the physical places symbolically conveying Italianness in Addis Ababa (I will consider the Italian school and the Club Juventus in Addis Ababa). The reconfiguration of Italianness as a gauge to enter the cosmopolitan niche of the city, modified those places’ internal structures, explicit discourses, and aims, in order to adapt to the present situation. However, this configuration does not prevent children of immigrants to face a set of social constrictions. Their performance of Italianness as a source of identification, may lead them to incorporate their differential condition when they confront themselves with its hegemonic representations. Far from being separated, I will underline how hegemonic and non-hegemonic representations about Italianness structurally overlap, and reconfigure along differential power relationships in order to reproduce the same discursive order as in Italy.

In this perspective, it will be possible to consider the entanglement between identification and social space in the reproduction of Italianness in Ethiopia, and its oscillation from a self-valuable source to a space of incorporated difference.

In the first part of this chapter, drawing on the Milanese first generations returnees’ practices of identification with Italian symbols, discourses, and processes, I will show how the performace of Italianness as a source of differentiation within the Ethiopian setting allows to value their social positioning as Ethiopians. Particularly, I will draw on two processes of social identification related to Italy (the celebration of the catholic Easter in spite of an Orthodox religious belonging, and the construction of a Milanese returnees’ association in Addis Ababa) deconstructing their performance of Italianness as the background of their previous Italian experience or as a nostalgia for their Milanese diasporic life.

In the second part of the chapter, I will consider the Italian school of Addis Ababa, a public institution fully funded from the Italian government, as a site of reproduction of a non-hegemonic Italianness.

By diachronically considering the structural shifts in the Italian involvement in Ethiopia, I will explore how the lack of an Italian identification among the students of the Italian school, far from underlining a process of cultural resistance to an imposed acculturation, can be inscribed in the institutional function of the school itself. Considering the students' structural constraints on a social, economic, racial and legal level when confronted with Italy, it will be possible to explore the social function of the Italian school, as a site of production of non-hegemonic Italianness.

Finally, I will explore the social function of the Club Juventus, a crucial reference space for the Italian community in Addis Ababa, as a site where hegemonic and non-hegemonic representations of the Italianness coalesce, as well as a mirror of the postcolonial Italian presence in Ethiopia. Drawing on the experience of children of immigrants frequenting the place, Club Juventus will emerge as a site of social identification, as well as a space of incorporation of a differential condition. Particularly, I will analyze how the activation of the hegemonic categories sustaining Italianness (I consider the visit to the club of the president of the Italian republic Sergio Mattarella) may cannibalize any other meaning associated to a non-hegemonic Italianness, leaving children of immigrants without any other source of recognition but their legal status. In this perspective, I will explore the work of the Italianness in the Club, and its configuration as a site of production of what it is possible to consider as a *bare citizenship*.

In the intersection of the counter diasporic mobility with hegemonic construction of space and cultural identification, Italianness in Ethiopia emerge as a central category to better explore the processes of reproduction of an Habesha second-generation condition.

6.2 Tigrayan returnees from Milano to Addis Ababa: the social value of the Italianness in the Ethiopian social space

Since the takeover of the TPLF as the hegemonic force in Ethiopia, there was an ever-greater flow of Tigrayan people from the global diaspora who decided to get involved in the coming nation building process. Almost the totality of them belonged to the so-called "generation nationalism" and were politically involved in the longstanding war against the Derg from afar. In the conversation I had with Yonas, a Tigrayan returnee from Milano to Addis Ababa, he emphasized the political dimension of his previous diasporic engagement. He was used to say that the *Woubè* (ወ.ድብ) represented the main source of identification when he was in Milano. The *Woubè* was exactly the Tigrayan political activism aimed at the Ethiopian liberation from the mid 70's to Mengistu's fall. The structural interconnection between diaspora and homeland, all along the Tigrayan political struggle against the Derg (see chapt.1), led the most influential subjects in Diaspora to consolidate

good relationship with the constituting (TPLF driven) ruling class of the Ethiopian nation state. Many of them, as Yonas did, decided to return to Ethiopia, with their family and their children born and raised in Italy. In their journey back, they profited of their previous political involvement, and, similarly to the most influential people who struggled on the battlefield, they were offered privileged working position and low-price housing (see chapt.4). However, despite their Tigrayan political involvement represented the main source to activate their paths of mobility to Ethiopia, many of them remained structurally connected to Italy. Far from simply keeping in touch with their diasporic network, they continuously perform explicit practices of Italianness in Addis Ababa, and they are structurally involved in the Italian institutional circuits of the city, such as the Italian school (see 6.3) or the Club Juventus (see 6.4). In this section, I will consider two situations where their practices of Italianness seem to transfer the diasporic practices they lived in Milano during their youth in their daily life in Addis Ababa. Particularly I will investigate the choice of Yonas's family to celebrate Catholic Easter despite their Orthodox religious belonging, and the creation of the Milano *Mahber*, an association operating in Ethiopia and made by only Milanese returnees. In the first case, I will question whether the celebration of the Roman Catholic Easter during Orthodox Fasting time can be inscribed as a syncretic practice resulting from their previous diasporic experience. In the second case, I will investigate the social function of the *Mahber*, questioning its relevance as a vector of diasporic *nostalgia*. In both cases, it will be possible to consider the social value of Italianness out of its spatial and symbolic circuits, configuring as a crucial source to work the present Ethiopian scenario.

6.2.1 The fasting Easter. Religious Syncretism or performance of Italianness?

I was invited to Yonas's house with Johnny to celebrate Catholic Easter. We met his daughters, Hellen and Sara, in front of the Roman catholic church of St. Salvatore, in the central neighborhood of Stadium. They attended the catholic Easter mass in Italian; once the mass finished, we moved to their house for the Easter lunch. On the way to their home, I asked Hellen the reasons of this celebration since they professed themselves as Ethiopian Orthodox. Hellen told me that she attended the mass to accompany her younger sister Sara since many of her friends of the Italian school attended the celebration. Sara herself was used to meet in the oratory of the church with her classmates every week. Then Hellen added that despite the differences, it was the same religion¹.

¹ Fieldnotes, 26.03.2016.

The ethnographic extract refers to the celebration of the Roman Catholic Easter in a family of Ethiopian returnees from Milano to Addis Ababa. Particularly, it emphasizes the choice of two Italian young women of Tigrayan origins to attend the religious celebrations in the Italian church of Addis Ababa despite their religious self-ascription as Ethiopian Orthodox. In 2016, the Ethiopian Easter (*Fasika*) would have been celebrated more than one month later²; therefore, the Roman Catholic Easter was in the midst of the Ethiopian Orthodox great fasting time (*Tsom*), a period of 56 days of dietary abstention from animal products and limitation of alcoholic beverages³. In the following description of the Easter meal in Yonas and Lili's home it is possible to note the ways fasting and *feasting* codes comingled.

Once we reached Yonas and Lili's home, we found seven more guests, all of them men. Five of them were Ethiopians (both Amhara and Tigrayans) who moved to Italy during the 80's or 90's and then returned to Addis Ababa. Two of them had never moved from Addis Ababa and they were close friends of Yonas. The vernacular language was Amharic but they often shifted in Italian, in English or in Tigrayan depending on the interlocutors of the conversation. None of the people celebrating the catholic Easter was effectively a catholic, and the most of them (including Mila) strictly followed the Ethiopian Orthodox fasting rules. Lili explained us that she prepared two different buffets on two different tables. On both of the tables she mixed Ethiopian and Italian traditional dishes, but only on one of them she included cheese and meat. Lili herself did not eat any feasting food; she said that it was unfair to prepare only fasting dishes in holyday. Her husband, on the contrary, apart from eating feasting dishes, took this time to serve us the wine he received from Italy. We spent the Easter meal eating lasagna and drinking Ribolla gialla and Amaretto di Saronno.

The returnees' family choice to celebrate the Roman catholic Easter during Orthodox Ethiopian fasting time seems to immediately recall to a perspective that associates their apparent syncretic religious practices to the processes of acculturation they experienced in Italy. Fasting Easter, in fact opens to a set of questions: where do these practices stem from? Can we trace them back to the migration paths of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Tigrigna speakers who moved to Milano since the late 70's? And finally: can these practices be analyzed in the domain of religious belonging alone? To answer this question, it is necessary to preliminarily consider the Milanese diasporic setting during Yonas and Lili's Youth.

² The Ethiopian calendar serves as the liturgical year for Christians in Eritrea and Ethiopia belonging to the Orthodox Tewahedo Churches, Eastern Catholic Churches and Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. While the Roman Catholic Easter was on March 27th, *Fasika* would have been celebrated on 1st of May.

³There are 7 official fasting periods for Ethiopian Orthodox, for a total of 180 fasting days.

It is undeniable that Roman catholic church played a decisive role in the making of the Milanese diaspora (see chapt.1). Italian catholic missions were among the main vehicles to activate gendered working mobility paths to Italy (Marchetti, 2009; Ambroso, 1987). Once in Milano, the role of the Roman Catholic Church was even stronger: within the Ethiopian and Eritrean Milanese community, it is a recursive narrative to underline the crucial role that the Eritrean Capuchin Priest Padre Marino (see Chapt.1) played for the diaspora. Besides his fundamental role as social, economic, and legal stakeholder between the diasporic community, the homeland and the larger social space of the city (Arnone, 2010), he was the religious guide of the Milanese diasporic Christian community, regardless of their religious belonging. As Ambroso (1987) and Arnone (2010) reported, Padre Marino celebrated Masses in Tigrigna or in Geez, and he mixed Orthodox and Catholic practices and rituals. Only after 1993, with the independence of Eritrea, the separation of the Eritrean Tewahedo church from the Ethiopian, and the growing of the political tension between the two states, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches developed in Milano (Arnone, 2010, p.28).

This process of religious separation is very indicative: despite the pervasive and the long-term culture-contact (Peel, 1968) between Catholic and Orthodox faiths among the Ethiopian and Eritrean Milanese diaspora, the political overturns in the homelands led to the need of a separation of the worships. As Tabacco (2001) and Mezzetti and Stocchiero (2005) noted, the social function of the catholic-orthodox church itself and its related activities (see Chapt.1) gradually lowered as the hostility among the Ethiopian and Eritrean nation states increased.

This overview of the Milanese religious coalescences and shifts, may serve as the starting point to frame the fasting Easter in Addis Ababa. During the meal, I tried to explore the continuities between the religious setting Yonas and Lili lived in Milano, and their choice to celebrate Easter during fasting time. All of the guests were very open in talking about the links between religion and the community and emphasized the role of Padre Marino and its social relevance in the diasporic context; on the contrary, they had no interest in emphasizing a link between their experience in Milano and their present choice to celebrate the catholic Easter. Actually, the evasiveness of their answers on the reasons to celebrate catholic Easter as Orthodox, made my questions appear inappropriate. Actually, during the meal I figured out that my questions turned to be a way to question their social identification and their social status rather than their religious belonging⁴.

⁴ I will later explore in this chapter (6.4) the ways Italianness can be questioned in the analysis of Italians of Ethiopian origins involvement in the Italian social spaces of Addis Ababa.

Their previous Milanese Catholic-Orthodox experience, in this perspective, rather than representing the basis of their apparent syncretic religious orientation, may help to understand the ways religious practices entangle with broader political and social phenomena. Feasting during fasting needs to be explored out of a pretended cultural heritage, but as a way to site in a social context oriented from a system of power relationship; following Baumann (1999, p.66) it requires to shift the social function of religious belonging from a *baggage* to a *sextant*.

Baumann, drawing on Asad's work on the construction of religion as an anthropological category (Asad, 1983) argues that "*while all religions claim to have an immutable core, even the meaning of that core changes as it is reasserted in new circumstances*" (p. 69). If we turn to the Milanese diasporic experience of religious intersection, the risk is precisely to decontextualize religious belonging from the broader social space. By detaching religious belonging from the power relations orienting and siting diasporic social practices, the apparent catholic-orthodox syncretism of the Ethiopians and Eritreans in Milano turns out to represent the paradigm of a culturalist view of religion as well as a tribalist view of culture (Al-Azmeh, 1993; Baumann, 1999)

In these respects, Baumann's metaphor of religious belonging as a sextant (1999) seems to reassume perfectly the social value of religion as a source of orientation in a given social field: as Baumann states:

As all the evidence shows, religion is thus not some cultural baggage that is taken along on migration wrapped, tied, and tagged [...] Rather, one might compare religion to a compass [...] But the matter is even more complicated than that alternative metaphor might suggest. A compass points north, wherever you are. Yet the bearings of religious conviction and action will change as the users themselves change positions, or see them changed in their new contexts. It is more appropriate, therefore, to comprehend religion as a sextant, the instrument that sailors use to calculate their own position relative to a changing night sky. [...] what the sextant indicates will always take account of the relative time and location of the navigators themselves (Id., p.79).

The celebration of the Catholic Easter in Yonas and Lili's house, far from ratify their hybrid religious belonging, clearly shows the way religion relationally works with social status, and turns out to be a source of social and political orientation in the social space of the homeland. The catholic mass at the Italian church of Addis Ababa, as well as the Italian traditional dishes Yonas and Lili offered during the meal, made the catholic Easter a space of celebration of their Italianness, a performance of their self-valuing differentiation within the wider context of Addis Ababa (see Chapt.4).

Same as religious belonging, even ethno-political affiliation may coalesce with Italianness and transform in a way to produce social and symbolic value. In the next paragraph, I will consider the

social institution of the *Mahber* (a Tigrigna term that it is possible to translate as community association) constituted among Tigrayan returnees from Milano to Addis Ababa. I will investigate its significance as a social and economic vector, as well as its value as a source of identification in Addis Ababa.

6.2.2 Mahber Milano. Reproducing Tigrayness through Italianness

Y: The Mahber is organized but is not as formal as an association. It is the way people traditionally used to get together. I would say that a partial translation of the term can be *committee*⁵.

Yonas offered this explanation when for the first time he spoke about the *mahber* Milano. I heard the term *mahber* several times during my fieldwork, from Italian as well as from English speakers of tigrayan origins, but all of them chose not to translate the word. The *Mahber*, in fact, calls to a specific set of social practices and a specific way to get together, rooted in the Ethiopian and Eritrean Christian Abyssinian socio religious tradition.

Tronvoll (1998), in the analysis of the social value of the *Mahber* religious dimension in the highland rural Eritrea, emphasized the formalized structure of the *mahber*, its closed composition, the periodicity of the gatherings. On the other hand, as Iyob underlined (1997), the term *mahber* acquired a specific political dimension during the Tigrayan and Eritrean struggle against the Derg regime, indicating the political and paramilitary organizations, both in the homelands and in diaspora.

In both its community based or political purposes, *mahber* serves as one of the most powerful semi-formal space of social, political, and economic mobilization (Aredo, 1993) as well as a source of identification and a self-relief strategy (Weldegiorgis, Jayamohan, 2013). The performative value of the social institution of the *mahber*, actually, have recently been mobilized out of its semi-formal status, and used as an institutional nation building tool in Ethiopia. Particularly, *mahber* represents nowadays a powerful tool of diasporic involvement in the homeland developmental politics (see chapt.4) directly promoted from the Ethiopian consulates and primarily oriented to the housebuilding process (Grimaldi, forthcoming) in the homeland. According to this conjugation, *mahber* turns out to represent a practice of long distance nationalism, and at the same time, a source of identification in diaspora.

This overview on the performative value of the *mahber*, and the many social and symbolic dimensions it entails, can be helpful in the understanding of the meaning of the *mahber* Milano

⁵ The Italian term “comitato” differs from the English word Committee. The Italian “comitato” is a group made of a narrow number of people aimed at realizing a given (and usually of public interest) purpose.

among the political activist Tigrayan returnees of the *Woubè* generation. As I previously underlined (chapt.3), Milanese Tigrayan returnees opted for Addis Ababa rather than Tigray due to the economic and political flows circulating in the capital and its better opportunities to valorize their political significance as active members of the diasporic TPLF. Nevertheless, the city was an alien context to the most of the Tigrayan returnees. Addis Ababa represented for decades the center of the long-standing hegemonic power on the peripheral Tigray and the most of the familiar networks of the Tigrayan returnees were far away from the capital. The new settlement context, furthermore, prevented them to meet regularly. As Yonas underlined, his new life in Addis Ababa made difficult for him to meet his former Milanese colleagues (who moved at different times and settled in different neighborhoods of the city) as well as being informed about the diaspora's political and social life in Milano. As he said, one of his friends died in Milano and he knew about that only one month later. He said that his friend's death represented the occasion to meet all of them for the first time. That day, they decided to constitute the *Mahber Milano*, precisely to avoid another similar situation⁶. From 2008, all of them gather at least once a month, rotating the place of the meeting in order to make everyone host the *mahber*. The participation to the *mahber* is mandatory and a prolonged absence from the gatherings as well as a social behavior contradicting the rules of the *mahber* leads to the expulsion. *Milano mahber* does not follow gender or status division lines among its 25 participants. Both men and women are allowed, some of the people are Italian citizen while some others are Ethiopians. All of them, however, lived in Milano and identify themselves as Tigrayans. Despite *Milano mahber* have been founded to reproduce a line of continuity between their diasporic experience and their present condition in Addis Ababa, its social value is far from being a mere reminiscence of the Milanese setting and their political activism. *Milano-mahber* gatherings allow the *Milanese-Tigrayan* returnees to act on a political, economic and social level, from local issues connected to Tigray, to Ethiopian national policies.

The economic value of the *mahber* is intrinsic to its structure: in every gathering, all of the members are expected to give a certain amount of money. This practice is widely rooted in the Abyssinian social space and it is called *Iqqub*. The *Iqqub* can be described as savings association where each member agrees to pay periodically a small sum into a common pool so that each, in rotation, can receive one large sum (Aredo, 1993, p.9). In the *Milano mahber*, money is not redistributed but re-invested: at the time of the fieldwork, Yonas, as well as the other members of the *mahber* had already completed one house in Mekele, and he was going to finish a villa in a residential

⁶ Fieldnotes, 02.02.2016.

neighborhood of Addis Ababa⁷. Due to their mobile status, they mobilized the Milano *mahber* as a diaspora investment group, and they benefited of the governmental policies of diasporic engagement in the housebuilding process (see chapt.4).

Furthermore, the Milano *mahber* strictly follows the tradition of the political organizations at the time of the diaspora political engagement: they donate part of the sum collected during the Mahber in TPLF led development organization in Tigray. Built through the memory of their Italian experience, the *Mahber* operates in the production of a group socially and politically interconnected, working as a source of political significance, as a self-help organization, as an economic vector operating in the present Ethiopian social space.

Under this perspective, the call to their Milanese diasporic experience, far from being the site of symbolic orientation of their everyday life as returnees, represents a source to mobilize in order to better work the social setting they are immersed in.

I chose to underline the experience of the Tigrayan returnees from Milano to Addis Ababa, not only because of the ways this social group interacts with children of immigrants and their counter diasporic projects, but especially because of the way they mobilize an Italianness out of its differential attributions. Emphasizing the ways they perform Italianness as a source of political and social recognition in the social space of the “return”, they make Italy a site that allows them to better work the Ethiopian social setting. Their performance of the difference (chapt.4), actually, cannot be compared to the children of immigrants’ counter diasporic paths. Returnees inscribe their Italianness in Addis Ababa within a frame which never questions their condition of Ethiopians. Differently than Italians of Ethiopian origins, they have an Ethiopian structural setting in which to reproduce their social life (see Chapt.4); furthermore, their intersections with the structures reproducing hegemonic Italianness in Addis Ababa, do not entangle with the reproduction of their social identification.

On the contrary, Italians of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic paths are structurally confronted with hegemonic discourses on Italianness. It means that the ways they perform Italianness as a source of legitimation in the ancestral land can be constantly counterbalanced by social classifications and attributions reproducing their second-generation condition.

Both for the children of the returnees born and raised in Italy and the Italians of Ethiopian origins activating individual counter diasporic paths, it is not possible to imagine their social life in a line of continuity with the previous generations of returnees. From education, to working paths, from

⁷ Fieldnotes 15.03.2016.

social networks to relations of intimacy, Italianness structurally acts on their understanding of the ancestral land: the impossibility to separate Italianness from their social experience expose them to hegemonic constructions reproducing along the differential lines of class and race. In the next sections, I will focus on the Italian school and the Club Juventus in Addis Ababa, two social spaces institutionally connected to Italy, as reference points of both the sons of Tigrayan returnees and the Italians of Ethiopian origin from Milano. By focusing on the social significance of these places, it will be possible to figure out the relations between the Italian postcolonial presence in Ethiopia and the structural order reproducing an hegemonic Italianness, as well as to mirror the children of immigrants structural condition of *differential italians*.

6.3 Postcolonial translations. The Italian school of Addis Ababa

The Italian school of Addis Ababa is one of the eight Italian public institutes out of the national boundaries. The school is located in the neighborhood of Piazza, in the same area of the Italian cultural institute. Nowadays, the school includes a peer kindergarten (about 180 pupils from 3 to 5 years), and all the grades of the Italian public school system, with two different secondary schools (about 570 students)⁸.

The foundation of an Italian schooling system in Ethiopia is clearly connected to the AOI, the Italian colonial experience of the Horn of Africa⁹. In parallel to the State school in Asmara¹⁰, the foundation of the present State Italian School in Addis Ababa can be traced back to the Italian postcolonial presence in Ethiopia. In fact, in the period following the end of the Italian empire in the Horn of Africa, the structural presence of Italians in Ethiopia flourished (chapt.1).

The school has been opened in 1954, two years after the official re-establishment of the institutional relations between Italy and Ethiopia (Calchi Novati, 1996) and it was an integral part of the Italian structural engagement in the postcolonial Ethiopia. Right after the end of the Italian fascist occupation, in 1941, Haile Selassie issued a proclamation to forgive the defeated Italians and to avoid any reprisal (Sbacchi, 1979, p.29). He officially confirmed his hopes that "*Italians (technicians, business men and workers) would remain numerous in Addis Ababa to ensure that industry and commerce flourished and that the level of civilization in the capital did not drop*" (Calchi Novati, 1996). Therefore, the history of the Italian school in Addis Abba cannot be separated from the

⁸ See Official data on the Italian school of Addis Ababa, www.nuovofiore.it <https://goo.gl/dr9wuK> (last access, 19.06.2017).

⁹ A pre-institutionalized Italian schooling system can be traced back to the Italian religious missions in the region. For further analysis on the institutional Italian schooling system in the AOI see Pankhurst, 1972.

¹⁰ On the Italian school in Asmara and its postcolonial legacy See Ghidei Biidu, Marchetti, 2010.

intersection of the Italian structural interests in the region and the Ethiopian developmental paradigm issued by Haile Selassie from the end of the Italian occupation to the political overturns in the region of 1973-74. In this period, Addis Ababa, together with Asmara, constituted the pole of a transregional circuit of postcolonial Italianness where more than 50.000 Italian citizen lived structurally separated from the Ethiopian social space (Fuller, 2007).

From 1974 on, with the overthrow of Haile Selassie, the Derg regime takeover and the nationalization of private properties in Ethiopia, the number of Italians dramatically decreased¹¹ (del Boca, 1976) and the Italian school also changed its function, as well as its location. The school was transferred and reduced in extension in 1974, and, parallely, its social composition gradually changed. The number of white Italian students heavily decreased and the school nowadays hosts prevalently Ethiopian citizens, and some Italian-Ethiopians living in Addis Ababa. There is, furthermore, a small number of Italian citizens of Ethiopian origins, who were born and raised in Italy and moved to Ethiopia with their families. Among them there is Hellen, the daughter of Yonas and Mila, who moved to Addis Ababa when she was 13.

In the next paragraph, I will focus on the way Hellen framed her experience of student in the Italian school of Addis Ababa. By analyzing how the school influenced her social identity within the Ethiopian setting, and drawing from Ghidei Biidu and Marchetti's analysis on the Italian postcolonial schools in Asmara (2010), it will be possible to frame the Italian school of Addis Ababa as a site of *translation* (p.119), a space where Italianness is structurally deprived of its hegemonic contents. A translation acting on two different sides: from one side it produces a postcolonial Italianness, on the other side it activates differential understandings of Habeshaness.

6.3.1 Non hegemonic Italianness and the making of differential Italians.

L. My Amharic is not that good. I have a strong Italian accent, I use to stutter and sometimes I make mistakes. When my classmates want to tease me, they call me Ferengi.

This sentence was part of an interview I took with Hellen, talking about her experience in the Italian school of Addis Ababa. Hellen attended her last year of high school, and she was preparing to move in London for her M.A. I reported this sentence because it strongly introduces to the structural function of the school as a translating space.

¹¹ Club Juventus archives reports that in the 1973-74 over 22.000 Italians left Ethiopia. In 1975 according to the Italian ministry of foreign affair there were 5.000 Italians in both Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Institutionally speaking, Italian schools around the world serve as a way to preserve the cultural identity of the children of Italian citizens, as well as of the citizens of Italian origins¹². The Italian school in Addis Ababa, actually, seems to play a different role. While teaching programs strictly follow the Italian institutional educational system¹³, the educational model, differently than in Italy, seemed to be not aimed at the construction of an Italian social identification. The importance Hellen posited on Amharic language at school, and the irrelevance of a good knowledge of the Italian language she implicitly underlined (because of her Italian accent their classmates call her *Ferengi*), represent a spy of this phenomenon.

Therefore, this process leads to investigate the reasons of this apparent discrepancy. It is useful to start from a question: is this process a matter of resistance to a hegemonic structure? To put it simply: did an Ethiopian shared belonging among the students resisted the school attempts to turn them into Italians? I will try to answer, starting from the deconstruction of this contraposition, and framing the relation between hegemony and resistance under different lenses.

In their work on the Eritrean schools in Asmara (2010), Ghidei Biidu and Marchetti brilliantly centered the postcolonial condition of the students as subjects in-between the appropriation of hegemonic discourses and their practices of cultural transgression and resistance of the (post)colonial Italian presence in the country (p.124). Their work is based on the narratives of Eritrean women who moved to Italy between the 60's and the 70's, in the midst of the Italian postcolonial momentum both in Asmara and Addis Ababa, when Italian acculturation was considered as a priority by the Italian elite (p.118). The Italian school, in that perspective, represented the mirror of the Italian hegemonic socioeconomic and cultural position in the country (Bottaro 2003). Nowadays, the structural frame orienting the salience of the Italian school within the Ethiopian context completely changed. On the one hand, the ties binding Italians to Ethiopia have structurally changed from 1974 on. On the other hand, the structural processes orienting the developmental paradigm in the Ethiopian nation state, as well as the structural position of the Ethiopian citizenry within the global regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013) played a crucial role in the ways the Italian school reconfigured.

In this perspective, rather than considering the Italian school of Addis Ababa as a hybrid space in between cultural hegemony and cultural transgression (Ghidei Biidu, Marchetti, 2010, p. 109), it is

¹²See Esteri.it. Le scuole italiane all'estero.http://www.esteri.it/mae/it/politica_estera/cultura/scuoleitalianeallestero/

¹³ A process that makes the students almost completely unaware of central issues of the present Ethiopian nation state narratives, above all the Italian presence in Ethiopia.

possible to focus on the school itself as a space reproducing a non-hegemonic Italianness, and as a transnating space. Far from reproducing good Italian citizens, the Italian school turned in a space of reproduction of a self-valuable Ethiopianness.

It is possible to trace a first indicator of this process in Hellen's words about the composition of the school.

Most of the students are Ethiopian, and there are some Meticci as well. Even some Eritreans.

How many second generations?

Very few but there are some.

And what about the white Italians?

There are almost no whites. Most of them enroll at Stanford, the English school¹⁴.

The Stanford school of Addis Ababa, since its foundation in the late 40's, represented the main educational reference space of the Ethiopian ruling class, as well as of the international white community of the city¹⁵. Nowadays, more than 50 nationalities are represented in the Stanford student population and the social and economic limitations to its access (over 3 thousand dollars per year from 1st to 13th grade) structurally makes the school an elitist space granting a world-wide recognized high profile international education.

The Italian school, on the contrary, is fully funded by the Italian government, and its tuition fees are generally affordable for the merging Ethiopian middle classes (less than 120 euro per year). White Italians, rather than prioritize an Italian acculturation, reproduce their hegemonic position within the Ethiopian context by securing their sons a privileged international background.

The constant drain of white Italian students, by the way, activated a process of structural reconsideration of the role of the Italian school. According to the old school official website¹⁶, the *Liceo Scientifico*, specifically designed to give students the skills to progress to higher educational institutions, had been suppressed precisely due to the lack of Italians and the predominantly Ethiopian student population. The predominantly Ethiopian presence oriented the school to consider more technical courses, due to the structural necessities of the Ethiopian nation state. A composition whose needs are changing parallelly to the merging of an Ethiopian middle class.

As the new website reports:

Until recently, Ethiopia needed intermediate technical employees. It led our institutions to privilege technical oriented curricula. The *Liceo Scientifico*, thought as a preparation to University, was deactivated

¹⁴ Fieldnotes, 23.01.2016.

¹⁵ See Stanford International school website. <https://goo.gl/UXkAPX>

¹⁶ Old website IISO Galileo Galilei Addis Ababa. See Wikimapia. com <https://goo.gl/tZK6Ns>

some years ago. On the other hand, nowadays, even the locals are interested in this opportunity, so that, from 2016-2017, “*Liceo delle scienze Umane*” was activated.

This process reveals the paths the school followed to turn its social function from a site of reproduction of hegemonic Italianness to a space of translation to reproduce a difference based self-valuable Habeshaness.

This process of structural translation is even more effective by analyzing the possible career opportunities after the end of the school. The Italian school of Addis Ababa provides a fully recognized Italian diploma; on the other hand, it does not grant any working mobility opportunity within the international market for most of the students.

This process has been clearly explained by Hellen, who at time of the interview prepared her application for a M.A. in London. While her Italian citizenship would have grant her easy transnational mobility paths (see chapt.7), she told me about her Ethiopian citizen classmates and their uncertainty for the limitations they found to continue their studies abroad.

By working the function of the Italian school of Addis Ababa in a mobility perspective, the idiosyncrasies between a full Italian education and the possibility to move to Italy clearly emerge. On the other hand, by diachronically analyze the function of the school, another structural feature emerges: the production of postcolonial subjects. The Italian school is the privileged site for the Italian big companies operating in Ethiopia to look for intermediate technical employees, hired for their Italian cultural background but paid according to the Ethiopian salary standards. As Hellen stated in her interview:

Many of my friends, straight after diploma, have been hired from Salini¹⁷ or Varnero¹⁸. The luckiest of them work in Addis Ababa. But many of them are sent in the construction sites. A lot of them have been hired in the construction of the Dam¹⁹.

Under this perspective, the *non-hegemonic Italianness* produced in the Italian school of Addis Ababa, may configure as a structural process of reproduction of *non-hegemonic Italians*: a process connected to the reproduction of the post-colonial structural order orienting Italianness in Ethiopia.

¹⁷ Salini Impregilo is an industrial group specializing in the construction of major projects. Strongly involved in Ethiopia since the postcolonial period (1949-1974), the company gained the commission for the construction of two major dams for hydroelectric purposes, the Gibe III, on the Omo River, and the Grand Renaissance Dam, on the Nile river.

¹⁸ Varnero’s family operates in Ethiopia as a construction company since the aftermath of the AOI and it is one of the symbols of the Italian presence in Addis Ababa.

¹⁹ The so called Great Renaissance Dam, is a gravity dam on the Blue Nile River in Ethiopia that has been under construction since 2011. The dam will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa when completed, as well as the 7th largest in the world. The main contractor for its construction is the Italian company Salini Costruttori. The dam turned out to represent the material representation of the developmental paradigm spread in Ethiopia, and created strong international tension (especially with Egypt). For a preliminary overview see Hammond, 2013.

6.3.2 The Italian school and the making of a differential Ethiopiness

The performative value of the Italian school of Addis Ababa, therefore, clearly needs to be founded out of the circuits reproducing an hegemonic Italianness. The school, in fact, configures as a performative space that allows to act in the wider Ethiopian context: a site of production of a self-valuable differential Habeshaness and a gauge to access the cosmopolitan youth niche of the city. This perspective, on the one hand associates the students of the Italian school of Addis Ababa to the children of immigrants' counter diasporic experience (see chapt.4). On the other hand, by focusing on Hellen's experience of the school it is possible to note how the school produces a peculiar understanding of the ancestral land creating distance from both the children of immigrants' counter diasporic experience and from her parents' perspective.

Similarly to the Milanese people enacting counter diasporic paths, Hellen used to live the cosmopolitan contexts of the city; she used to speak English rather than Italian or Amharic with her Ethiopian classmates. Conversely, differently than children of immigrants, she marked an intergenerational structural discontinuity in the ways to deal with the Ethiopian social space.

During a preliminary interview we had (see chapt.4), she showed a total lack of interest in the structural issues about ethnic or religious divides in Ethiopia focusing, on the contrary, on gender relations, contraception, or homosexuality in Ethiopia.

Hellen's emphasis on civil rights, rather than on the Ethiopian ethno-politics, turns upside down the scenario of the Habesha *traditional values*, orienting children of immigrants' explicit representations in Milano. The ancestral land hegemonic structures, in Hellen experience, turns into a space of confrontation and intergenerational conflict. The differential Habeshaness produced into the school, in this perspective, turns into a driving force for change and a space of intergenerational juxtaposition.

The function of the Italian school of Addis Ababa as a space of translation, clearly shows the ways social space enters in the making of cultural identification. Deprived of its hegemonic attributes and aimed at producing differential Italians, the Italian school of Addis Ababa has been re-signified as a site of construction of an Habeshaness oriented on the paradigm of modernity (see chapt.4).

The relation between a hegemonic and a non-hegemonic Italianness, therefore, represent a central trope of orientation among the Italians of Ethiopian origin. Those differential constructions, by the way, may conflate in the same social space. In the following paragraph, by considering the Club Juventus, the Italian place par excellence of Addis Ababa, it will be possible to identify the racial order orienting the structures reproducing Italianness and its internal stratification.

6.4 Postcolonial mirrors: The Club Juventus

J: I was in Addis in Summer 2006 and there was the final of the World Cup between Italy and France. The Club was crowded with hundreds of people and there were strict controls to access. Once I arrived at the entrance of the place, the guard stopped me and he told me there was no more space to get in. In the meanwhile, there were many people getting in without any problem. It was simply ridiculous. I did not try to convince him, I simply pushed him away to get in. He grabbed my arm and violently pushed me out of the entrance. He shouted to go away and he threatened me with a stick.

G. So you did not see the match?

J. I finally managed to get in but I spent all of the time thinking about the guard. These are my memories about the day Italy won the World cup²⁰.

These words were pronounced by Johnny the first time we went in the Juventus Club, the Italian club house of Addis Ababa. Officially called *Circolo sportivo Italiano Juventus*, and widely known as one of the main sportive centers of the city, Club Juventus it is nowadays a crucial hub of the cosmopolitan circuits of Addis Ababa for its western standards, its facilities, and its renowned Italian restaurant and bar. At the same time, the Club is the social and symbolic reference space of the Italians in Addis Ababa, and a city hub for symbolic or institutional activities aimed at the reproduction of the *Italian community*.

As clearly emerged in the previous ethnographic extract, Johnny was very surprised when he came to know about the social relevance of the Club among his network. In his experience in Ethiopia he never gave attention to the Club, a place that, in his words, have never been of great relevance for the Milanese children of immigrants moving to Ethiopia for short term vacations. He used to emphasize the nonsense in attending a place that made him feel uncomfortable in his own country. This contradiction, impressively reassume the social function of the Juventus Club in children of immigrants' counter diasporic experience, as a mirror reflecting the constitutive features of a postcolonial Italianness, and its oscillation between structural privilege and marginalization. Juventus club is a place where Italianness may represent a powerful source of differentiation within the Ethiopian context, and, at the same time, a social and racial order reproducing their second-generation condition of differential Italians. To make sense of the ways these two different features of Italianness coalesce, it is necessary to preliminarily consider the structure of the club itself in a diachronic perspective, its social and spatial organization and its configuration in the wider space of

²⁰ Fieldnotes, 13.01.2016

Addis Ababa. By critically analyzing the archive material of the Club Juventus in a postcolonial perspective, it will be possible to better introduce its mirroring function.

6.4.1 The making of a differential space

Similarly as the Italian school, the Club Juventus itself is structurally tied to the reorganization of the Italian presence in the Horn of Africa straight after the end of the AOI experience. Officially founded in 1952 to constitute an Italian football team playing in the Ethiopian championship, the Club gradually earned an institutional value. Since 1959, when the foundation stone of the present building was laid, the Juventus Club configured as the mirror of the structures reproducing the Italian postcolonial presence in the region. The location of the Club itself showed how the tropes of centrality and separation, constituting the main feature of the Italian urban planning during the occupation in Ethiopia (Fuller, 2007), structurally intersected. The club is located in the area around Meskel square, the symbolic center of Addis Ababa, and the core of modernist urban reshaping policies of the postwar Ethiopia. Despite being geographically contiguous to the square and structurally connected to the Haile Salassie urban elitist modernizing project, Juventus Club was (and still it is) symbolically disconnected from the larger urban setting, through a dense vegetation making it “invisible” from the adjacent streets.

The postcolonial geographies (Blunt, McEwan, 2002) orienting the location and social signification of the Juventus Club in the wider city space, mirrored its internal social structures. The disconnection of the Club from the outer Ethiopian social space (the acceptance of non-Italian members has been introduced only in 1997) emphasized the social function of the place as a crucial hub of the transregional postcolonial Italianness that constantly grew in the Horn of Africa until Haile Selassie was overthrown. Specifically, the Club represented a powerful symbolic center of the structural interconnections between Asmara and Addis Ababa, the two reference spaces of the postcolonial Italianness in the region. The archives of the Club show the ongoing Italian transregional mobility between the two former centers of the AOI (see Chapt.1), and the role of the club as one of the symbols of this interconnection. The Club organized numerous recreative activities, such as football tournaments, or car racing²¹, aimed at interconnecting geographically distant contexts to celebrate a transregional Italianness. The Club, furthermore, constantly conveyed its role of institutional connector between Addis Ababa and Italy (the *homeland*). Juventus club represented a reference

²¹ See *La gazetta del Circolo, mensile del circolo sportivo italiano Juventus*, november, 2012.

space for the Italians during the political overturns of the 73-74 and the 90-91 (see chapt.1), and it was (and still it is) a de-facto interlocutor with the Italian institutions both in Ethiopia and in Italy²². The club not only represented the mirror of the structural disconnection between Italianness and the wider Ethiopian social space, but especially a site mirroring its internal stratification and its differential reproduction. Despite the dramatic decrease of the Italian presence in the region from 1974 on, the Juventus club gradually became a significant reference space of the Italo-Ethiopians in Addis Ababa. The isomorphic relationship between social status and racial politics sustaining colonial and postcolonial Italianness in Ethiopia reinforced the relation between “italians” and “Meticci” rather than loosening it. The persistence of a stratified Italianness as a constituent part of the Juventus Club, structurally entered its present configuration, side by side with the new meanings the Club acquired since the the new millennium. In line with the spread of the developmental paradigm in Ethiopia since the end of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict on, the Club opened to the wider Ethiopian social space and gradually reconfigured as Hub of the cosmopolitan circuits in Addis Ababa. Together with the reproduction of a differential Italianness, the Club turned into a place where to practice Italianness as a performance of the difference. Drawing on the experience of the club Juventus among the Milanese enacting couter diasporic projects, in the next paragraphs I will consider the social effects of the coexistence, the overlapping and the coalescence between the two ways Italianness is socially reproduced in Addis Ababa.

6.4.2 Club Juventus and the doubleness of postcolonial Italianness. A space of coexistence or an hegemonic space?

Nowadays, most of the people attending Club Juventus in its daily activities are not Italian nationals. Middle class Ethiopians, and western expats are everyday attending the dozens of sport courses the Club Juventus offers, eating in the Italian restaurant of the club, or joining the evening parties organized by its bar. The performativity of the new configuration of the Club was strong enough to make the members think about a change of the club statutory body (a change that never happened), transforming it in the European community club²³. Nowadays the most spoken languages in the daily routine of the Club are Amharic and English rather than Italian, and the club it is represented by most of its members as a site of reproduction of the Ethiopian cosmopolitan setting rather than of a differential Italianness.

²² Club Juventus archives. 1991.

²³ See *Club Juventus Archives*. Gazzetta, 2005.

Marta explicitly underlined this viewpoint in a debate she had with Johnny on the social function of the Club. Besides her job in the Italian NGO (see Chapt. 5.2) she was part of the board of directors of the Club Juventus. While Johnny strongly criticized the Club describing it as a fascist and racist place, she emphasized the mixed composition of the club, and she classified the nostalgic discourses about the Italian fascist period led by its oldest members as a folkloric element. She said that it was impossible to change their minds, but it was tolerable because they had no decisional power. She added that it was unfair to send them away since they were in their own room playing cards and keeping each other company²⁴. Actually, Marta's words ideally represented the two social meanings associated to Italianness reproducing the Club Juventus in a condition of coexistence. In my visits to the Club I met people explicitly revindicating their fascist belonging and their racial superiority compared to the Ethiopians, or even their nostalgia for General Graziani²⁵. The vast majority of those people were born or raised in the postcolonial Ethiopia: some of them never left Ethiopia; others returned after the Derg overthrown and the opening of the Ethiopian nation state to neoliberal policies. As one of them told me motivating his decision to leave Ethiopia when Haile Selassie overthrown: *I was born as Fascist. I couldn't live or die under a communist regime*²⁶. Actually, those people were structurally separated from the wider space of the club. They used to spend their daily life in an *only members* room: a politically connoted place where it was possible to explicitly reproduce the Manichean distinction between *the Italians and the others*.

The apparent coexistence of the two meanings of the postcolonial Italianness, seemed to be confirmed in the analysis of the way Jack, an Italian of Ethiopian origins who moved to Ethiopia in 2013 from Milano, made sense of his social experience in the Club Juventus. From 2015, in fact, Jack decided to attend a taekwondo course at the Club Juventus. A mixed-race Italian-Ethiopian who had lived in Italy for over 20 years led the course, and the disciples were people of Jack's same status and age. Most of them were western expats. Although he had never practiced taekwondo in Milano, in his words, he decided to start because it was a way to deal with the stress of his life in Ethiopia²⁷. Jack felt structurally disoriented in the wider Ethiopian social space, and he remarked his differential condition as a tool of social legitimation (see Chapt.4). Precisely for this reason he chose the

²⁴ Fieldnotes, 21.03.2016.

²⁵ Graziani, the so-called butcher of Ethiopia, was one of the most famous and brutal fascist generals. Among the many atrocities he perpetrated during the repression of the Ethiopian resistance against the Fascist occupation, he was responsible of mass murders by using toxic gas on the population. For an overview on Graziani and his postcolonial legacy see Morone, 2013.

²⁶ Fieldnotes, 01.04.2016.

²⁷ Fieldnotes, 17.03.2016.

Juventus club as his routine space. Besides the possibility of talking his native language, of sharing Italian food or watching Italian TV, the club allowed him to work his Italianness as a source of differentiation from the Ethiopian setting and as a source of identification in the cosmopolitan niche of the city. Furthermore, in his experience of the club, Jack never adhered to the institutional function of the club nor to its value as a discursive pole of a national belonging. His Italian social networks were mainly connected to the Milanese diaspora in Addis Ababa rather than the ones of the Italians of the Club Juventus. In short, he usually did not join, nor suffer, the differential order reproducing hegemonic Italianness.

In this perspective, a set of questions emerges: would it be possible to think about the club as a space where non-hegemonic and hegemonic values, symbols, and discourses about Italianness coexist? Is it possible to think about a place where the differential discourses and practices reproducing a stratified Italianness can be spatially contained, as Marta underlined in her debate with Johnny? Furthermore, can the non-adhesion to the hegemonic tropes of Italianness, as in Jack's experience of the club, be considered as the proof of this structural separation?

I would argue that the explicit representations Marta and Jack offered about the Club can be considered as the result of a process of incorporation of the social difference. While their performances of Italianness serves as a gauge to act within the wider Ethiopian social space, their second-generation condition assumes a central value in the reproduction of a hegemonic Italianness. (Giuliani, 2015, p.4). The performativity of this hegemonic process does not lay in the mere reproduction of the colonial imaginaries constituting the Imperial Italianness. As Hall, in his work on the Black condition, stated:

Cultural hegemony is never about pure victory or pure domination (that's not what the term means); it is never a zero-sum cultural game; it is always about shifting the balance of power in the relations of culture; it is always about changing the dispositions and the configurations of cultural power, not getting out of it (Hall, 1980, p.106-107).

The performativity of a hegemonic Italianness on Italian of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic experience lies in its invisibility (Duncombe, 2012, p.222), and in its social incorporation.

In the following ethnographic extract, it will be possible to note how the apparent two coexisting discourses on Italianness structurally overlap in the Club Juventus, and how micro practices of reproduction of the hegemonic Italianness structurally reproduce a second-generation differential condition. Particularly I will consider the reactions of Johnny (a person that was not used to live the everyday dynamics of the club) and those of Marta and Jack (who made the Club a reference space

of their social life in Addis Ababa) compared to an apparently normal situation that questioned their Italianness. In their different reaction to the same process, it will be possible to consider the performativity of the Club Juventus as the mirror of a postcolonial Italianness.

I was at the table with Johnny, Marta and Tesfay, an American guy of Ethiopian origins. He was Marta's flat mate and Johnny asked her to arrange a meeting to interview him for his research. Jack reached us because he was there for his taekwondo training. Because of Tesfay's presence, we mainly used English as a vehicular language. In the midst of our conversation a middle-age white Italian interrupted us to ask some information. Once Marta answered him, he complimented her on her wonderful Italian, and he started to talk about his journey in Ethiopia and his plans to move in Addis Ababa. What impressed me the most was the way he talked and acted during his speech. When he talked to me he spoke proper Italian. On the contrary, when he talked to the others, he spoke very slowly, he made easy semantic structures, and he often conjugated verbs in the infinitive tense, or avoided to use articles. Furthermore, he continuously tapped or leaned on Marta's shoulder during his speech. Ten minutes after he left. While Marta and Jack immediately started to laugh, Johnny nervously started to speak against the old man. On the contrary, Marta was much more concerned about what he said rather than about his behavior. In her opinion, his behavior was a matter of ignorance. She said that although it was not justifiable, it was understandable that an old Italian man seeing 4 black people could have acted that way²⁸.

The extract shows the racial lines reproducing Italianness as a differential discourse, and the interplay between normativity and deviance in hegemonic self-definition of Italianness. In the old man's perspective, my attributed whiteness represented the gauge where he could mirror his own condition and his perceived hegemonic condition. On the contrary, his behavior with the others physically reproduced their supposed deviation from a normative Italianness: a deviation he explicitly represented with the use of the language and the use of the body.

By the way, the main argument raising from this extract is that Marta and Jack did not have strong reactions to this process. Their submissive behavior compared with Johnny's is central to understand the value of Italianness in counter diasporic journey. Differently than Johnny, in Jack and Marta's experience of the ancestral land, Juventus Club had a central dimension. It represented a space of social identification, legitimation and recognition, and one of the most significant places to make their experience of the ancestral land valuable. On the contrary, Johnny's shortsighted perspective about his staying in Addis Ababa, prevented him from a confrontation with the Club as a space of social identification in Ethiopia. It led them to have two totally different perspectives about their social experience of the club. While Jack and Marta emphasized the value of the club as

²⁸ Fieldnotes, 26.03.2016.

a field of possibilities, Johnny stressed how the club reproduced the differential Italianness he was used to experience in Italy. A process aggravated from the fact of being racialized even in his own place of origin.

This extract shows the impossibility to deactivate hegemonic discourses on Italianness and clearly underlines the structural cannibalization of a non-hegemonic Italianness once the two processes overlap. Furthermore, it shows how the differential lines reproducing Italianness can be incorporated and assimilated to reproduce the experience of the ancestral land.

The differential discourses and practices sustaining an hegemonic Italianness in the Club, actually, rather than being residual or involuntary, can be institutionally driven.

In the next paragraph, I will consider the activation of the differential structures reproducing Italianness during the institutional visit of the president of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella to the Juventus club.

The apical momentum of the celebration of a transnational Italianness, in fact, revealed the structural processes contributing to the making of differential Italians. Drawing on the mechanisms of recognition and difference the club put in place to organize the accesses to the event, the analysis consider how hegemonic discourses and practices of differentiation can be incorporated so far in children of immigrants experience to produce a proper disenfranchisement between the legal status of Italian citizen and its social and cultural attributes. Configuring as the mirror of the structures of the difference reproducing an hegemonic Italianness, the Club Juventus can be conversely analyzed as a space of production of what Appadurai (2013) defined as *bare citizenship*.

6.4.3 The president of the Republic at the Juventus Club: Italianness and the institutional production of bare citizenship

I came to know about the official visit of Mattarella to the Club a few days before the event. The aim of the visit was to meet the Italian community of Addis Ababa after an institutional journey in Ethiopia. In the days before the visit, the Club was in turmoil. Marta, as a member of the directory board of the Club, used to spend there the most oh her day.

She had to organize the reception, and she was involved in the Club security and in the organization of the accesses. The issue of the accesses interested me the most. All along my fieldwork, I met people frequenting the Italian circuits of Addis Ababa even if they were not Italian citizens. for example, many among the Tigrayan returnees from Milano to Addis Ababa were in that condition:

many of them did not fit the requirements to apply for Italian citizenship²⁹; some others, like Yonas (whose wife obtained the Italian citizenship), just preferred to keep their Ethiopian citizenship.³⁰ I asked Marta about the ways they decided to deal with the accesses, and if it was necessary to exhibit an Italian passport at the entrance. Marta reassured me that there was no need for a passport to get in and that the guards would have selected people at the entrance³¹. The club's directory board decision was obviously directed to avoid a direct relation between Italianness and a defined legal status: otherwise, most of the people attending the Italian school, or even the non-Italian members of the club would have been excluded. However, the choice to avoid any formal tool institutionally recognizing Italianness, made its recognition a subjective issue; the guards had to discretionally and arbitrarily decide who could enter and who could not. This situation, paradoxically, led the most of the Italian citizens with Ethiopian origins to bring their passport with them and to use their legal status as a source of recognition during the day of the president's visit. At the end of Mattarella's institutional visit to the Club, I met Lili (the Tigrayan returnee from Milano) and one of her friends. Because of their late arrival (the entrance to the club closed 30 minutes before the president's visit for security reasons) they had to wait outside the club for the whole president's speech. As she told me, there were a lot of people with her waving their Italian passport in front of the guards and claiming to get in. However, once they managed to get inside, they were all but shaken from their previous experience. On the contrary, they started taking pictures of the stage from which Mattarella spoke and posting them on Facebook.

While Lili and her friends had no problems to show their passport to get it, in Johnny's case it was totally different.

Differently than the most of his Italian network, Johnny decided not to go to the Club on that day. As he told me the morning before the event, he considered just crazy that the Italians of Ethiopian origins wanted to be part of a discourse from which they were structurally excluded. Once I got home after the event, I met Johnny. He told me that since most of the people he knew were at the Club and he was getting bored at home alone, he thought about joining us. While he was preparing to get out of the house, he instinctively placed his Italian passport in his bag. Once he realized that, he immediately dropped his bag and decided to stay home. He said that he did not know the reasons

²⁹ According to the law 91/92, Italian citizenship to Extra Eu members may be "conceded" to immigrants regularly residing in Italy for at least 10 years. The concession of the citizenship is subordinated to a series of legal, economic and cultural requirements the applicants need to satisfy. On the procedures to obtain Italian citizenship see Esteri.it http://www.esteri.it/mae/it/italiani_nel_mondo/serviziconsolari/cittadinanza.html. Last access, 27.06.2017.

³⁰ As I previously underlined (chapt. 4), Ethiopia does not allow double citizenship.

³¹ Fieldnotes, 12.03.2017.

that led him to think about bringing his passport with him, but that it was one of the most humiliating things that had happened in his entire life³².

The ethnographic extract introduces to the way the reproduction of an hegemonic Italianness may trace such a deep line of differentiation to produce a condition where citizenship represents the only source of recognition in the experience of differential Italians. In his work on the concept of future (2013), drawing on the Agambenian “bare life”, Appadurai introduces the concept of *bare citizenship*. Relating the concept to the structural insecurity deriving from the loss of the intimate sphere of the house (Appadurai, 2013), bare citizenship describes a condition of deprivation of social capital and cultural credibility (p.122), dispossessing citizenship from its social and political meaning and reducing it to a statistical fact (p.123).

Appadurai’s concept of bare citizenship serves as a gauge to explore the contrasts between the celebration of a transnational Italianness and its social effects on structurally differentiated Italians in a socially connoted social space. Club Juventus is intrinsically founded on a discursive order activating the relation between space and cultural identification: a relation whose aim is to continuously define the normative feature of a hegemonic Italianness, and whose effects are a continuous redefinition of its deviance. The result of this process is a structural dispossession, that may leave differentiated subjects without any source of recognition on a cultural, political, or social basis.

On the day of the Italian president’s visit, the strict policies of admittance to the Club were founded on what is possible to define as a *juridically empty space* (Agamben, 2003). A space where the mechanisms of recognition, were structurally founded along racial and class lines reproducing an hegemonic Italianness. The institutional configuration of the Club as a mirror of power relations reproducing an hegemonic Italianness in Ethiopia, actually, as it was possible to note in the ethnographic extract, produced different reactions.

In the case of Lili and her friend, the lack of institutional recognition, was counterbalanced by the social value of their entrance as a source of legitimation compared to their wider Ethiopian network. The acceptance and the incorporation of their subordinate condition compared to the hegemonic configuration reproducing Italianness, allowed them to gain social recognition in the outer social space in which they reproduce they everyday life as Ethiopians. On the contrary, the self-valuable features of a non-hegemonic Italianness were completely absent in Johnny’s experience. Born and raised in Milano, he constantly had to confront himself with the issue of social recognition.

³² Fieldnotes, 15.03.2016.

Configuring as a structural deviant in the construction of the isomorphic relation between race and Italian national belonging, he left Italy to avoid the continuous challenge to his social condition. However, in his counter diasporic journey to Ethiopia, except for his transnational family, most of his social networks were structurally linked to Italy. While most of them incorporated their differential condition compared to a hegemonic Italianness to perform their presence in Ethiopia, he had no reasons to do that. His initial choice to bring his passport with him to the club, in this perspective, was all but irrelevant. In his unconscious gesture, he accepted his differential condition as a given, he incorporated the traits of a non-hegemonic Italianness and he consciously accepted that his legal status represented the main source he had to gain social recognition as Italian. Disjoining his condition of Italian citizen from its social and cultural contents, as well as from his biographic trajectories, he posited his passport at the center of his condition.

The Club Juventus, in this perspective, besides mirroring the power relation producing a postcolonial Italianness, turns out to be the mirror of the structural processes acting on the reproduction of a second-generation condition in Italy: a microcosm reproducing the intersection between space, mobility and cultural identification of crucial relevance to deepen the social relevance of the Milanese second-generation Habeshanness.

Conclusions

Far from representing a transnational reverberation of the place they were born and raised, Italianness clearly assume a constitutive dimension in the Italians of Ethiopian origins counter diasporic experience, and it configures as a crucial field of possibilities and constraints they structurally navigate in order to make sense of their ancestral land.

A mobility perspective in the analysis of the social value of the Italianness out of the national borders, allows to focus on the historical, structural, and symbolic processes entangling in the reproduction of this category in a transnational social space. Specifically, the present structures reproducing Italianness in Addis Ababa mirror the processes of reproduction and re-signification of a colonial and postcolonial paradigm whose effectiveness and representations are merely spatial. The ongoing reproduction of structurally disconnected places from the wider Ethiopian social space fuels a postcolonial geography where Italianness reproduces as an altero-referential paradigm (Giuliani, 2014) aimed at marking a social, racial, and symbolic differentiation.

Conflating meanings arise within this network: Italianness may serve as a self-valuing category to site in the Ethiopian social space, a site of reproduction of postcolonial subjects, a hegemonic space of differentiation.

Italians of Ethiopian origins enacting counter diasporic projects structurally oscillates among these differential meanings reproducing Italianness in Ethiopia. In their experience, therefore, Italianness may configure as a set of social practices that allows them to gain social legitimacy, as well as an hegemonic construction reproducing their second-generation condition in the ancestral land. A two-fold connotation that positionally overlaps according to the social and symbolic structures it activates. In its different conjugations, the social, racial and legal attributes connotating the “second generation’s experience” of the ancestral land, therefore, structurally shifts along the *paradigm of modernity* interconnecting Italianness to the present hegemonic Habeshaness. According on which side of the line the Italians of Ethiopian origins are socially placed (Italians or Habesha), Italianness may configure as a source of differentiation or a structure reproducing their differential recognition. Similarly to Italy, therefore, the disentanglement between the hegemonic representations sustaining Italianenenss and the children of immigrants’ social condition, may activate as a constitutive feature of the counter diasporic journey.

The relevance of Italianness as a field of possibility and constraints in the ancestral land, therefore, allows to de activate the binary relation “ancestral land – receiving context” as the sites where children of immigrants social identification reproduce, and to focus on wider mobility tactics they enact to make sense of their second-generation condition. As I shown before (6.4.3), an Italian legal status may represent the only space of recognition children of immigrants may have if compared to the hegemonic structures reproducing Italianness. Conversely, Italian citizenship can be a decisive source to mobilize in a transnational space. In the following chapter, I will focus on the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins intra-european mobility, investigating the patterns of mobility from Milano to London. In the exploration of this process it will be possible to investigate their Habesha second-generation condition as a source of mobility out of the “return” paradigm.

Chapter 7: London Calling: Habesha second-generation intra-european mobility

7.1 Introduction

J. The first time I came in London I was on summer holiday after my high school diploma. My cousin Johnny hosted me. I was totally shocked but guess what shocked me the most?

G. What?

J. I saw for the first time in my life a black bus driver. I stared at the bus for a while, until Johnny took me away. When I tried to explain him that I stopped because I saw a black man driving a bus he started laughing. He told me that it was absolutely normal and that I had to be smarter and forget about life in Milano if I wanted to move here¹.

Jack, an Italian of Ethiopian origin who was born and raised in Milano, talked about his first time in London. After some years of precarious jobs in Milano he moved to London for good in 2014: nowadays he works full time in a coffee house and studies in a well-known university of the city.

Jack's mobility path can be a paradigmatic example of the ways Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins make sense of their social condition in the European social space. In the ethnographic extract, a cosmopolitan ambition, a transnational familiar structure, and the overturning of the racial paradigm he lives in Milano intertwine. In this chapter, I will offer an explorative view about a paradigm of growing importance in the understanding of the Italian second-generation condition. In the analysis of children of immigrants' mobility, the ancestral land for a long time has represented the main context of exploration, and it still does. An empirical outlook on their mobility paths, actually, would reverse this assumption. Since 2002, in her seminal work on the Italians of Eritrean origins in Milano, Andall registered the growing importance of children of immigrants' mobility path in the globalized north. Far from the attraction to the ancestral land, the iconic hubs of the North American and the North European space represented their major destination of long-term mobility. More than a decade later, this process, rather than lowering, grew in importance and numbers. In the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' Milanese setting, everyone has a close family member who left Italy, and in most of the cases is based in London. While it would be impossible to define the precise number of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin currently living in London, we can rely on the explicit representations about the phenomenon. At the beginning of my fieldwork in Milano,

¹ Fieldnotes, 08.06.2016.

when I explained my research proposal to the subjects I was working with, I was often told that rather than Milano I should have gone to London if I wanted to know how second generations live. During my fieldwork in London, I asked the approximative numbers of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins living in London and Jack's answer was very indicative: *I do not know how many, but I think that nowadays there are more of us in here than in Milano*².

It is necessary, therefore, to move from the binary relation homeland-diaspora, and to frame the massive relevance of this phenomenon in the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' social life through a mobility perspective (Klute, Hahn, 2007). Second-generation intraeuropean mobility, in fact, may represent a paradigmatic example of the non-homogeneity of transnational migrations, representing a system encompassing a wide range of different and situationally varied practices (Riccio, 2001). Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility is first of all Italian mobility. Italians have always moved in the European social space: London, despite Brexit, has been and still is among the main hubs of Italian transnational mobility³. A perspective assimilating Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility to wider Italian migration patterns, actually, would only partly make sense of this process. In this chapter I will try to make sense of the ways a second-generation condition entangles with transnational mobility trajectories, I will explore the network they mobilize, and I will work on the ways their mobility paths act on their condition of differential Italians. In their mobility paths, the social value of Italian citizenship, their Habeshanness, and their Italianness turns out to be crucial phenomena to analyze in the relation with the London social landscape. Second-generation intra-european mobility, in this perspective configure as a prolific field of enquiry that allows to work on the entanglement of legal status, ancestral identification, and processes of structural differentiation in the production of mobility patterns⁴.

² Fieldnotes, 04.07.2016.

³ According to the latest report by the Migrants Foundation (oct. 2017), the United Kingdom is the favorite destination for Italian expats: 24,771 new members of the Aire (Italian Register of Residents Abroad) in 2016, In proportion, 20% of all 124,076 Italian movers. See XXVI Rapporto Immigrazione, 2016.
http://s2ew.caritasitaliana.it/materiali/Rapporto_immigrazione/2017/Sintesi_RICM2016.pdf (last visit, 22.10.2016).

⁴ The chapter is based on a three months ethnographic fieldwork in London. It is beyond the purposes of this chapter to consider children of immigrants' mobility in relation with the structural processes producing present London configuration. British imperialism, postcolonial migrations, the management of transnational migrations in the UK represent crucial phenomena to consider. In the economy of the work, I could only slightly underline these processes. For a preliminary overview see: Fedorowich, Thompson, eds. 2013.

7.2 Take your passport and go. The changing relation between space and identification in the second-generation mobility to London

You cannot even imagine how sad were that days in the coffee shops of Largo Marinali⁵. In the square's Chinese bar you could find only Eritreans, and all of them were Italian citizens. They spent their days drinking cheap drinks, talking about football and complaining about how Italy sucks. I mean. Stop complaining, take your passport, and move. We have a privilege. Why don't they use it? most of them could move even tomorrow if only they want to⁶.

The ethnographic extract I have just reported represents a part of a wider talk I had with Abraham, an Italian man in his first 30's who was born and raised in Milano and moved in London in 2011. During the interview, Abraham focused on the relation between the movers and the stayers and emphasized the nonsense of wasting a life in Italy with the possibility to move across Europe.

Abraham's position seems to address two of the main issues about the value of citizenship in the contemporary European social space. On the one hand, by equating spatial to social mobility, he emphasized the space of possibility that the declination of his national citizenship granted him as a European citizen. On the other hand, his point of view seems to confirm a widespread rhetoric fueling the public debate on the nexus between second generations and Italianness⁷: the apparent reduction of the citizenship issues to a formal and instrumental dimension (Colombo, Domaneschi, Marchetti, 2009). Both cosmopolitanism and nationalism, actually, play a decisive role in the orientation of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin within the European social space. These two paradigms, however, are far from representing the opposite poles in the relation between mobility and immobility: on the contrary, national identification and transnational mobility continuously overlap in the definition of a second-generation Habesha mobility.

7.2.1 Framing second-generation mobility in the wider European social space. Similarities and differences

As Favell pointed out in his brilliant book *Eurostars and Eurocities* (2008), historically in Europe the nation-state-society has underwritten a promise of good life to its citizens. Despite inter-European mobility having always represented a structural phenomenon in the European social space, it had long been underestimated (Wimmer, Glick Schiller, 2002). Surely, the effects of globalization and the post-industrial shift lead to a new emphasis on 'transnationalism', 'mobilities' and 'super-

⁵ Largo Marinali used to be a reference space for the Italians of Eritrean origins youth, and reached its peak in the first 2000's, right after the closure of Via Kramer oratory (see chapt.2). A brilliant work on this topic is the Ariam Tekle documentary "Ci vediamo ai Marinali", 2017.

⁶ Fieldnotes, 29.06.2016.

⁷ The *Ius soli* debate in Italy, in this perspective, is strongly indicative. See Introduction.

diversity' in migration research, pointing to the expiry of exclusively nation-centered models of citizenship, integration, territory and container-like borders (Favell, 2014, p. XI). In the process of consolidation of the European social space, Favell identified a category of people, the Eurostars, he defined as the pioneers of the European integration, younger groups of movers who moved in the early stages of their careers. Differently than the classic migration patterns dominating the European mobility from the late 19th century on, Eurostars incorporated the freedom of movement within the European space and the possibility to join the economic, symbolic and cultural vitality of its hubs (Recchi, Favell, 2009). In this process, London turned out to represent the European destination of free movement par excellence. As Favell pointed out (2008, p.30):

A quiet and unstoppable European invasion... has taken place in the latter half of the 1990s... London became increasingly the target of mobile young continental Europeans, in fact, the prime destination of European free movement for this particular generation. It started with West Europeans – from France, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Italy – and in the new millennium extended, with enlargement around the corner, to a new wave of East Europeans.

A paradigmatic example of both a global and Euro city (King, Lulle, Conti, Mueller 2016), London's social space turned out to represent the main hub of the Intereuropean mobility, where consolidated migratory patterns from both Europe and Extra-Europe, intersected with the ongoing Eurostars mobility.

7.2.2 Italian mobility in London. A space of possibility, a space of difference.

From the financial crisis of 2008 on, the structural changes in the assets of the European social space, however, changed many of its mobility patterns. First of all, there was a shift in the ways the mobility processes within the European social space were publicly framed. The financial (and then social) crisis the southern European nation states faced from 2008 on, reversed the long-standing subdivision of West-East European mobility. A south-north European relationality, in terms of differential economic access, as well as social and cultural background arose in the European social space⁸, and redefined the moral and symbolic configurations acting on the Intereuropean youth mobility.

In the classification of the Intereuropean mobility towards London, Italy turned out to represent the paradigmatic example of the role of migration in the European centre (north)–periphery (south) dynamics (King, Lulle, Conti, Mueller 2016). This new wave of highly qualified movers is only the

⁸ It is strongly indicative, in this perspective, the institutionalization of the acronym PIGS in order to indicate Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain, as the most vulnerable countries, in terms of economic and social stability, within the EU.

latest stage of a historical model of Southern European migrations, coherent across Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece (King, 2015). In Italy, the cosmopolitan discourses about freedom of choice and processes of integration of the European social space were soon replaced by the “narratives of the crisis”, dominated by key terms as *gerontocracy*, *Italian mentality*, and *recommendation* (King, Lulle, Conti, Mueller 2016). A narrative where the structural indicators of the Italian social instability, first of all the youth unemployment rate, turned out to be the main paradigm in the understanding of the Italian mobility paths to the North European global cities. In this setting, London’s cultural cool and economic clout, and its access to the English-language business (Favell, 2008) enhanced the city’s attractiveness as a space of possible futures, out of the stagnant economy or parochial career hierarchy back home.

Parallely to the growth of London as a global city, Britain faced a progressive expansion of identitarian discourses: a retreat from a “globalizing” world, and a politicization of Englishness, whose main effect has been the so-called Brexit, the referendum of the 23 June 2016, when Britain voted to secede from the transnational formation of the EU (Virdee, McGeever 2017).

Three main elements, therefore, emerge in the making of the Italian mobility paths to London. The attractiveness of the city as a cosmopolitan hub and a space of possibility, the Italian paradigm of the crisis as a push factor, the ongoing ethnicization of the British social space with a progressive process of attribution of a differentiated and culturally connoted Italian migrant status. These processes intersect with the structural condition of the Italians as European citizens, and have (until present times)⁹ reproduced a proper regime of mobility (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013) orienting, facilitating or constraining their mobility paths. In their analysis, however, Glick Schiller and Salazar underlined how the transformation of the structural phenomena orienting mobility paths produces strong differentiations in the reasons, the ways, and the outcomes of the mobility processes. Within this framework it is necessary to make sense of the second-generation Habesha mobility, as a distinct analytical space from the wider Italian mobility. The social fields of differential power they live as differential Italians within the Milanese social space (chapt. 2), in fact, will be analyzed as a peculiar push factor related to their second-generation condition. The elements related to their differential Italianness, in this perspective, act on the mobility processes as a whole, and reconfigure the relations reproducing London as a space of possibility or constraints. In short, the disparities,

⁹ The long-term effects of Brexit on the politics of mobility over Italian citizens are yet to be explicit.

the inequalities, the differential paradigm acting on their social condition works on their practices, their discourses, their representation of (im)mobility.

7.2.3 Second-generation condition and mobility. Subverting the relation between space and identification

In the analysis of the Eurostars mobility, Favell (2009, p.178) asked (and answered) a crucial question:

What happens when you remove race, class, ethnicity, inequality, borders, barriers, and cultural disadvantage from immigration? Answer: you get “free movers.” Nationals of European member states are also European citizens, amongst whose basic rights are those that ensure their unfettered ability to move, shop, work, live, and settle wherever they want abroad in Europe, whenever and however.

In his analysis, Favell underlines the obstacle that nation states rhetoric posits in the making of an European integration, and the ethnic and racial categorizations producing the European movers as migrants. The equation between what he named as the *pioneers* of the European integration, and the representatives of this group, however, seemed to precisely follow the nation-state hegemonic equation between a population in a bordered territory and a homogenous racial profile. Favell traces back the opening of the Eurostar mobility processes in the symbolic hubs of the European social space (above all London) from the mid 1990's on; Eurostars mobility, however, have been all but a racial homogeneous process. In the following ethnographic passage, Billy, an Italian of Eritrean origin who moved in London in 2013, describes the second-generation mobility in a longitudinal perspective.

The first among us moved immediately after the approval of the citizenship law. The main places were the U.S and London. Since 1993 they never stopped. There were some big waves, such as in 1998 or 2002. It worked like that. When a group of us moved it was easier for the others to move as well. From 2007 on, anyway, it never stopped and London became the main place to move. Nowadays, most of the Eritrean teenagers do not even consider to stay in Italy¹⁰.

Billy's words depict a framework of more than 20 years of ongoing mobility from Milano to London, of people born and raised in Italy, with the cultural, social, and symbolic expectations of the European cosmopolitan Eurostars. Similarly to their European peers, they moved in the early stage of their lifepaths as individuals in search of possible futures, and similarly to the Eurostars they confronted with the triangulation, between possibility, constraints and their status of European citizens in the production of their mobility patterns. The vitality of London's social, economic

¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 06.07.2016.

lifestyle, the constraints related to the Italian structural configuration, and their Italian citizenship configured as crucial processes.

There is, anyway, a structural difference in the mobility patterns of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and the Eurostars: the relation between space of identification and mobility, in fact, is totally reversed.

According to a cosmopolitan perspective, one of the main obstacles to the European integration lays in the nationalist configurations the movers have to face, and the related processes of differentiation they are confronted with. This perspective, anyway, is far from representing an axiom; on the contrary it is based on a *sedentarist metaphysics* (Malkki, 1992), reproducing the isomorphic relation between place and belonging as a given. Mobility, in this perspective, would configure as a perturbation of a space of enunciation converging with the nation state of affiliation.

Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility premises, on the contrary, reverse these perspectives. In their mobility choices, in fact, the disjuncture between the mechanisms reproducing identification within the Milanese space (the space they were born and raised), and their second-generation condition represented a key factor in the activation of transnational paths towards London.

In the following ethnographic extract, I draw upon the experience of Miriam, an Italian woman of Eritrean origins in her late 20's, talking about her experience of Milano with a sister who used to live abroad. Miriam moved to London in 2014 and one of her main reference points was her sister Ariam, who moved to London when she was 19 in 2001. As she said:

I used to argue every time I was in the streets with my sister. She came back very rarely in Milano but every time I walked in the streets with her she had to argue with the people. She asked them the reasons why they were staring at us, and she screamed at them to turn their eyes away from us. I grew up arguing with Ariam. I thought she was exaggerated and that the situation was not that bad. After more than 10 years, once I moved here, I understood she has always been right¹¹.

The processes of differentiation she faced due to the racial paradigm sustaining Italianness (see chapt.2), worked as a structural constant in the making of her relation with the Milanese social space (the place she was born and raised). It is indicative, in this perspective, the answer I received from Jack about the racial issues he lived in Milano. When he told me about his mobility's motivations, he did not mention the problems he faced due to racial attribution. When I asked him whether

¹¹ Fieldnotes, 04.06.2016.

racism represented a motivation in his mobility paths to London, he told me that it was implicit and that he did not talk about that because he assumed that I already knew about racial problems and that he did not want to bore me. He said that he never found himself in jail or with the police gun to his head. But he had been searched in the streets many times, and a lot of people used to ask him for drugs. Then he said he preferred not to talk about the problems he had at school or in his everyday life, otherwise we would have spent the whole night talking¹².

In Jack's experience, the overlapping of racial and gendered attribution of the difference he had to confront with, reproduced the relation between the invisibility of his social condition in the place he was born and raised and the hypervisibility of his attributed status as a potential threat (Carter, 2010).

In the making of the Habesha's second-generation condition, furthermore, the disjuncture between the place of origins and identification, reproduced itself even on institutional level. Despite the vast majority of the people I worked with were Italian citizens, almost none of them was *institutionally* born as Italian. Some of them gained the Italian citizenship from their parents during their childhood, but most of them could present the documentation to ask for Italian citizenship only when they were 18¹³. It meant that during their adolescence, they had to face the institutional restrictions connected to their status of Non-Italians. The institutional differentiation, strongly manifested especially in the restrictions to mobility, affecting their ways to socialize the border in times of free EU circulation, distinguishing between those who could access to intra-European mobility from those who were confronted with the European regime of border control (van Houtum, Pijpers, 2007).

As Ariam underlined, when she attended high school in the late 90's, she was among the few with a non-Italian nationality on her ID. When the school organized a school trip she had to ask their parents to sign a lot of documents in order to grant her the possibility to leave. Then, at the Italian borders, they found a police checkpoint and the bus took hours to leave because they had to check whether she was allowed to cross the border or not. As she said, she felt a lot of anger during the narration of this episode, but, at the times of the school trip, she remembered feeling only guilty towards her classmates because of the delay¹⁴.

¹² Fieldnotes, 07.06.2016.

¹³ On the Italian citizenship law see chapt.6.

¹⁴ Fieldnotes, 12.07.2016.

In the relation between citizenship and identification, therefore, it is necessary to consider the historical processes, the institutional tools of regulation and control and the differential power relationship the subjects have to face in order to reproduce their mobility paths.

Institutional legitimacy, in these perspective, represents a necessary tool to navigate the relation between identification and difference within a transnational social space. In the mobility process, in fact, their Italian citizenship, whose social value structurally weakens when confronted with a hegemonic Italianness, turns out to represent a source of great value to realize their cosmopolitan aspirations. The possibility to navigate the European social space, and the choice of London as the main recipient of the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins mobility patterns, in fact, contributes to a redefinition of the paradigms of identification and difference acting on their social condition.

7.2.4 Subverting the relation between hypervisibility and invisibility. Second-generation mobility and London spatial confidence

It is, therefore, necessary to work the relation between space and social identification in the analysis of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility patterns to London. From the mid-90s on, the making of London as a global city, and its growing field of possibility in terms of social and economic mobility, made the city the attractive pole par excellence of the Italian mobility in the European social space¹⁵. In the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins experience, however, the attractiveness of the city lays in the convergence of its recognized multicultural social panorama with their aspirations: there is, therefore, an attraction deriving from a different understanding of the relation between space and identification compared to the Milanese setting. In her book *commonplace diversity* (2014), Wessendorf argues that the production of the London landscape as a superdiverse space (Vertovec, 2007) produced a configuration where diversity, in terms of ethnic, racial and legal status became commonplace, 'unsurprising', and even 'taken for granted' (p. 45). In a place dominated by an *ethos of mixing* (Wessendorf, 2013) where ethnic or racial based group-making processes are practiced but criticized, the clear-cut 'majority–minority' relation is constantly challenged in the practices of the city space (Curl, 2015). The representations of London as a multicultural space works both on the mobility choices of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins (constituting a powerful magnet), and on the ways they framed their relation with the city social space. The emphasis on London as a superdiverse space works despite the critics for its

¹⁵ Considering the number of the Italians who moved to London for good, it would represent the 5th Italian city in terms of population. See: [ilsole24ore.it, Tutti a Londra, la quinta «città italiana», http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2016-02-08/tutti-londra-quinta-citta-italiana-063528.shtml?uuiid=ACpmgjPC&refresh_ce=1](http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2016-02-08/tutti-londra-quinta-citta-italiana-063528.shtml?uuiid=ACpmgjPC&refresh_ce=1). Last visit. 16.10.2017.

romanticized view and the erasing of the field of unequal relation reproducing the city social space (Makoni, 2012), as well as the difficulty to apply the concept to the present UK social configuration (Brexit scenarios and the rising of a racially connoted Englishness as the hegemonic paradigm). Particularly, in the motivations the subjects I worked with gave to talk about their relations with the London city space, the concept of *confidence* emerged as a signifier to make sense of the relation between invisibility/hypervisibility connotating their second-generation condition. Ariam expressed the following sentence in order to talk about the differences between the ways she felt in the London's streets compared to the Milanese setting: when I walk in the streets in here I feel confident. I can go around without all the eyes on me¹⁶. Meron, a mixed-race Italian Ethiopian in her 50's expressed the same feelings about the relations between Milano and London. She was born and raised in Ethiopia, growing up as Italian, and when she moved to Italy, at the age of 18, she was confronted with the processes of racial differentiation. In 2006, when she moved to London with her son, she experienced a big difference in the ways she felt compared to the London setting. As she said:

In Italy I felt no confidence in being as everyone else. In London, on the contrary, there are no problems. No one cares about you. In addition, here I can proudly say that I am half-Italian. In Italy I am just a black woman. It does not mean that here in the UK there is no racism. Maybe it is even worse than in Italy. The main difference is that here they cannot do or say a lot of things that in Italy are still the normality.

In the previous ethnographic extracts, the concept of spatial confidence (Koskela, 1997), the practice of take possession of space, merged as one of the main paradigms to make sense of gendered narratives about racial differentiation. Spatial confidence, in this perspective, represents the result of a re-articulation of the relation between invisibility and hypervisibility, out of the differential paradigm they lived in the Italian setting. In this perspective, Habesha second-generation patterns of mobility represent a way to act on their social condition of differential Italians. The discourses about the "instrumental use" of the citizenship as a way to "profit" of the privileges bounded to Italian nationality, simply detach the social value of the legal status from the social mobility aspiration of differentiated subjects. On the contrary, compared to the cosmopolitan mobility paths explored by Recchi and Favell, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins represent real pioneers of European integration (2009), mobilizing their European citizenship as a space of possibility. Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins', mobility paths, actually, are strongly dependent from another structural process. Their mobility trajectories, in fact, overlap and intersect

¹⁶ Fieldnotes, 12.07.2016.

with a wider process of ongoing mobility uniting London to the Ethiopian and Eritrean transnational social space (Riccio, 2001). In this perspective, it will be possible to analyze the social and symbolic meanings related to their Habesha ancestral identification as a source of transnational mobility.

7.3 Habesha as a source of mobility. Transnational structures in action

We Habesha are very strange. The Community protects you but at the same time strangles you. It is like a chain. I don't know why it is so tight. In Milano I have always been out of the community. I could not understand how it was possible to live that way. And it was not a problem. But here I often feel like a fish out of water. However, they help you. When Eritreans come here from Italy, the day after they can get a house and a job. You call the number X and you find a house. You call the number Y and you find a job¹⁷.

These are the words of Sara, an Italian of Eritrean origins in her late 20's who moved in London in 2014. In the ethnographic extract, she summarized the processes that led her to establish in the city, and how, at her arrival, she entered the Habesha circuits in order to accommodate her mobility paths.

In her words, a number of structural processes emerged. Second-generation Habesha mobility, in fact, intersect with wider and historicized migration processes interconnecting Italy to the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic social field (de Brujin, van Dijk, 2012). In order to navigate the regimes of mobility (Glick Schiller, Salazar, 2013) they are confronted with, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility paths, therefore, overlap with a wider culture of migration (Cohen, Sirkeci, 2011). A culture of migration revealing wider politics of mobility (Cresswell, 2006; Adey, 2009) reproducing the Habesha diasporic social field. Furthermore, mobility trajectories work in the reposition of the ways to deal with ancestral identification. The change of paradigm Sara traced between the ways she socially positioned herself in Milano and London, shows the effectiveness of the transnational chains and their social and symbolic meanings in the production of mobility trajectories. In the next paragraph, I will underline the ways the category of *Habesha* turns out to configure as a source of mobility to navigate Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility patterns.

7.3.1 Culture of migration. The making of Habesha ethnic identification as a source of mobility

I was in an Ethiopian restaurant with Marco for an interview. Marco is an Italian of Ethiopian-Italian mother and Eritrean-Italian father in his mid 20's. He was born and raised in Milano and he moved with his mother in London in 2001. We arranged a meeting for lunch in Caledonian road¹⁸, one of

¹⁷ Fieldnotes, 08.06.2016.

¹⁸ Caledonian road is one of the most significant diasporic areas in the London landscape. Other salient reference spaces are Tufnell Park, Kings Cross, Brixton, Lambeth, Shepherds Bush and Notting Hil (see Palmer, 2012).

the main hub of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in London; a place he used to attend during his adolescence with her mother. We had lunch in an Ethiopian small café of the neighborhood. However, we soon discovered that the owner, a man in his 50's, was an Eritrean from Asmara. As soon as he heard us speaking in Italian he entered the conversation and told us that he moved from Asmara to Milano in the late 80's and after more than a decade, in 2003, he moved to London. We talked about his condition, how was London compared to Milano and which were his opinions about Brexit. I explained him my research, and, at the end of the lunch, I asked him whether he knew someone who moved from Milano to London like he did. He, therefore, told me about one of his friends, Girma, an Eritrean who had lived in Italy for more than 30 years and who moved in London in 2011. He called and explained him my work. After that, he gave me his telephone number and he told me I could call him to ask whatever I wanted to. After the lunch with Marco, therefore, I called Girma. I introduced myself and told him that the restaurant owner gave me his number. As soon as I stopped talking, he started to give me a lot of information about the UK job system. In less than a minute, he told me how to do the NIN¹⁹, he said that he could introduce me to a lot of his contacts in order to start a job and he explained me how long I had to work in order to be eligible for the UK benefits. I tried to stop him, but he added that I did not have to be afraid, and that two of the sons of one of his closest friends had just obtained a council house this way. Finally, he said that I did not have to worry about Brexit, since, at least for the next two years, everything would have remained as it had always been. At that point, I interrupted him and I said that I was not Habesha and that there was a misunderstanding between him and the man who gave me his contact. From that point on, he completely changed his way of talking and after few seconds he left the conversation²⁰.

The extract powerfully shows how different historical, social, and symbolic mobility trajectories, are structurally bounded (Hackl, Schwarz, Gutekunst, Leoncini, 2016) through a wider diaspora culture of migration. Milano has always represented a crucial mobility hub in the definition of the secondary movements from the Horn of Africa to the North European contexts (chapt.1-chapt.3). At the same time, since the late 70's, Italy and particularly the Milanese space represented a reference point uniting the political, economic and social dimension of the Ethiopian and Eritrean transnational mobility patterns²¹. The attractiveness of the Milanese context in the Italian panorama, as well as its

¹⁹ The NIN (national insurance number) is a number used in the United Kingdom in the administration of the National Insurance or social security system. The number is described by the United Kingdom government as a "personal account number" and it is the primary step every migrant has to take in order to find a job in the UK.

²⁰ Fieldnotes, 04.07.2016.

²¹ Milan and London represented two crucial sites in the making of the Ethiopian and Eritrean long-distance nationalism against the Derg regime. See. Arnone, 2010; Bernal, 2006.

role of mobility hub for transmigrants, made the Habesha diaspora space a crucial site in the tactics of navigation of the European regimes of (im)mobility and a space of interconnection with the diasporic hubs in the European social space. The ongoing and overlapping migration flows and its changing configurations from the 70's until present days, despite altering the social and political composition of the diaspora hubs (Arnone, 2010) reinforced their social value and tightened their transnational networks. This social configuration turned out to represent a valuable source in the making of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility paths.

Transnational networks, and their historicized ways to deal with the difficulties connected to the activation of a transnational mobility path (looking for a place to stay, looking for a job, confronting with bureaucracy), in fact, enters as a structural phenomenon to accommodate a second-generation mobility. In a constant relation between formal and informal dimension, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins navigate the culture of migration of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora in order to make sense of their differential Italian cosmopolitanism.

The ethnographic extract I have presented before, delineates a proper process of institutionalization of these structures: the misunderstanding between me and Girma clearly showed the activation of the transnational ties reproducing a culture of migration. By identifying me as a *Habesha*, he put in place his knowledge of both the London context and of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility patterns and needs, in order to accommodate what he assumed to be my job seeking requests. Girma represented a proper stakeholder of mobility who drew the strands between interconnected places: he made sense of his Italian background and of his knowledge of the London diasporic space, acting in the ongoing translation of an ethnic group in a transnational community (Riccio, 2001). Girma's facilitator role, furthermore, showed the formalized structures laying behind the informal regimes reproducing transnational networks. The individual contacts of the movers or of their transnational familiar network they activate in order to accommodate their mobility paths, are, in fact, a meagre phenomenon compared to properly formalized structures. In fact, the relevance of the ongoing Milano-London flow, produced proper organizational patterns to accommodate their mobility aspirations: second-generation mobility, in this perspective, represents an institutionalized cultural, economic and symbolic issue among the Londonese Habesha diaspora. The possibility to navigate an informal market based on ethnicity to accommodate mobility paths, the relevance of a transnational network and the preference Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins give to these structures compared to the familiar ties is clearly

showed in the house seeking process. In the housing analysis it is possible to frame the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' houses in London as *infrastructures of mobility* (Korpela, 2016).

7.3.2 Habesha houses as infrastructures of mobility.

In the following ethnographic extract, I report the choice of Sara to enter the Habesha council house circuits as informal lodger after her first period in London. Sara moved in London straight after her BA degree with the ambition to find a job congruent with her curriculum. After few months, actually, she was forced to choose a different path to make her mobility trajectories work.

I tried to avoid the Habesha houses when I arrived. I don't like this. It is illegal after all. But, after two months, I understood I could not afford the expenses. London is too expensive. So, I called the man. A friend of mine gave me his telephone number. And he provided a place to stay. You can call him only at definite hours and if you discuss about his job he gets crazy. You have to pay him the first week rent for his intermediation²².

As Korpela stated (2016) the possibility to enact mobility trajectories strongly depends on infrastructural circumstances (p.114). Social, economic, and cultural capital, intersect with wider structural processes facilitating or interfering on mobility processes. In Sara's perspective, the facilitations she had in the activation of her paths to London due to her Italian citizenship, clashed with a series of obstacles interfering with her cosmopolitan project as the lack of an economic capital to start her experience, or the social expectative she had due to her Milanese background. Her initial choice to avoid the Habesha diasporic networks configure as a congruent choice with her Milanese background. Her cosmopolitan ambitions to find a congruent occupation after her degree, anyway, clashed with the structural obstacles Italians find in the UK system, forcing her in a situation of underemployment. The lack of a familiar financial security who could work as a substitute of the welfare state (Celik, 2008), forced her to restructure her mobility trajectories in order to go on with her project. The overlapping of structural and conjunctural phenomenon influencing her mobility paths, in this perspective, worked on her choice to activate the transnational network reproducing the Habesha diasporic space in London as a source of mobility.

7.3.2.1 Housing and transnational familiar network. A dangerous relation

Despite part of her familiar network being based in London, she preferred to avoid contacting them. Sara's choice is quite usual among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins moving in the European social space, as well as in the ancestral land. As I have previously underlined (chapt.4), the

²² Fieldnotes. 07.07.2016.

activation of a transnational familiar network activates a circuit of reciprocity that can be hard to face as well as a set of social and moral obligations the movers have to fulfill in order to reproduce their familiar status.

This process is clearly exposed in the following extract where Miriam, an Italian of Eritrean origins, talks about her experience in her aunt's house during her studies in Geneva:

The house was far away from the university. I felt very bad in living there. My aunt's husband was very upset for my staying and he influenced a lot my aunt and my cousins. However, I could not leave the house by myself, otherwise I would have embarrassed my mother who activated the contact²³.

Although the transnational familiar network surely represents a crucial social source along the mobility project, the transnational family is usually far from representing the main reference point to enact mobility trajectories for the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin.

On the contrary, the ethnic based informal housing market, with its regulated patterns and its economic based relations, in this perspective, worked as a field of opportunity in the making of the second-generation mobility.

7.3.2.1 Joining the Habesha housing market in London. Navigating the welfare state

It is very easy. For example, when they get married, they only celebrate the wedding in church without a registration to the city council. So, if they have two council houses, they don't move their domiciliation and they don't lose one of them. They use one of the houses to live, and they rent the other one. Some others just give you the keys and change country, but they keep having their domiciliation in the council house²⁴.

In the extract above, Meron explained some of the ways council houses can be informally rented on the free market. The issue of the so called social *housing frauds* is an ongoing debate in the UK public space²⁵. At least 100,000 social housing properties are the subject of housing fraud, according to government estimates. In 2013 a special law was published²⁶ to contain the phenomenon and, during the Brexit campaign, the issue of the benefit frauds converged with the migration issues and was among the arguments used by the supporters of the *Leave* vote²⁷. Social housing, on the other hand, represent a source to navigate the UK field of possibility and constraints transnational Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants in London are confronted with. In this configuration, the tactics the

²³ Fieldnotes, Milano, 19.10.2015.

²⁴ Fieldnotes, London, 22.07.2016.

²⁵ It is beyond the scopes of this work to analyze the phenomena connected to the so-called housing fraud. For a preliminary overview see Palen, 1995; Wesley Lane, 2010

²⁶ See. Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 - Legislation.gov.uk

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/3/contents/enacted>. Last access 18.10.2017

²⁷ See. www. Politico.eu How the UK's housing crisis builds a case for Brexit <http://www.politico.eu/article/how-the-uk-housing-crisis-builds-a-case-for-brexit-eu-referendum-prices-migration/> Last access 18.10.2017

social houses tenants enact, open a proper market where stakeholders play a crucial role. In Sara's experience, the *Delalà*, an Amharic-Tigrayan term for a professional figure that is possible to translate with the word mediator²⁸, connected her needs to find a place with social housing offers. By navigating the relation between formality and informality, the *Delalà* translates the welfare state facilitations in an informal market in order to facilitate transnational mobility paths. Concerning the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin, the *Delalà* makes his experience of the Italian context, as well as his knowledge of the Ethiopian and Eritrean houses availability in London, a profitable source to produce an ethnicity based housing market. This informal market, therefore, allows Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to unbind their mobility projects from the reproduction of a transnational familiar network. This market does not follow any line of internal differentiation based on political, national or interethnic division fragmenting the Habesha diasporic space. On the contrary, the informal housing market is based on subjects sharing a common condition within the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic community, navigating transnational mobilities in London as a space of possibility.

This paradigm is clearly expressed in Sara's first Habesha house experience: she lived for six months with her tenant, a middle age Ethiopian woman who had never been in Italy. The informal network worked in the accommodation of Sara's needs, despite the different nationality between her and the tenant, or the lack of previous contacts. Habesha houses in London, in this perspective, configure as proper infrastructures of mobility: on the one hand, the houses mobilize ancestral identification as a source of spatial (for the movers) and social (for the tenants) mobility; on the other hand, the Habesha housing market allows to connect transnational tactics to micro meso and macro structural processes, from the Italian migrant condition, to UK governmental structures; from the national and ethnic based politics of distribution of social housing²⁹, to the national and transnational politics regulating mobility in the European social space.

In the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' transnational mobility patterns, therefore, Habeshanness, far from representing a source of diasporic identification to navigate the London social space, represents an organizational tool, producing and orienting mobility projects. As I am going to show in the following paragraph, however, common identification may enact new forms of transnational networks, where, far from the ancestral identification, the common condition they

²⁸ I will deepen the figure of the *Delalà* in chapter 8.

²⁹ The concentration of Sub-Saharan African migrants' houses in precise neighborhoods of the city represents one of the sources reproducing a black Italianness in London. I will underline this process at the end of this chapter.

live as differential Italians facilitate their navigation of the London city space. It will be possible to underline the salience of this process in the analysis of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' transnational networking in London.

7.3.3 Second-generation networking. Turning ancestral identification into differential Italianness

I worked for five years at Tommy Hilfiger in Oxford street. I got in because I knew someone who knew someone else. For a long time, the manager was an Italian Eritrean from Milano. Then I argued with the new manager and left. Anyway, five years were enough [...] I don't know how many of my friends from Italy contacted me to have a job or to make one of their friend getting in. This is the reason why the places where we work at the beginning are usually the same³⁰.

This extract was part of a conversation I had with Miki, a 25 years old Italian of Eritrean origin who moved from Milano to London in 2011. In Miki's description of his working paths in London, a strong transnational chain interconnecting the Milanese of Eritrean origins with the London space emerges. As I have already underlined (chapt. 7.1), second-generation mobility patterns connecting Milano to London are far from being a new phenomenon. Different mobile generations at different migration stages, and within different structural settings, however, turned to intersect within the London space.

Job seeking, together with the housing, represents a primary issue of the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins mobility patterns. Both for the movers in search of opportunities they did not find in Italy, and for aspiring cosmopolitan subjects moving in London for higher education programs, job is crucial. For many of the Italian of Ethiopian origin studying in London, job experience in fact may not only help them affording the expensive London standards, but it may represent a necessary step to start an academic path. The expensiveness of tuition fees and living costs to complete an academic cycle in the UK would make them impossible to afford for most of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins³¹. There are, anyway, historicized tactics to navigate the structural constraints of the UK academic system.

As Jack, an Italian of Eritrean origin in his 20's who started the university in 2015 stated:

I owe everything to my cousin. He explained me how could I afford university. After just three months working, it is possible to apply for a position of Job-Working Part-Time Student, and be eligible for a tuition

³⁰ Fieldnotes, 26.06.2016.

³¹ According to the UK's National Union of Students (NUS), the average annual cost of living in England (outside of London) for European students is £22,000 (~\$27,040) per year. Studying in the capital city, meanwhile, is likely to be significantly more expensive. See. <https://www.nus.org.uk/>

fee and living costs loan covering expenses³². Plus, you have a job. [...] In this way I am making money while I study³³.

The process Jack explained, besides connecting the job to a wider range of opportunity the London social space offers, underlines the salience of historicized children of immigrants' trajectories from Milano to London as a tool facilitating new mobility paths. In newcomers' experience, therefore, the activation of a transnational chain based on their condition of Milanese of Ethiopian or Eritrean origin works as a crucial phenomenon in the making of their mobility project. Immersed in a social space they do not know, with poor language skills, the "fresher" - this is the name the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins use to distinguish newcomers from those who stably live in London - play their second-generation condition as a source to navigate the insecurity of their transnational mobility project.

This process, furthermore, shows the interconnectedness between the Milanese children of immigrants and Londoner space: a continuous interchange, fueled everyday by the ongoing entanglement of the cyberspace with the public sphere (Bernal, 2005). In the following ethnographic extract, Lul, an Italian of Eritrean origins in his 30's clearly shows the salience of the *second-generation* transnational networking by talking about his transnational *Fantacalcio*³⁴ tournament.

I hosted Lul for a dinner at home. A few minutes after arriving, he asked me for the house wi-fi password since he had run out of credit and he could not manage to top up all along the day. As soon as he connected, his smartphone started to ring repeatedly. He apologized and he turned off the ringer. Then he said that he received more than 100 messages from his *fantacalcio* group. When I asked him about the composition of the group he told me that half of the people were living in Milano and the other half lived around Europe. He said that they were more than 20 people and that the most difficult thing to do every year was the draft through Skype. As Lul told me, the *fantacalcio* group was used to talk about everyday issues, to share jokes and experiences, and even to inform everyone about important events³⁵.

Lul's *fantacalcio* group reveals the ongoing interconnection transnationally uniting the movers with the stayers under the common frame of their condition of differential Italians. The experiences they lived together in Milano as a differentiated group, in this perspective, revealed the mechanisms translating ancestral ethnic identification in a tool to make sense of a differential social condition.

³² Part time students have the same right to apply for the benefits as well as fully enrolled students.

³³ Fieldnotes 10.06.2016.

³⁴ *Fantacalcio*, the Italian name of Fantasy football, is a widespread game in Italy. Strongly gendered (it is mainly masculine) it is a game in which the participants serve as the general managers of virtual professional gridiron football teams. The competitors choose their team rosters by participating in a draft in which all players of a real football league are available. Points are based on the actual performances of the players in real-world competitions.

³⁵ Fieldnotes, 28.06.2016.

Far from identifying in the London global Habesha space, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins produce their own transnational chains in order to accommodate their mobility processes. The salience of a Milanese second-generation condition in the making of the mobility projects, is also counterbalanced by the almost total lack of social connections between the Italian movers and the English of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. The translation of Habesha ancestral identification in a source of mobility, therefore, reveals the necessity (once again) to decenter the analysis from a paradigm connecting a second-generation condition to ancestral ethnic background, and to consider the processes reproducing a differential Italianness as a crucial factor in the making of their mobility paths.

In the next paragraph, by working on the ways Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins make sense of the relation between the London social space and their identification, I will underline how Italianness structurally connects to second-generation mobility paths.

7.4 The intra-european (im)mobility of a second-generation condition.

7.4.1 Divergent Habeshaness between Milano and London

Do you want to know the reasons why the English of Habesha origin do not meet? It is just because they do not need it. I think Italy, England and US can be three different examples of what does it mean to integrate. In Italy there is no integration, in the US there is a lot. England is a middle point between those two. There are some problems but they are incomparably smaller than in Italy. This is the reason why here any Habesha can listen to the music he wants. He can dress the way he wants. I grew up in here and, left the churches aside, I would not be able to tell you where you could go to find English people of Ethiopian origins³⁶.

Marco, who grew up in Italy and moved in London during his adolescence, tried to answer my questions about the lack of second-generation Habesha's groups in the Londoner public space. In his analysis, he linked the processes of group identifications to the spatial politics reproducing the landscapes of Milano and London. In his words, he underlined the structural difference between the London space and the differential paradigm acting on Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in Italy. This process, however, implies a strong difference between an Italian and an English Habeshaness.

The distance from the modality of incorporations of the difference the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enacted compared to an English Habeshaness are clearly expressed by Dina, a British citizen who moved from Ethiopia to London in her adolescence. Dina is the head of the Ethiopian

³⁶ Fieldnotes, 07.08.2016.

Association of Students & Youth in the UK (EASYUK). The organization arranged a public debate where students from Ethiopia and Eritrea discussed about belonging, race, and political issues related to both the Horn of Africa and the UK context. At the end of the conference, I asked Dina for an interview and after a couple of days we arranged a meeting. As she told me, most of the people of the association were British citizens who moved in London during their adolescence. On the contrary, only few of the people involved in the association were born and raised in London. She said that it was very difficult to involve them in their activities as they lived their own life independently from the politics of their ancestral places. When I asked her about the places the people of the association used to attend, she told me about the Habesha restaurants and clubs where to eat injera and dance traditional music. Then I asked her whether she knew about Habesha hip hop places in the city. She told me she knew nothing about that world. Then she added.

I do not doubt that some of the Ethiopians and Eritreans in here like hip hop. The same as others who likes rock, or country, or Jazz. I mean. They like hip-hop just because they do. It is nothing like the black black British. We define ourselves as East-Africans and, after all, we have very few contact points with them³⁷.

Marco and Dina's words, trace a strong line of differentiation between the British people of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' ways to deal with the London space and the social, cultural, and symbolic sources the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins constantly reproduce in the Milanese context.

The British patterns of Habesha reproduction, actually, strongly recalls Madebo's analysis on the social meanings related to an Habesha identification in Seattle (U.S.), one of the main global hubs of Ethiopian and Eritrean historicized paths of mobility. Madebo (2014) defines Habesha as a way to deal with a *non-white identity* within American binary Black/White racial landscapes.

Madebo works the public medial representation about this binary relation, emphasizing how a racial paradigm associating Habeshaness to Black Americanness, would represent a diminishing attribution in the self-representation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean subjects. The American public representations identifying as Black the correlative of being African American, made her state that:

If one claims blackness without Habeshaness (which within current popular discourses emphasizes a greater and collective identity that de-emphasizes ethnic and national differences) then the result will be a reduction in access to resources which are necessary for attaining the "American dream" (Madebo, 2014).

³⁷ Fieldnotes, 24.07.2016.

The distance of the ethnonym Habesha from the American blackness, therefore, represents a way to resist a racializing paradigm that, at the same time, contributes to its reinforcement (Habecker, 2012).

Dina's words I previously reported powerfully translate the racial paradigm sustaining an American Habeshaness within the British context. Her classification between "*Black Black*" and "*East African*" poignantly emphasize the public attributions about race and class in the British public discourse.

The racial isomorphism between American and British Habeshaness, however, follows the same paths of the incorporation modalities of the black condition both in America and in Britain.

As stated by Stuart Hall (1999):

A distinctive feature of the new Black British identity is the extent to which it has been Americanized. Its ideal images, its stylistic references are very powerfully Black American. Even though the style may be indigenized, given a British home-grown stamp, all leads come from Afro-America. The lines of Black transatlantic communication grow ever more complex and intense. And that too has consequences for the relation to Blackness (Hall, 1999:129).

The incorporation of a black British identity among the postcolonial British³⁸ on the model of the Afro American, in this perspective, allowed both for the reproduction of hegemonic notions of global blackness, and for the development of counter-hegemonic racial expressions in the British social landscape (Codrington, 2006).

The incorporation of a global blackness as a counter hegemonic discourse, actually, structurally connotate the Habesha's second-generation condition compared with Italianness (see chapt.2). The historical formations forcing in a racial paradigm the Ethiopian and Eritrean postcolonial presence in Italy, acted on their models of incorporation of the difference reproducing global blackness as a space of subjectivity.

In this perspective, a common ethnic ground between Italians and British of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, clashes with the structural processes reproducing their condition in the places where they were born and raised, and produces different understandings of the relation between place and identification in London. The distance from the global blackness connotating British Habeshaness represents in the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins one of the main attractive sources in the

³⁸ A deep analysis on the Postcolonial flow in the UK and the making of a Black Britishness goes far beyond the purposes of the work. For an historical analysis of the relation between Black postcolonial migration and Britishness see among the others: Rex, Tomlinson, 1979; Lunn, 1980; Lorimer Douglas, 1978; Walvin, 1973; Little, 2013 [1972]; Davison, 1966. For an analysis of postcoloniality in the UK see: Gilroy, 1987; Gilroy, 2004.

activation of their mobility paths. The imaginaries of blackness connected to South London, and especially to the Brixton area, represent a symbolic attractive source of primary value.

This is the experience of Ghile, an Italian of Eritrean origins in his late 30's who moved in London in 2014. In his experience Brixton represented the exaltation of his Milanese blackness. Ghile used to be a quite well-known rapper in Milano and his mobility path started precisely to pursue his career as a musician. Once in London, anyway, he confronted with the harsh situation of the new setting, and he started to make a living between the formal and informal economy of the neighborhood. His everyday activities were made of occasional jobs, buying and selling activities, drug dealing, loans: the marginalized component of the neighborhood of Brixton represented his primary market. Anyway, all along the interview he was proud of his condition, he repeatedly blamed the Italian context and he said he finally felt free in London³⁹. The informal space of the black Brixton, therefore, represented to him a space of social legitimacy where to navigate a socially recognized and undisputed blackness as a self-valuable attribute.

The attractiveness of the Brixton area, anyway, can be traced even in the activation of mobility paths for cosmopolitan purposes. As Marta, an Italian woman of Eritrean origins who moved in London in 2014 for a MA degree stated:

M: We all know about Brixton since our childhood. We dream about that place. When I moved to London I wanted to live for a couple of months in Brixton and it was one of the best experiences in my whole life. Now I hardly go there. When I manage to go out at night I go mostly in places like Shoreditch, or Camden that are easier to reach. Brixton is too far away.

G: How often you go to Habesha neighborhood such as Caledonian Road?

M: I have never been there. I have been sometimes in Habesha clubs for parties. But is very rare. I mean... I do not think that you usually go to Clerkenwell neighborhood. Nevertheless, it is full of Italians⁴⁰.

While Marta's social capital and cosmopolitan attitude did not prevent her to consider the symbolic imaginaries related to Brixton as an attractive source, at the same time, she emphasized the nonsense of the equation between an ancestral shared belonging and a shared lifestyle under a common Habeshanness. The possibility to live an everyday life where racial paradigms produces incomparably lower constraints compared to the Italian context, allows Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to navigate the London space regardless of ethnic or racial connotations. Marta's reference places in London, after all, represented some of the most important leisure time hub of the London city landscape. The deactivation of the differential paradigms reproducing Italianness in

³⁹ Fieldnotes, 6.07.2016.

⁴⁰ Fieldnotes, 26.07.2016.

mobility, therefore, allows them to overturn the categories of visibility and invisibility they are confronted with in the Milanese space. Compared to the invisibility of their condition in Milano and the hypervisibility of their racialized bodies in the public space, British racial visibility allows them to be *invisible* in the London public landscape.

This process implies a radical change of their ways to deal with social identification in the London multicultural space: the possibility to join the circuits of blackness as a space of subjectivity as well as to navigate the London landscape out of a racialized paradigm redefined many of the ways they socially sited in the Milanese public space before they left for their mobility paths.

7.4.2 Changing of the paths of identification

The analysis, therefore, underline the overturning of the tools of self-representation Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enacted to make sense of their differential Italianness. This process is strongly effective in the ways they dealt with leisure time in London, a crucial aspect of their social life in Milano (see Chapt.2). The lack of social recognition within the Italian space and the racializing paradigm they were constantly confronted with, acted in the production of an Habesha social identification merely connected to the leisure time (see Chapt.2- chapt.8). The necessity to perform their status in the antistructural space of the night parties, anyway, weakened in the London contest. In this perspective, Jack's words about his relation with leisure time in London is very explicative.

I hardly go out at night. Actually, I work most of the time. However, I often forgot even that it is Saturday.

When I was in Milano on Saturday night there was no doubt. I had to go partying even if I was sick⁴¹.

On the other hand, most of the people I worked with in London represented the narratives about their Milanese parties as something related to their past, and many of them regretted that period of their life. These are the words of Ariam, comparing the parties in the late 90s' in Milano with the present situation in the rare times she parties during her holidays in Milano.

Almost nothing changed. I mean it is still very nice that we can all meet at night. It would be impossible in here. But it is almost the same. Someone drinks too much and they start to fight. Even among women I assisted to incredible fights for apparent trivial motivations. There is too much frustration⁴².

Ariam's words directly link the relevance of the night parties to the social condition of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. Their need for a space of legitimation out of the structural processes of differentiation connotating their social life in Milano made the second-generation

⁴¹ Fieldnotes, 01.07.2016.

⁴² Fieldnotes, 04.08.2016.

Habesha's parties a crucial source of recognition: the liminal space of the night party, in this perspective, worked in the reproduction of a second-generation Habeshaness as an antistructural space.

The London context, on the contrary, represented a space where to perform their social capital out of a *perpetual liminality*, where their in-betweenness does not represent anymore an ongoing state of affairs (Ybema et al., 2011). The cosmopolitan London setting configures as a space of possibility, where the constraints related to their condition of EU foreigner (from the harsh working condition, to the language barriers, to the living costs of the city) are overcome by the opportunities to enact social and economic mobility processes out of a racial paradigm.

One of the results of this new configuration lays in the progressive abandonment of the Habesha mobility networks parallelly to the process of social integration within the city social space.

In this perspective, Ariam's integrational paths in London are very indicative:

It took me 8 years to find the job I moved for. When I finished high school in Milano I was offered a position as an educator. The wage was not bad but I had to leave. I found the same position here in London after a long time. In the meantime, I had to learn English and I had to get to know the city. Nowadays I hardly move from my neighborhood. I do not even have the travel card.

Her patterns of social and economic mobility in London are directly connected to a progressive weakening of the ties with both the Habesha transnational space and the Milanese second generation's network.

I found my first house because of a woman from Bari I met in Asmara. She introduced me to the Italians of Eritrean origins in the city. After one year, I started to live in a house I privately rented with three Milanese Eritreans. Since the house was very big and it was one of the few out of the council houses network, it became one of the reference point for many of our friends. There were a lot of people every night and we arranged house parties almost every week. I loved it [...] after a while I met an English guy and I started to live with him. It was 2008. Since that moment, I progressively weakened my contacts with the Milanese. I mean. I found a stable job. I got married. At the moment I hardly manage to see some of them during the year, and I even do not know whether most of them are in London or not⁴³.

It is possible to trace the same perspective in a totally different mobility path. In Lul's experience, who moved to London to find a job and who is still conducting a precarious life, the weakening of the children of immigrants' networks appears an inevitable phenomenon

We try to meet when we can. But it is very hard. We are spread all around the city and everyone works or has things to do. In Milano you go to the coffee house and you know you will find someone. Here is not like

⁴³ Fieldnotes, 04.08.2016.

that. You have to set the meeting weeks before and maybe you won't manage to see half of them. Maybe one day we will have our coffee house as in Milano⁴⁴.

Lul's perspective shows the progressive detachment of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in London from the antistructural space connotating their Milanese social condition. The more they enter the London city landscape, the more leisure time configures as a space of connection with their everyday life rather than the main source of legitimacy to make sense of the place they live in. In their daily relations with the city landscape, therefore, their ancestral belonging progressively weakens as a space of subjectivity or as a source of legitimacy. After all, out of a paradigm sustaining Italianness, their linguistic skills, their cultural competences, their habits configure them as Italian migrants rather than Habesha. In the next paragraph, I will consider the ways Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins make sense of their Italianness in order to navigate their transnational mobility paths

7.4.3 Becoming (differential) Italians in London

The area manager came to our shop and organized a team dinner with all the shop assistants. He asked every one of us to bring something representative from the nation we came from. I told him that I would have brought a grappa. Since he did not know me, he thought I was joking. He told me that he never saw a black Italian before but he was very happy about the grappa⁴⁵.

This is an extract of a conversation I had with Jack where the relation he had with his Italianness emerged. In the ways he presented to his boss, Jack claimed his Italianness as a source of recognition enacting a process of transformation from a second-generation immigrant to an Italian emigrant (Della Puppa, Sredanovic 2016).

It is possible, in this perspective, to directly link mobility paths to the processes of reproduction of Italianness. Out of the Italian hegemonic space reproducing a second-generation condition, Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins may work Italianness as a field of possibilities in the wider London space. In mobility, therefore, the isomorphic relation between citizenship and nationality may activate as a source to navigate the migration space. On the other hand, as Jack's experience shows, the racial paradigm sustaining Italianness is far from being confined within the nation state border, but continuously entangle with the colorblind oriented paradigm reproducing London multiculturalism (Kundnani, 2007).

⁴⁴ Fieldnotes, 07.07.2016.

⁴⁵ Fieldnotes, 27.07.2016.

In this relationality, racial attributions connected to their Italianness enters the relation with the social space, producing a field of possibilities and constraints to navigate in order to reproduce the migratory project.

7.4.3.1 Activating mobile italianness

I mean we are stylish. Especially about food. They don't know how to eat at all. My girlfriend is of Jamaican origins. She never tasted real Italian food before I took her to the restaurant. She fell in love with Italian food. I know several restaurants where you can eat amazing food for a reasonable price. I mean, I know you are going to be here for a short period. But I need these places sometimes, otherwise I go insane⁴⁶.

Amaniel, an Italian of Eritrean origins who moved to London in 2011, connects the symbolic values related to Italianness to his migrant condition. Italian food, in his perspective, turns out to represent both a tool to reconnect to the place he was born and raised in, and a space of self-definition within the London social space. The production of a self-valuing Italianness in mobility, same as the processes connected to ancestral land mobility (see chapt.5), overturn the paradigms of identification and difference acting on their condition in Italy. In the London space, anyway, their italianness enters in the relation with the discourses governing multicultural diversity in the UK (Grillo, 2015). It is necessary to remember, that, despite the ongoing crisis of the UK multicultural paradigm⁴⁷, as I showed before (see chapt. 7.1) London multiculturalism, compared to the immobility of a hegemonic italianness represents one of the main motivation the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins undertake in order to activate a mobility project. The possibility to enact Italianness within the London multicultural space, in this perspective, turns out to represent an explicit representation in order to fulfill their mobility project: a representation whose main aim is to underline a structural distinction compared with their previous social life in Milano.

It is indicative, in this perspective, Jack's representation of the London's multicultural space as a source where to mobilize Italianness.

In any place around Oxford circus or Tottenham, you go there and you show them you are Italian and they hire you. It is full of Italians going shopping in there who do not know an English word⁴⁸.

In this sentence Jack talks about the working possibilities he had as Italian in one of the main shopping streets of the city. By playing on the stereotypes of the Italian tourists without linguistic

⁴⁶ Fieldnotes, 24.06.2016.

⁴⁷ The crisis of the UK multicultural paradigm can be inscribed in a wider European backlash against multiculturalism (Vertovec, Wessendorf eds. 2010).

⁴⁸ Fieldnotes, 07.07.2016.

competences going for shopping, he valorized London cosmopolitan setting, as well as the economic value of a multicultural paradigm.

the shift of categories between their previous life and their choice of mobility it is even more clear in Jack's words when he sited a racial paradigm in London's multicultural discourse.

A friend of mine was going to finish his MA degree and he managed to obtain an internship in a big financial company of the city. He was an Italian of Ghanaian origin from Rome. At the end of the internship the company confirmed him. The manager told him that one of the reasons why they chose him was because he was a black Italian and they never had in their staff black Italians. In the manager's words they hired him because the company wants as much as possible a multicultural setting⁴⁹.

The salience of this extract far from being the hiring process itself, lays in Jack's reproduction of the London's multicultural paradigm as a field of possibilities where to convey a self-valuing Italianness. Furthermore, it is possible to see the overturning of the racial paradigm acting on their differential condition, transforming the racial attributions in a site of social legitimacy.

The Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobile Italianness, in this perspective, turns out to represent a primary outcome of the redefinition of the relation between space and social identification the mobility project enacts. On the other hand, as I have already underlined (see chapt.6) the deactivation of the hegemonic paradigms sustaining italianness is far from representing a definite process during their mobility paths. In the relation with a transnational Italianness in London, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins may easily be confronted with the attributions reproducing their structural differential condition.

7.4.3.2 Reproducing differential Italianness

An Italian company based here hired me. I had to work in the customer care of an insurance company. It was a call center job but they pay you much more than in Italy [...] In few months I became the manager of my unit. They said I was very good with customers. It was easy. They did not see me!⁵⁰

In Amaniél's experience his Italianness turned out to represent a crucial gauge in order to activate a working career. On the other hand, his words show the awareness of the differential paradigms acting on his condition when confronted with the Italian space.

Generally, in the mobility experience of many of the white Italians in London, the city places connected to imaginaries of Italianness represent an important source in the first steps of their mobility project. The ethnic niche of the Italian restaurants and café have historically represented a

⁴⁹ Fieldnotes, 07.07.2016.

⁵⁰ Fieldnotes, 24.06.2016.

crucial context where Italian newcomers looked for a job in order to start their social life in mobility (Pichler, 2011). Among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in London, I met many bartenders and waiters. The flexibility of the job, the high demand, and the fast recruitment processes, make the catering sector one of the most attractive as a starting point of their mobility experience. However, I had no direct experience of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins working in an Italian restaurant. I asked many of them whether one of their friends worked in the Italian food service sector but I had only negative responses. The brief survey about the relation between Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in London and the Italy related ethnic working, does not prove anything but the fact that working activities related to Italianness are not part of the explicit representations the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins put in place in order to make sense of their mobility projects.

In the next ethnographic extract, it will be possible to better understand the structural processes behind the lack of an isomorphic relation between London's space of Italianness and the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' mobility paths.

I was walking in Brixton with Lul to reach a place for our interview. While we were talking he asked me to be silent for a second and to speed up our pace. Few second after he started talking again. He apologized for the interruption and he told me that he saw a group of people loudly talking Italian. It happened to him several times to be stared at with surprise and even to be stopped in the street in these situations with people asking him why he was speaking such a good Italian. He added that when he hears someone he does not know speaking English with an Italian accent, far from translating in Italian, he reinforces his black British accent in order to avoid any comment⁵¹.

Lul's experience is a paradigmatic example of the everyday structural constraints the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins face when confronted with hegemonic representations of Italianness. Linguistic misunderstandings and embarrassing situations as the one I depicted above, represent a widespread phenomenon among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins I met in London. The discursive relation between two of the main paradigms sustaining Italianness (racial attribution and linguistic competence) produce an even more dissonant effect in mobility, where discourses and imaginaries connected to Italianness are structurally reified. In this perspective, transnational Italianness in London keeps on working as a space of differentiation, reproducing the second-generation condition they escaped from.

⁵¹ Fieldnotes, 24.07.2016.

Conclusions. From Habesha *second generations* to Black Italians

The complicated relationality between the way Italianness acts on children of immigrants' mobility paths, serves as a gauge emphasizing the necessity of further explorations about the ways a second-generation condition reproduces in mobility out of the binary relation ancestral land – residence context. A relation that needs to be explored inscribing their mobility patterns into a wider set of structural phenomena that allows to work on the ways the paradigms connected to citizenship and social belonging rearticulate in the transnational social space. In this perspective, it is interesting to consider an ongoing social process involving Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins as a preliminary outcome of the processes I have just underlined. In the following lines, I will briefly talk about the making of a black Italianness in London as an entanglement of the mobilization of legal status, the ancestral mobility patterns and the reproduction of a second-generation condition in mobility among Italians of African descents.

The following ethnographic extract, in my opinion, clearly illustrate the phenomenon.

I was with Lul in a street basketball court in Camberwell, a residential area in southern London. Although Lul lives in a council house in the north, almost every Sunday morning he crosses the whole city center with Victoria Line tube to play basketball with his friends. Lul invited me to spend some hours together and to introduce me some of his friends. When I arrived, anyway, I found a very heterogeneous group of people. There were nine people on the basketball court. Among them only Lul and his cousin were Italians of Eritrean origins. Three of them were young polish emigrants they had met the week before who wanted to play with them. The remaining four were Italians of African descents. Three of them were Italians of Nigerian origins born and raised in Rome, and one was a Bolognese of Ghanaian origins. When I asked him how he met them, he said that it was because of the network. A friend knows another friend and then, the people with common interests get together. In Lul's words he found in the three guys from Rome a way to go on with his passion for basketball after he moved from Milano.

Before we started the match, Lul showed me a video. He told me that the week before, on 10 people on the basketball court, 8 of them were black Italians. So they decided to make a video where, while playing they pretended not to know each other and introduced themselves. The first one said "Hi, I am John, and I am Italian", and the other one answered "I am Italian too"; one by one, everyone on the court said that he was Italian, and the video ended up with the video maker turning the came on his face and saying: "black Italians exist. Oh yeah, they do!"⁵².

⁵² Fieldnotes, 26.07.2016.

I came to know after a while that they sent the video to an Italian of Eritrean origins working on the Black Italian mobility in London. The extract powerfully shows many of the structural processes I underlined all along the chapter. A shared second-generation condition represented a crucial factor in the activation of black Italian basketball players' mobility projects. In their mobility processes, same as the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, they could rely on historicized migration patterns (in Southwark borough there is a 16% African ethnicity compared to 7% in London)⁵³ connected to their ancestral identification. Finally, similarly to the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, they have to face the differential paradigms connected to a transnational hegemonic Italianness all long their mobility project. As it is possible to see, therefore, the leisure time antistructural space may become a productive social space where to enact new meaning connected to their social condition. The structural interconnectivity reproducing their relation with Italy, furthermore, make their black Italianness resonate transnationally and act on those who stayed behind. In London, a growing number of Italian groups, activists and artists of African descent is producing mobile black Italianness as space of social legitimation within the Italian social space⁵⁴. Similarly to the Italianness, whose preliminary social conjugation has been produced in the early 20th century out of the nation state territory (see chapt.1), black Italianness works as a growing space of legitimation to identify a condition out of the immobile paradigm of a spacially bounded hegemonic Italianness. The process implies a structural transformation of the ethnic paradigm reproducing the Italian conjugation of term "second generation" itself, and a shift on the unequal racial relations reproducing their social condition.

In the next chapter I will try to make sense of the mobilization of the social and symbolic meanings related to a second-generation condition without a process of spatial mobility. By working on the relation between Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and the diaspora space of Porta Venezia, I will work on the tactics of deactivation of a differential Italianness within a hypermobile space.

⁵³ See Southwark. Key facts Demographic Factsheet May 2015 www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

⁵⁴ There is already a Web series on mobile black Italians called "Expats" by Johanne Affricot, talking about the mobility paths of the black Italians to London and New York. <http://theexpats.griotmag.com/it/about/>

Chapter 8: The second-generation condition and the diaspora space of Porta Venezia. Spatial immobility and the mobilization of the national paradigm in the Black Mediterranean

8.1 Porta Venezia as a space of disconnection from hegemonic Italianness

You know, they themselves call it Sheraton¹. They make fun of the reception. [...] I have no regrets for the mobilization but if I could go back I would have made different choices. Until one year ago I knew nothing about this neighborhood².

Tommy, an Italian citizen of Ethiopian origins in his 30's, talked about the refugees' reception in the neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia. Tommy had been one of the most active in the organization of the march "We are all on that ship", and until the mid' 2014 he was strongly involved in the "Committee 3.0". As I have already pointed out (see Chapt. 3), the formal disengagement of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins from the Porta Venezia refugees' reception increased in parallel to its institutionalization in the Milanese public discourse. Tommy's critics to the refugees' reception, anyway, seemed to totally recuse his previous engagement. In fact, the extract I have just reported, is a part of a conversation we had a few days after the shipwreck of the 18th of April 2015 in the Sicilian channel, one of the most deadly in the Mediterranean Sea, where between 700 and 900 people drowned³. He told me about a message he received from an Italian woman of Eritrean origins: she asked him to organize a new march in the neighborhood since the situation was even worse than 2013. Tommy focused on a part of the message where his friend underlined the necessity to make another "apolitical" demonstration as it was in 2013. Then he told me that it was simply irresponsible to think that a mobilization about these issues could have been politically neutral. Furthermore, he added that the mobilization, as the refugees' reception, was simply useless, since everything started from a wrong set of questions. In Tommy's opinion, it was crucial to ask why boats were sinking and why people were compelled to make that journey. In this respect, he concluded that since asylum seekers were mainly Eritreans and Eritrean diaspora itself did not take a clear position on their government despite what happened right in front of them, he did not feel the desire to act in any way.

¹ Sheraton is a chain of luxury resorts, and one of the most prestigious hotel in Addis Ababa.

² Fieldnotes, Milano, 22.04.2015.

³ On the 20th of April 2015, following the shipwreck, EU ministers proposed to double the size of Operation Triton and had a wider mandate to conduct search and rescue operations across the Mediterranean Sea compared to the previous limitation of 30 km from the Italian coasts.

Tommy's positionality about refugees in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, identifies the opening of a new discursive space in the making of a second-generation Habeshanness. In his words, the emphasis on a common identification with the asylum seekers was totally absent. At the same time, he denied any willingness to engage in the Milanese public discourse over the refugees' reception. On the contrary, the national divisions of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora arose as a primary issue to orient his social positioning.

Tommy talked about these issues in the club he ran from the end of 2014 in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia. Together with his girlfriend Mariam, an Ethiopian woman in her late 30's who moved to Milano in 2007, he decided to open an activity working as a coffee shop in the morning and as a club in the evening. The club was mainly directed to the people of the 'generation asylum' (both Ethiopians and Eritreans), attending the diaspora space of Porta Venezia and Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins (mainly underclass men). In contrast, the white Italian residents of the neighborhood were almost absent from the place.

The situation I have just illustrated configures a new social setting in the reproduction of a second-generation condition.

Porta Venezia, actually, is not a neutral space within the spatial economy of the Milanese city. The diasporic setting, in fact, clashes with the centrality of the neighborhood and the high social status of its residents and habitués. The diaspora space of Porta Venezia, therefore, configures as a racially connoted space structurally subjected to the othering processes (Wacquant, 1997) reproducing hegemonic representations of the Italianness. By reproducing the everyday dynamics of the diaspora space as a source of identification, therefore, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins establish a proper fracture between their social positioning and the wider Milanese space. The present situation, in fact, breaks the opposition between "Italians" and "immigrants", a binary logic that, as Dal Lago (1999) pointed out, structurally relegated immigrants to the status of "nonpersons" through a set of legal, discursive and symbolic opposition compared to Italians.

The new relevance of the diaspora neighborhood of Porta Venezia as a social, economic and symbolic site of identification for the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, on the one hand, reverses many of the primary sources of identification that have until recently reproduced a second-generation Habeshanness in Milano (see chapt. 2). On the other hand, it seems to represent the expression of a proper transition to their ancestral belonging. As Levitt pointed out (2009), configuring as subjects structurally embedded in a transnational social field, second generations may, at some turning points of their lives, activate their ancestral identification as a tool to better

navigate the social settings they live. In this perspective, we should configurate the end of the *second-generation* refugees' reception in Porta Venezia (see chapt.3), as a proper post-liminal phase. The expertise they gained in the everyday practice of the diaspora neighborhood, as well as the processes of marginalization due to the institutionalization of the humanitarian paradigm in Porta Venezia⁴ cutting them off a public recognition, should have led them to embrace practices, discourses, and ways of living connected to their ancestral belonging.

However, and seemingly to the process of the "return" to the ancestral (see chapt.4-5-6), the new configuration of a second-generation Habeshanness in Milano is neither a finalistic project, nor the natural outcome of their structural doubleness (Silverstein, 2005). As I will show along the chapter, their social positioning in the neighborhood is far from representing the reproduction of both their parents and the generation asylum social identification. On the contrary, a second-generation Habeshanness in Porta Venezia represents a vantage point to explore the processes of redefinition of the isomorphic relation between space and social identification (Wimmer, Glick Schiller, 2002) reproducing the hegemonic categories of national belonging.

A redefinition laying in the articulation between transnational mobility over the Mediterranean route and the processes of reproduction of a hegemonic Italianness in its historicized, ethical, and discursive forms. Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins involvement in the diaspora space of Porta Venezia, rather than a call for an ancestral identification or the expression of their social hybridity, therefore, can be pivotal to explore the processes of navigation of their second-generation condition in the wake of what some scholars have started to call the Black Mediterranean. In this chapter, drawing on the overlapping of the structural processes entering in the reproduction of a second-generation condition, I will frame the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins presence in the neighborhood as a process of mobilization of their differential Italianness out of the hegemonic national paradigm. The children of immigrants' engagement in the economic, social and symbolic space of the diaspora, similarly to the spatial mobility processes I explored in the previous chapters, will be investigated as a field of possibility where to work their Italianness as a source of social legitimation. The aim of this chapter is twofold: on the one hand it aims at breaking the isomorphic relation between spatial immobility and the national paradigm in the present interconnected social scenario, and, on the other hand, it underlines the disenfranchisement

⁴ Social exclusion and incorporated expertise represent the two main paradigms in the analysis of children of immigrants' identification shifts. In this regard See chapt.4.

between the processes reproducing the hegemonic national structures and the second-generation condition.

8.2 The refugees' flow out of an hegemonic Italianness

Let's take back Tommy's starting sentence, when he made a comparison between the refugees' reception in Porta Venezia and one of the most important hotels in Addis Ababa. Tommy's words strikingly resonate with the analysis of Danewid (2017) about the humanitarian practices that spread over Europe following the so-called migration 'crisis' of the Mediterranean. Danewid focused on how an ethical perspective, dominating in the management of the refugees crisis, led to a disconnection of connected histories uniting the African to the European context and to the reproduction of what she defines as the *white innocence* over the Mediterranean route. As she stated (p.1675):

By focusing on abstract – as opposed to historical – humanity, these discourses contribute to an ideological formation that disconnects connected histories and turns questions of responsibility, guilt, restitution, repentance, and structural reform into matters of empathy, generosity, and hospitality. The result is a colonial and patronising fantasy of the white man's burden – based on the desire to protect and offer political resistance for endangered others – which ultimately does little to challenge established interpretations that see Europe as the bastion of democracy, liberty, and universal rights.

Danewid's theory moves from a peculiar conjugation of the concept of the Black Mediterranean as a tool that allows to place the contemporary migrant crisis in the context of Europe's constitutive history of empire, colonial conquest, and transatlantic slavery, emphasizing the nexus between racial violence and the emergence of European modernity as a discrete racial unit (p. 1679)⁵.

Tommy's words denying his previous engagement in the refugees' flow follow exactly the process Danewid depicted: Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins volunteering for refugees in Porta Venezia connected the present refugees flow to more historicized trajectories uniting Italy to the Ethiopian and the Eritrean context (see chapt.3). With the institutionalization of a presentist and hospitality-based humanitarian paradigm in the management of the refugees' presence in Porta Venezia, the social values Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins mobilized structurally deactivated. The refugees' reception in Porta Venezia that started as a process aimed at questioning the shades of an hegemonic Italianness, turned out to reproduce it. Their choice to stop with an institutional engagement, in this respect, is not only coherent but also inevitable in the light of their social condition: by conjugating their social activism within the hegemonic humanitarian paradigm,

⁵ See among others, Proglgio, 2017; Chambers, 2008; Raeymaekers 2014a.

they would have produced the paradox of legitimating the social discourses acting on their structural differentiation in the Milanese context. The progressive enfranchisement from the institutional refugees' reception, however, has not prevented them to act on the flow. On the contrary, by entering the everyday diasporic setting of Porta Venezia, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins joined the historicized help chain of the neighborhood, and adapted it according to their second-generation condition.

In the following ethnographic extract, Mike, an Italian of Eritrean origin, talks about the ways he entered in the management of the flow out of its public representations:

When they manage to get the money, I bring them to buy a telephone card, shoes and clothes for the trip [...] There is always one of us who can help them and give his name in their place for the money transfer or if they have to register for the SIM card [...]. The day before they leave, I bring them to cut their hair and to buy the ticket. Once at the station, I am always the only one who speaks. Once a policeman stopped us and I told him that they were my cousins on vacation. I think he just pretended to believe me⁶.

These words strongly highlight the novel configurations of their engagement in the flow. Similarly to the social practices that have long sustained the diasporic networks (see chapt1, chapt.3), their efforts were not founded on a humanitarian paradigm and directed to the Milanese wider space, but on the contrary represented a tool to help the refugees to navigate the system of containment and identification of the transnational forced mobility across Europe.

Differently than the subjects of the diaspora, however, the Habesha second-generation engagement referred to a set of specific expertise directly connected to their social, legal and symbolic condition of Italians. Their legal status, their knowledge of the city space and dynamics, their linguistic fluency, turned out to be crucial and to connote their commitment. In this respect, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins found their legitimation as actors over the flow specifically in their Italianness rather than in their ancestral belonging.

The redefinition of their engagement in the refugees' flow, furthermore, far from being connected to the exceptionality and the emergency-based rhetoric bounded to the institutional reception, turned out to represent a part of their everyday presence in the neighborhood. The refugees' issue, in other words, represented a part of a wider process of re-signification of their relation with the diaspora space of Porta Venezia.

In the following paragraphs, I will delineate the reasons and the contours of this presence by enquiring into the ongoing structural processes that acted on a micro meso and macro level on the

⁶ Fieldnotes, 11.06.2015.

redefinition of the relation between space, mobility and identification in the making of a second-generation Habeshaness.

8.3 A second-generation diasporic Habeshaness

I came to Tommy's club to meet him. It was 5.00 pm and his club was usually almost empty at that time. When I arrived, I found Tommy with some of his closest friends he knows since his childhood. All of them were Italians of Ethiopian origins. They were all sitting in front of the TV, staring a YouTube video Tommy uploaded from his mobile phone. It was a one-hour length video of a car driving around the streets of Addis Ababa at sunrise with Ethiopian traditional motifs as background music. They invited me to sit with them and watch the video, and until its end they commented it between themselves. They talked about the new streets and the new buildings they did not find in their last vacation, and they tried to understand which part of Addis Ababa the video showed according to the timing of their last visit. Mariam (Tommy's girlfriend), was behind the counter with a friend of hers from Ethiopia. They were talking Amharic and they seemed to be totally uninterested in the video. When one of Tommy's friends asked her opinion about the urban renewal in Addis Ababa she said that she did not recognize her city in the video, and that she probably could not have found her way home if she tried to get back⁷.

The ethnographic extract I have just presented can apparently be considered a symbolic peak in the ways to perform a second-generation condition as a source of connection with the ancestral land. Tommy's club, as well as most of the clubs and places in Porta Venezia of the everyday life of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, strongly worked as diaspora sites where to reproduce imaginaries and symbols of their ascribed *homeland*. From listening to Habesha music to drinking Ethiopian imported beers, from the injera to the ibiscus teas, these diasporic practices can be framed as proper "performative acts" (Aly, 2015) aimed at reproducing the diasporic practices connoting the neighborhood of Porta Venezia from the late 70's on.

Expression of what Appadurai defined as the disjuncture on the global culture flows (1990), these practices, however, show the productiveness and the effects of the black Mediterranean in the Milanese context. From 2001 on, with the acceleration of the Ethiopian and Eritrean forced flows across the Mediterranean and the mobility containment regulations enacted on a European level, the Milanese context and Porta Venezia in particular, reinforced its function of informal transit hub and settlement space in the cultural economy of the generation asylum.

Laying in the relation between (im)mobility, identification and space, the structures reproducing porta Venezia's diaspora everyday life, express the productiveness of the Black Mediterranean as

⁷ Fieldnotes, 04.05.2015.

an historicized contact zone. The overlapping of structural micro-meso and macro processes involving both the Italian and the Horn of Africa contexts, produced a setting where to reproduce a second-generation Habeshanness. The ascribed Habesha *roots* performed by Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in the context of Porta Venezia, in this perspective, turns out to represent the outcome of a long-standing *route* (Clifford, 1993) where the structural processes related to their ancestral identifications entangle with the hegemonic discourses sustaining Italianness.

8.3.1 National identification and the performance of a diasporic Habeshanness

In order to navigate the diasporic space of Porta Venezia, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins had to re-define massively their explicit social positioning. Particularly, they had to shift the practices, the rhetoric, the symbols connected to their ancestral identification from the private sphere of the familiar network (see chapt.2) to the public space.

This process, in the first place, involved issues of national identification: the contrastive relation between Ethiopia and Eritrea (connotating the present relation between the two nation states) had always been disconnected from the ways Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins socially represented themselves in the Milanese space. With their entrance in Porta Venezia, however, it became one of the main axes on which defining self-ascription and otherness. Their national ascription, actually, has to be continuously conjugated within the long-standing relation between multiple ethnic, national, and political positioning nourishing the everyday life of the diaspora space of Porta Venezia. A relation that reproduces on the line between the implicit and the explicit. Considering the collective histories of exploitation and sufferings related to the Horn of Africa's political issues, in fact, it is necessary to learn how to talk politics without explicitly talking about it (Massa, 2016a). Being engaged in the diaspora space without breaking its social rules can be considered one of the main features of a diasporic Habeshanness: a culturally shared expertise that brings the Ethiopians and the Eritreans to walk the line between said and unsaid.

In the following ethnographic extract, it is possible to underline both the salience of national identification and the ability to perform a diasporic Habeshanness between Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins.

I was at one of the many ethio-eritrean barbershops of Porta Venezia, with Johnny, (my research companion in Ethiopia) during his Milanese vacations waiting to have our hair cut. It was the peak of the "refugees' emergency" in Milano and the shop was crowded with asylum seekers waiting to cut their hair before leaving the neighborhood and try to reach the North of Europe.

This situation brought Johnny to explain me his view about the Eritrean political situation. He was very critical with the Eritrean government and especially with the president Isias Afewerki. In his opinion he was the main responsible for the massive escapes of Eritreans. After a few minutes, one of Johnny's friends, Ermias, an Italian young man of Eritrean origins, entered the barber shop. As I discovered later, Ermias was involved in the nationalist Eritrean groups of the diaspora and he was very supportive of the Eritrean nation state's politics. As soon as Ermias entered the place Johnny changed his way of speaking. The two guys started to talk about the Eritrean political situation without using the word Eritrea, nor the word refugees. They used the setting they were in, the barber shop, as a metaphor to talk about Eritrean issues: hence, the Eritrean people became the clients of the barber shop, while the Eritrean president and his appropriateness to rule the country, was personified by the owner of the barber shop and his ability to perform the haircut⁸.

By translating contrastive national discourses in harmless everyday life issues, Johnny and Ermias performed a proper diasporic Habeshanness in order to avoid the activation of contrastive nationalist rhetoric. Differently than the relational patterns of a second-generation Habeshanness I underlined before (chapt.2-3), therefore, it is possible to underline a compression of the social identifications on the explicit self-representations connected to the nation state. The performance of the social and symbolic codes related to the reproduction of the diasporic context turned out to represent a primary source in the making of their social positioning. As it is possible to see in the following ethnographic passage, the reproduction of a diasporic Habeshanness among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins can be a source to affirm nationalist views and reproducing social difference:

I was in an Eritrean club very popular among the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and I was talking with Alex, an Italian of Ethiopian origins in his 40's, about the value of the *Birr*, the Ethiopian currency. During our chat Awet, an Italian of Eritrean origin, entered the place and started to talk with Alex and me. We introduced him in the conversation and I asked him about the value of *Nafka*, the Eritrean currency. Alex answered for Awet and said that even if the *Nafka* was a bit stronger than the *Birr* it did not mean anything since it was possible to change it at the black market for three times its official value. Then he said that he did not care about the *Nafka* since he was Ethiopian, and that *Nafka* was an awful currency. Immediately after, however, he said that he was just kidding, and that Awet was like a brother to him⁹.

⁸ Fieldnotes 04.07.2015.

⁹ Fieldnotes, 15.05.2015.

The Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' ways to navigate the diasporic contrasts and contradiction were not limited to *Habesha performances* of national differentiation; even the generational gaps, and the ways to perform it came to represent a constituent part of the processes of redefinition of their public positioning. The relation with their parents' generation, until recently confined to the familiar networks, with their entrance in Porta Venezia turned out to represent an integral part of their everyday life with the performance of a standardized set of relational patterns and social and symbolic values. The processes of code-switching and code-mixing (Auer, 1998) enacted by Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins when confronted with elders, in this perspective, are very indicative. The social attributions they incorporated as people born and raised in Milano (see chapt.2), disappeared in the relation with the elders. In the following ethnographic extract, an old woman entered Tommy's club to greet him. She was one of her mother's friend. As soon as Tommy saw her turned down the volume of the hip-hop music he was listening to. She started to speak Tigrigna with him; following the Tigrayan and Eritrean cultural norm, she asked him the ritual question *kemey 'aleka* (how are you) many times. He answered in Italian but he replied by saying *thank God*, the translation of the Tigrigna ritual form *Ezgher Yimesgen*, to answer the question "how are you?"¹⁰.

Code-switching, as well as the ascription of nationalist identifications, can well represent the structural shifts the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins enacted in their choice to enter the diaspora space of Porta Venezia. As it is possible to note, the expertise they gained in their lifepaths as members of a diasporic familiar network worked as a primary source to site themselves in the neighborhood. However, by framing this shift as a status transition, hence, by analyzing the enactment of a diasporic Habeshanness as the answer to their structural marginalization, would miss the point. On the one hand it would lead us on essentialist positions, making the *doubleness* (Silverstein, 2005) the children of immigrants enact as the starting point of the analysis rather than the outcome of structural processes of differentiation (see chapt.5); on the other hand, it would not consider the internal differentiation in terms of social and symbolic structures between the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and the diasporic subjects of Porta Venezia. In the next paragraph, I will underline the structural differentiation connotating the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' presence in the neighborhood compared to the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic subjects. I will particularly focus on their relation with the "generation asylum", the people of their same cohort daily sharing their same places.

¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 28.06.2015.

8.3.2 Differentiation as a source of recognition in the diaspora space

Tommy and Michael (an Italian man of Eritrean origins in his 30's) talked about a brawl that broke out in a club during a Habesha party (see chapt.2) the night before. Michael asked Tommy some news about the brawl and who was the one who started the fight. During their talk, the first question Michael asked was if the man was Habesha. Once Tommy confirmed, Michael asked if he was born in Milano or not¹¹.

The questions Michael asked showed the salience of another structural order compared to the diasporic categories of identification I described before. although he included the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in the macro category of "Habesha" he did not follow the nationalist lines of differentiation reproducing the relation between "us" and "them" in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia. By asking if the man was born in Italy or not, Michael moved away from the ethnic, national and political divides of the diasporic setting, and emphasized the distinction between a second-generation and a migrant condition as a significant category.

Structurally differentiated in terms of social capital and legal status, linguistic competences, beliefs and practices, the coalescence of these two social groups in the neighborhood of Porta Venezia, therefore, cannot be simply traced in a common Habeshaness. On the contrary, as I will show in this paragraph, their structural differentiation is exactly the main source that allows the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to find a legitimation in the diasporic setting. In this perspective, it will be possible to analytically mobilize the concept of black Mediterranean in a space of interconnection with the hegemonic discourses and practices reproducing Italianness. It will be possible to analytically shift from a paradigm considering children of immigrants' ancestral belonging mobilization as a form of opposition to the hegemonic discourses reproducing their differentiation, to a source that allows them to mobilize their social condition in a space of non-hegemonic Italianness. In this perspective, it will be possible to analyze a second-generation Habeshaness in Porta Venezia as a proper source of mobility: similarly to the mobility paths I emphasized in the previous chapters (chapt.4; chapt. 7), Habeshaness far from representing a site of disconnection from Italianness, represents a source that allows them to deactivate the differential contents reproducing their social condition.

During the ethnography I experienced how the differentiation between children of immigrants and the generation asylum in Porta Venezia, besides its structural connotations, was merely visible. From linguistic competence, to daily discourses related to their jobs, to embodied practices related to

¹¹Fieldnotes, 23.04.2015.

daily activities, it has been possible to note how the cohabitation in the same places did not imply a mixing between the two categories. Despite sharing the same places, the differentiation between people of the generation asylum and Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins produced social practices where the status of *migrant* or of *second generation* worked as a powerful tool to reproduce identification and otherness.

These structures explicated in different group making processes within the same place, and were even more visible in the daily interactions among the two groups. A good example of the different embodied practices between Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins and the generation asylum is clearly expressed in the ways of eating *injera*, the Ethiopian and Eritrean national dish.

Injera, in its identarian connotation¹², represents a strong site of productive imagination (Appadurai, 1996) in the self-representations of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. The diasporic relevance of the dish and the powerful processes of remembrance it collectively enacts (Sutton, 2001), make injera one of the main symbols of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' diasporic Habeshanness. Injera consumption, therefore, represented a central practice in the ways they reproduced their presence in the neighborhood.

The space of conviviality that activates around the practices of eating *injera* together with the people of the asylum generation, at the same time, represents a space of differentiation displaying divergent systems of socialization.

The Ethiopian and Eritrean ways of eating *injera*, in fact, requires a set of practices in order to eat properly. The eating process is culturally normed from a proper unwritten food etiquette, regulating the movements of the hands, the ways to break injera, the right amount of food to bring to the mouth, the way to swallow food. Some of these practices, however, are in contrast with the incorporated eating practices of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. A good example is surely the ways to stick out the tongue to better eat injera while bringing a piece to the mouth: while, according to the Ethiopian and Eritrean eating habits, this practice is widely shared and fits the food etiquette, almost none of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins eats that way. The Ethiopian and Eritrean eating habits, in this perspective, contrast with their Italian incorporated practices of food consumption. The result is that even on injera, one of the most iconic sources of diasporic identification between the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, they are jokingly differentiated from the "real" Habesha by the people of the generation asylum. All along the fieldwork in Milano, furthermore, when I talked with people of the asylum generation, it was not

¹² On the value of the food as a source of identification see Douglas 1972; Appadurai, 1988; Sutton 2001.

rare to hear them jokingly saying that due to my competence of the Ethiopian and Eritrean setting I gained during my fieldwork, I could have been considered more Habesha than the most of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. The sentence, that on the one hand wanted to be a compliment to my efforts, on the other hand stressed the powerful differentiation between the two social groups. This process of differentiation does not imply merely embodied practices, but produces contrastive positionalities on crucial issues concerning social identification. In the following ethnographic extract, it is possible to note how these clashes may activate even in peculiar situations where people of different status built long term relationship. It is the case of Tommy and Serena (the former born in Milano and the latter residing until her late 20's in Addis Ababa), talking about racial identification.

Tommy and Serena were arguing in their club. Serena got upset because of the ongoing situation of sub-Saharan migrants getting in the place, using the toilet, or spending long time inside, without ordering anything. Tommy, from his point of view, told her he did not want to argue with those people because they were not creating any problem in the club. Serena replied that they were creating big problems, since many of their clients could have been annoyed by the presence of black people inside doing nothing.

At that moment, Tommy turned to Serena and said: What do you think you are? Are you not black too?

By listening to Tommy's words Serena got upset and replied: I am not black. Can you see me? Do I look like black? Are you blind or what?¹³

The passage clearly shows two different understandings of social and symbolic discourses developing around the racial question in the diasporic setting of Porta Venezia. Tommy's club, as most of the places joined by Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, differently than the coffee shops or clubs frequented almost completely by Ethiopian and Eritrean people of the generation nationalism or the generation asylum, are widely joined from West and Central African migrants. The discrepancy in the spatial distribution of sub-Saharan migrants in Porta Venezia precisely follows the different understandings about race and identification dividing the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic subjects from the children of immigrants. While, on the one hand, the incorporation of the blackness represents a crucial attribute in the production of a second-generation condition (see chapt.2) the paradigm reproducing Habeshanness in Ethiopia and Eritrea found its legitimation on a process of differentiation with "black Africans" (see chapt.4).

¹³ Fieldnotes, 04.05.2016

While Tommy's social classification about race configurate as the incorporation of the differential representations about Italianness, Serena founds its self-identification in the paradigms reproducing a hegemonic Habeshanness in the Horn of Africa.

The salience of the differences I have underlined shows the structural impossibility to frame the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' presence in the diasporic setting as a liminal space turning them into diasporic subjects. The structural exclusion from the Milanese public space they everyday face, as well as the alienation from the discourses reproducing Italianness, did not activate their ancestral Habeshanness as a source of recognition. On the contrary, as I will show in the next paragraph, it deactivates the hegemonic structures reproducing Italianness, and, similarly to the mobility processes I investigated in the previous chapters, it allows them to perform their Italianness as a source of social, economic, and symbolic legitimation within the diasporic context.

8.4 Mobilizing Italiannes in spatial immobility

8.4.1 Brokering Italianness

Marco is an Italian of Eritrean origins in his late 30's, with a good knowledge of Tigrigna language, whose parents undertook an Italian surname (see chapt.1). Marco's experience represents a gauge to introduce the potential of Porta Venezia in its present configuration for the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. Marco defined himself as a *Delalà* (see chpat.7). All along the "Porta Venezia's refugee's crisis in 2015", Marco spent his whole day in the neighborhood, looking for business opportunities with the merchants or the people of the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora. He even designated one of the coffee shops of the neighborhood as his office, the place where to find him, or where people looking for him could leave a message to the bartender. Marco's activity was very well expressed by his own words:

Now more and more people need something. Someone needs to import, someone has to open a bank account, someone has to transfer money, someone needs permission to build a house at home... and I earn money¹⁴.

Marco built his own working network with trusted people from both Ethiopia and Eritrea. He had to travel a lot between Italy and the Horn of Africa in order to make his business work; however, he founded most of his business activities in the neighborhood. His words clearly express the economic salience of Porta Venezia in the midst of the so-called refugees' crisis (see chapt.3):

¹⁴ Fieldnotes, 01.07.2015.

It seems to be in Addis Ababa in here. It's all a breeze. If now, instead of talking to you, I went around the neighborhood asking each of the merchants if they need something, I would bring home at least 2000 euro in one morning¹⁵.

Marco made his attributed role of *culture broker* (De Jong, 2016) a professional activity. As it is possible to note, he mobilized both his legal status (his Italian citizenship allows him to move towards Italy and the Horn of Africa) and his expertise of the Milanese context in order to economically intercept the diasporic setting. The economic and symbolic relevance of the brokers (a key concept of the political anthropology in the 50-60's¹⁶) represents nowadays an important analytical topic in transnational analysis, and especially the co-development studies (see Marabello 2015; Grillo, Riccio, 2004). At the same time, second generations' analysis have widely worked on the role of culture brokers of the children of immigrants as translating agents¹⁷.

In his working activity, Marco seemed to incorporate both the features of the broker as a transnational agent and a facilitator aimed at translating the needs of the diasporic space in the Milanese setting. In the analysis of this process of translation, anyway, it is necessary to consider the meanings he had to mobilize in order to reach his purposes.

The brokering processes Marco enacted, in fact, are nothing but the *mise en valeur* of the legal, social, and symbolic attributes related to his Italianness. The legal status connected to his Italian citizenship granted him the possibility to move easily across Italy, the Horn of Africa and the Ethio-Eritrean diaspora's transnational space. In the context of Porta Venezia, at the same time, he found his social legitimacy (and his economic fortune) in his expertise of the Italian legal and social system. In this perspective, he found a legitimation as a power broker (Raeymaekers, 2014b), in his ability to navigate and translate the power relations between the diasporic space and the wider Milanese setting, rather than in his incorporated *Habeshanness*. It was exactly his structural differentiation from the diasporic social, linguistic and symbolic space, therefore, that granted him the possibility to develop his business. It is possible to translate the social patterns Marco has developed to grant economic mobility in Porta Venezia, as an interpretative key that allows to explain the relevance of the neighborhood in the reproduction of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' social life. If,

¹⁵ fieldnotes, 01.07.2015.

¹⁶ The concept of *broker* arose with the Manchester school focusing on the late colonial period and the social changes it enacted: it gains particular relevance in the analysis of the groups navigating the relations between the state and the arising market forces (see Gluckman, 2013 [1955]; Barth, 1965). For an overview of the anthropological analysis on the broker see James, 2011.

¹⁷ For an overview of the studies on children of immigrants as culture brokers see Trickett, Sorani, Birnam, 2010.

as I have shown before, the salience of their presence in Porta Venezia cannot be traced in an attributed similarity with migrants, it is necessary to reverse the perspective.

As with the second-generation mobility processes I have previously underlined, therefore, the analytical lens of the structural differentiation from the ancestral social and symbolic setting can be well representing a useful tool to make sense of the relation between the diaspora space and the reproduction of a second-generation condition.

In the daily relations with the people of the generations asylum, the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins find their legitimation exactly as stakeholders of an Italianness the diasporic subjects are external from. Shortly, they make social attributes disputed in the wider city space (such as their Italian linguistic competence, their popular culture knowledge, informal bureaucratic and legal assistance, their management of the Milanese space) their source of recognition.

The productiveness of this process transcends its economic utilitarianism (in the neighborhood formal and informal second-generation led economic activities arise) but it turns out to be the main paradigm to make sense of the structural differentiation with the diasporic subjects and the main source to build social relationships. This process is clearly expressed in the following ethnographic extract resuming an ordinary afternoon in Tommy's club, where it is possible to underline how a second-generation attributed *Italianness* in Porta Venezia's setting, translates in the main source of legitimation to deal with a diasporic *Habeshanness*.

8.4.2 In search of Italianness: porta Venezia as a site of mobilization of the national paradigm

It was around 4.00 pm, and an Eritrean migrant in his 30's entered the club asking for Tommy's help. In his words, he was fired without any apparent motivation and he did not receive part of the salary he worked for. One of his friends gave him the telephone number of a lawyer and suggested him to start a legal action against his employer. At the moment of the call, anyway, he decided to go to the club and ask whether Tommy could have called the lawyer in his place. The man thought that Tommy's mastery of Italian would have been useful to explain better the situation. Furthermore, he said that he preferred not to call, since, in his opinion, he thought the lawyer would have dismissed him hearing his poor Italian. Almost one hour after, Serena received a call. As she explained to Tommy at the end of the phone call, Maza, one of their friends, asked her for help. Since I was talking with them, they explained me her friend's situation. Maza was an Ethiopian woman who moved from Addis Ababa to Milano two years before. She spoke poor Italian and, few months before she found a job as a domestic worker in a Milanese family of the city Centre. As Serena said, the landlady did not allow her friend to go outside, she did not have any day off, she was underpaid,

and the family treated her very badly. Maza tried several times to change her situation but her efforts were ineffective. Therefore, she called Serena in tears asking for help. Serena and Tommy started to discuss about the possible actions to undertake in order to help Maza. Tommy decided to call her friend and asked her to talk with the landlady. During the call he said that her behavior was illegal and that she immediately had to let the girl go out. Straight after the call, Tommy asked one of his friends to bring him on Maza's workplace to pick her in her house. Then he said: if the landlady does not allow Maza to leave the house, we will enter the house forcedly¹⁸.

The ethnographic extract I have just reported, poignantly shows the processes of structural marginalization the migrants live in the Italian context, and the way their status of "nonpersons" (Dal Lago, 1999) is reproduced constantly. On the other hand, it allows to consider the positionality of the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins within the diasporic space of Porta Venezia. Far from the activation of an incorporated Habeshanness, the presence of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in the neighborhood needs to be explored in the investigation of the paradigms reproducing the diaspora site of Porta Venezia as a differential space in the social and symbolic Milanese landscape.

The daily relations with the diasporic setting the Italians of Ethiopian origins enacted, therefore, pave the way to the analysis of the long-term effects of the Black Mediterranean on the making of a second-generation diasporic subjectivity. The global flows that spread with the opening of the Mediterranean route, in fact, not only reinforced the development of a transnational social space nourishing the diasporic settings, but, especially, accelerated a disconnection of a racially and status connoted "other" from the hegemonic paradigms sustaining Italianness. The fracture in the isomorphic relations between space and national identification, reproduced a spatial politics of otherness in the diaspora space of Porta Venezia (see chapt.3) and distanced a second-generation condition from the discourses related to Italianness. On the other hand, this fracture produced a spatial void where the processes of differentiation connoting a second-generation condition ceased to be effective. In the daily relation with the diaspora context, the paradigm of the difference pushing the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins out of the Italian social and symbolic body, worked as a source. In the reproduction and the elevation of their differential condition compared to diaspora subjects, it is possible to see a partial suspension of the Italian structural categories acting on their differentiation: in this perspective, Porta Venezia turns out to be a site of

¹⁸ Fieldnotes, Milano, 11.09.2015.

disconnection from the Milanese setting, where racial and ethnic boundaries delimited a liminal space of social existence.

It is possible, therefore, to understand their presence in Porta Venezia as the outcome of a longstanding process of social space erosion; a progressive marginalization depriving them of the spaces of social legitimation within the Milanese context and enhancing the fracture between their social condition and the hegemonic paradigms reproducing Italianness.

It is very revealing, in this perspective, that one of the main answers I received when I asked the reasons that led the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to live their everyday life in the diaspora neighborhood of porta Veneiza was: “It is because there is no one left in Milano”.

The activation of mobility patterns along the Habesha diasporic social field they enacted as a tool to deactivate the hegemonic paradigms of Italianness (see chapt. 6-7), in fact, enhanced the decomposition of the social models the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins reproduced in Milano in order to make sense of their differential condition. Those who remained in Milano, therefore, started to base their everyday life in a site of disconnection from the representation of the difference they had to deal with in their everyday life. The spatial disconnection, the change of social paradigm, the reversal of the perspective about social identification this process enacted, therefore, made the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins’ spatial immobility a source that allows them to mobilize their social condition out of the hegemonic national paradigm. A process founded in the convergence of the dynamics reproducing the present Black Mediterranean condition, and underpinning the necessity to turn the attention from the ancestral identification dynamics to the relation between space and identification in the making of a second-generation condition. The diasporic setting of Porta Venezia, therefore, is far from representing an oppositional space, or a transitional site where Italians of Ethiopian origins “activate” their ancestral identification to move in the social category of diasporic subjects. On the contrary, their engagement in Porta Venezia testify an extreme need to mobilize the everyday discourses, practices, and paradigms acting on their differential Italianness. In the next paragraph, therefore, by centering the analysis on the effects a second-generation Habeshaness on the wider Milanese space, I will explore the performativity of this process compared to the hegemonic structures reproducing Italianness.

8.5 Performing a second-generation condition: Liminoid italianness in Porta Venezia

*If we were all gone, we would still be in chains*¹⁹.

¹⁹ Fieldnotes, 14.10.2016.

That was Tommy's answer when I asked him the reasons that led him to stay in Milano despite the most of his friends moved across Europe. It is indicative, that in his words he reconnected to the enslavement process as a metaphor of the racial asymmetrical relations between black and white Italians. In his answer, he represented himself as a subject that undertook the legacy of his differential condition, and he emphasized the necessity to remain in Milano as a form of social responsibility (in continuity with the black liberation movements), in order to change the present paradigm.

Tommy's social positioning recalls Alessandra di Maio's perspective on the Black Mediterranean. As she underlined, the Black Mediterranean is far from representing a mere precondition for modern racial capitalism but it takes on a transformative potential (2014). One of the analytical key to approach its everyday reproduction lays at the nexus of anti-black violence (seen in immigration policy, citizenship law, and everyday racism) and black liberation struggles across the Mediterranean basin (Hawthorne, 2017).

A question, in this perspective is necessary: would it be possible to assume that the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' presence in the diaspora space of Porta Venezia represents an integral part of the longstanding process of redefinition of the paradigms reproducing a hegemonic Italianness? The ethnographic evidence seems to lead us on different outcomes.

8.5.1 The fracture between diaspora space and Italianness

Tommy told me about his legacy as a black Italian to stay in Milano, while we were in his club. We were the only two Italians inside. The totality of his clients at that moment were migrants from all over Africa.

The social function of the diaspora neighborhood of Porta Venezia, in this perspective, if on the one hand allows the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins to perform Italianness, on the other hand works precisely as a site of disconnection compared to the wider Milanese context. The diasporic presence in the neighborhood, in fact, represents an anomaly in one of the most central places of the city. All along the fieldwork I confronted several times with the business owners of the neighborhood serving the local middle-class complaining about the migrant presence. The police raids represented a frequent phenomenon as well as racial discriminations. Tommy, during his first months of his activity had several police control because of the neighbors complains. In order to go on with his activity he was forced to make his club soundproof.

In the hegemonic representations of the neighborhood, therefore, Porta Venezia keeps on representing a site of disconnection from the wider Milanese setting which at the same time

expresses 'blackness' as a way of socio-cultural differentiation. This paradigm involves both the external and the internal discourses on the neighborhood. Considered as one of the most symbolic spaces of the migratory issue in the city, Porta Venezia soon became both the paradigmatic site of the humanitarian as well as the identitarian and securitarian discourses in the city (see chapt.3). The intensification of the public attention on the neighborhood, on the other hand, led to a transformation of the neighborhood relations between the migrant population and the *autochthones*. The discourses conjugating racial and social differentiation started to become more and more effective in the neighborhood, with the rising of a securitarian rhetoric. In summer 2014, in the midst of the *refugees' emergency* in the neighborhood, a Porta Venezia neighborhood committee proposed the institution of the *Ronde* (civil Patrol) in order to contrast the "sense of insecurity" arising between Porta Venezia's dwellers with the spread of the discourses over the migration issue in Milano²⁰. The process of *alterization* between the diaspora space and the wider population of the neighborhood, therefore, soon led to the production of an opposite rhetoric in Porta Venezia. They condemned not only the refugees' flow, but even its long-term effects. An Italian restaurant owner in Porta Venezia who opened his activity in the 80's, talked about the spatial expansion of the Habesha shops, restaurants and clubs in the neighborhood. He said he never had problems with the Ethiopian and Eritrean migrants and their activity in the neighborhood, since they were polite, and they knew their place. In his words everything changed in the last few years, with the arrival of the new generation migrants, and the opening of several commercial activities. In this respect, he talked about a project he named the *Coptic cross*, a programmed expansion of the Habesha commercial activities between two streets of the neighborhood (via Palazzi and Via Tadino). The presence of his restaurant in the heart of the diaspora space led him to contrast publicly what he named as the "African presence" in the neighborhood²¹.

The connotation of the diaspora space as a *ghetto* in the moral economy of the city, led the Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins themselves to slide in the macro-category of *blacks*, and in its association with a structural alterity.

In the experience of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins, Porta Venezia's configuration, far from representing a transformative space, enhanced the disconnection between their condition and the hegemonic representations of Italianness. In this perspective, a major feature of the black

²⁰ See Corriere.it. *Porta Venezia, ronde per la sicurezza. Il Comune: «Zona già presidiata»*
http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/14_luglio_15/porta-venezia-cittadini-vigilantes-ronde-civiche-la-sicurezza-8ffe88fc-0c22-11e4-b3f9-bc051e012a1f.shtml Last access. 26.10.2017.

²¹ Fieldnotes, 11.07.2014.

Mediterranean arose. The ongoing interaction between the two shores of the Mediterranean produced outer spaces on a legal, social, racial and symbolic perspective, representing the counter-mirror of a hegemonic paradigm to preserve and protect.

Nonetheless, precisely the features of the neighborhood as a space of disconnection, made Porta Venezia a site where Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins elaborated novel social configurations out of a relational dialectic with the hegemonic paradigm of Italianness.

8.5.2 Play the difference: liminoid habeshanness and the creative re-composition of the Black Mediterranean

I heard about Porta Venezia's nights. I know that is the coolest place to go nowadays. Next time I come back, I will go there for sure.

These are the words of Jack, the Italian man of Eritrean origins living in London since 2013 (see chapt. 7). He told me about Porta Venezia when I spoke about my research project and the new relevance of the neighborhood. Despite the neighborhood did not represent a center of his everyday life before he left Italy, he knew very well about its present configuration, and he was interested in its club scene.²²

In a famous article, *Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology* (1974), Turner suggested that liminal experiences in modern consumerist societies to a large extent have been replaced by "liminoid" practices, where creativity and uncertainty unfold in art and leisure activities. Despite the long waves of criticism the concept encountered on both an epistemological and a structural point of view²³, I think the salient features of the *liminoid* may illuminate us on the relevance of the children of immigrants' led parties in Porta Venezia.

In Turner's words, the analysis of culture into factors and their free or "ludic" recombination in any and every possible pattern, however weird, represents the essence of liminality (p.60-61). In his theorization, even if the liminoid represents an independent domain of creative activity emerging out of a direct confrontation with hegemonic social structures, it has powerful anti-structural features. As he stated (p.65):

"Anti-structure," in fact, can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles (whether authoritative or dependent, in control or rebelling against it) in the direction of radical change.

²² Fieldnotes, London, 15.06.2016.

²³ Turner's approach has been criticized for his division between traditional and modern society, as well as for the excessive emphasis on the individualistic nature of the liminoid practices. An in-depth study of the concept of liminoid and its review is not part of the purpose of this work. For a review of the concept and its present declinations see De Matteis, 1995, Thomassen, 2014.

In his book "Ritmi di festa", Apolito (2014) focused on the anti-structural potential of the parties, as forms of aggregation capable of producing, redefining, reinventing relationships. The liminoid moments of the Porta Venezia parties, in this perspective, exceed their consumerist function and turn out to be the privileged sites to reflect on the processes of transformation of a second-generation condition in the midst of the Black Mediterranean.

The party dimension has always represented a central feature in the making of a second-generation Habeshanness (see chapt.2). Configuring as liminal spaces where their differential condition turned to be a self-valuable attribute, black hip-hop, as well as Habesha parties, represented powerful sources of social legitimation. Porta Venezia's parties, however, have a different meaning.

It is necessary, first, to make sense of the relevance of the Porta Venezia club parties in the present configuration of the neighborhood. In a setting where a second-generation condition is based on the daily co-productions of meanings with migrants, internal legitimation goes hand in hand with a detachment from the hegemonic discourses reproducing the wider Milanese space. On the contrary, Porta Venezia's club nights organized by Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins have a great resonance in the wider Milanese space, attracting people from the whole city regardless of ethnic origins and status.

The discursive relation between a second-generation condition as a form of disconnection from the wider Milanese space and the symbolic powerfulness of the parties as an aggregative force can be investigated exactly in the relation between structure and anti-structures explored by Turner. The annihilation of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins' quest for legitimation compared to the hegemonic paradigms sustaining Italianness, on the one hand led them to join the Porta Venezia setting and to enact a process of structural invisibilization. On the other hand, it led them to enact a process of creative repositioning of the disconnected diasporic space of Porta Venezia as a site to re-elaborate their social condition. Porta Venezia becomes a site where to elaborate novel configurations out of the hegemonic paradigms they are confronted with. As Turner states:

the "play" is thought of as divorced from this essentially "objective" realm, and, insofar as it is its inverse, being "subjective," free from external constraints, where any and every combination of variables can be "played" with. (p.66).

In the second-generation parties, therefore, it is possible to see how the hierarchically ordered categories reproducing Italianness, are creatively recombined to produce a liminoid Italianness aimed at reconfiguring the relation between space and identification.

8.5.3 #PVStateOfMind. Non-hegemonic Italianness and the nexus between space and identification

In order to both publicize and share the memories his party nights on the social networks, Tommy uses the hashtag “PvStateOfMind”. As he told me, he took the hashtag from the Jay-Z song “Empire state of mind”, celebrating New York lifestyle. #PvStateOfMind is the hashtag he uses under the posters of his party nights: at the same time the hashtag is used to categorize a picture of a group of people dancing in his club, an injera dinner, an Hip Hop freestyle video with his white Milanese friends, or to tag the unusual facts he everyday assists in his club and narrates with posts on facebook.

The parties, both in Tommy’s club and in other children of immigrants led clubs represented the material conjugation of these virtual representations. From the use of small injera rolls to serve as finger food during the traditional Milanese aperitif²⁴, to the practice of serving traditional beverages or imported beers as fashionable products; from the musical selection ranging from black American funk and hip hop to the Ethiopian and Eritrean traditional songs. Club nights attracted a wide range of Italian people normally out of the everyday life of the neighborhood. Besides the presence of Italian of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins women (whose presence in the neighborhood is normally considerably lower compared to men), second-generation club parties attracted people of different social and ethnic background as middle class white Italians looking for hip-hop clubbing, black Italians of variegated ancestral origins, social activists, artists, people of the generation asylum. The salience of these nights, goes well beyond their leisure relevance or their economic effectiveness. On the contrary, the ongoing success of the second-generation nights, displays their liminoid function.

The parties’ structures, their social composition, the meanings they mobilize, in fact, summarize the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins second-generation condition in the paradigm of the Black Mediterranean. In the parties it is possible to trace the historical effects of transnational forced mobility paths, the processes reproducing social difference and their appropriation, the cultural global flows performativity and their local declinations. Undoubtedly, all of these processes represented a constituent part of the “second generations’ Habesha parties” well before the children of immigrants’ entrance in Porta Venezia (see chapt.2). However, the new configuration arising in the neighborhood, brought in a specific site (the neighborhood) the salient attributes of

²⁴ The Apertif’s tradition in Milano, started out back in the 1980’s. An aperitivo usually comprises a selection of cold pasta, pizzas, bruschette and other snacks to accompany the cocktails. This gastronomic offering has gradually become so varied that what started out being known as an aperitif has now become what the Milanese call an apericena (aperi-dinner).

the processes of re-appropriation of a second-generation condition. The dis-articulation of the hegemonic paradigms sustaining Italianness, and their free recomposition in the creative space of the leisure time, allows them to frame the structural processes reproducing the Black Mediterranean under new lights. The diaspora neighborhood, under this perspective, turns out to represent a site where novel configurations concerning Italianness arise: a site where the racial, legal, social, and economic lines of differentiation reproducing the hierarchical categories of the Italianness cease to be effective, or, more precisely, where attributed difference itself turns out to be a symbolic source of celebration. Structurally disconnected from the semantic space of the Italianness, the diaspora space of Porta Venezia represents a space where to reproduce a liminoid Italianness, as a creative recomposition of the salient features of the black Mediterranean under a non-hegemonic perspective.

Conclusions

The processes I have underlined are undoubtedly performative. By framing Porta Venezia's diasporic space as a space of mobilization of the second-generation condition out of the hegemonic national paradigm, it is possible to work the effectiveness of the Black Mediterranean in the present Italian social space. The ongoing processes of disconnection on a social, racial and legal level between the diasporic site and the outer city space, reveals the historical, discursive and social phenomenon reproducing the hegemonic paradigms sustaining Italianness. Conversely, the historicized structural contacts between the two shores of the Mediterranean turned out to be a constitutive part of the neighborhood, enhancing the attractiveness of the diasporic site as a space of possibility, where novel configurations of the relation between space and social identification arise.

By navigating the Black Mediterranean *fracture* reproducing Porta Venezia as a site of disconnection from the wider Milanese space, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins put in place their Italianness as a source to legitimate themselves within the diasporic space. The lack of a hierarchical structure reproducing their differential Italianness allows them to work their social condition and to play their differentiation from the diasporic setting as a self-valuing attribute.

Furthermore, by recombining the hierarchical ordered features of the Black Mediterranean in the creative space of the leisure time, Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins reproduce a liminoid Italianness configuring the diaspora space as a site of re-appropriation of a second-generation condition.

It would be naïve, by the way, to celebrate a kind of second generations' cultural creativity or to think about Porta Venezia as the laboratory of new configurations about Italianness. The ongoing disconnection of Porta Venezia's diasporic space from the wider Milanese context stresses the structural marginality of the people living the neighborhood. The paradigms sustaining hegemonic Italianness show its effectiveness not only on diasporic subjects: it relegates to the domain of the *otherness* Italian citizens born and raised in Milano. The racial paradigm invisibilizing children of immigrants' social status, as well as their cultural capital and their symbolic horizons, in this perspective, makes the historicized fracture between the Italian and the second-generation condition increasingly wider. This process, therefore, rather than transforming the structures of inequality on which Italianness is based, contributes to enhance their radicalization.

The transformative potential of this process, therefore, needs to be found out of this relation. The reproduction of a second-generation condition within the diaspora space produces new social configurations transforming its structural order. New meanings, new models of social reproduction, new forms to articulate the relation between identification and differentiation enters the field. In the wake of the Black Mediterranean, an ongoing process of crystallization of the difference is taking place in Porta Venezia, whose long-term effects, in both the diaspora space and the wider Milanese context are yet to come, but whose social potential may generate disruptive social configurations.

Conclusions

All along my 3 years as a PhD student, the term “second generation” and its relation with a national paradigm assumed a central relevance within the European social space. Few weeks after I enrolled, the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack committed by French citizens born in Paris to Algerian immigrants shocked France. Since January 7th 2015, the public debate on children of immigrants’ relation with nationality and social belonging gained in prominence all over Europe (Orioles, 2015). The debate increasingly started to intertwine with another phenomenon that in the last years interrogated the national paradigm in the European social space, the forced migrations on the Balkan and the Mediterranean route. In the Italian social space, where the structural lack of recognition of children of immigrants (Thomassen, 2010) is closely interconnected with the Italian geographic position as a central hub of the arrivals on the Mediterranean route, the political debate on the *Ius Soli* represented a perfect storm in this context. By equating the issues of children of immigrants’ recognition to the public discourse on forced migrations, the opponents to the law relegated people born and raised in Italy in the same public container of the asylum seekers, and produced a paradoxical debate on whether these people were Italians *enough* to be eligible for a formal recognition.

The Italian case is a powerful example of a wider nationalist revival, with the rise of xenophobic and racist political discourses and parties all over Europe, including its striking manifestation in the recent Brexit movement. This is the arena where I developed my research. What I defined as a second-generation condition, therefore, emerged as a constitutive feature of the present national paradigm, and conjugated along the duality recognition/differentiation. Within this epistemological duality I started my fieldwork in Milano, where I was confronted immediately with a set of processes that were apparently reinforcing this paradigm. The production of a shared everyday life between children of immigrants, migrants and refugees I found in the neighborhood of porta Venezia, in fact, apparently reinforced these structures as well as an analytical perspective depicting “second-generations” as so called in-between subjects. All along the ethnographic journey, actually, I had the possibility to make sense of the fact that the perspective reproducing the category of “second generations” represented itself an object of enquiry, whose reproduction interrogated a plurality of wider spatial and historical processes. In this perspective, the Milanese context represented a power field to analyze the dialectic relation between incorporation and mobilization of a second-generation condition out of a sedentarist metaphysic (Malkki, 1992). The starting point of my work,

therefore, was an epistemological reconsideration of the key concepts overlapping in the production of a second-generation condition. In this perspective, the national paradigm orienting the “second generation” relation between recognition and difference became a space of analytical investigation. At the same time, children of immigrants’ ancestral identification turned out to represent the mirror of the processes of differentiation reproducing the national paradigm.

By enacting an ethnographic exploration around the terms “Italianness” and “Habesha” out of a methodological nationalist perspective, two major analytical outcomes materialized. First of all, a wide interconnected field emerged as a constituent reference space in the reproduction of a second-generation condition. A field of unequal power relationships reproducing through historical, as well as political, and economic intersections, and overlapping in children of immigrants’ social experience. Consequently, the analysis opened to the multiple practices the children of immigrants enacted to cope with their differential condition. A mobility perspective, therefore, turned out to represent a powerful analytical key to reinstate a unity of experience in the understanding of children of immigrants’ lifepaths, out of a fragmented paradigm reproducing an isomorphic relation between places and social belonging. At the same time, this perspective allowed to place the duality “recognition/differentiation” out of the national paradigm, and to focus on the ways children of immigrants navigate this interconnected space and make sense of this relation as both a discursive order and a set of social practices.

A mobility perspective, therefore, on the one hand allows to work on the assumptions reproducing the term second generation as the material representation of an ontological divide, and, on the other hand, lets us consider how structures and processes reproducing their social condition in their birthplace shape how they conjugate their ancestral identification in immobility and in mobility. The construction of the ethnography around the ways the Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins mobilized their ancestral Habesha identification worked as a mirror of this relation. Its diasporic relevance as an identification pattern, aimed to de-activate the nationalist representations fragmenting the Ethiopian and Eritrean diasporic setting, has been appropriated by children of immigrants and interpreted as the mirror of their second-generation condition. All along the work, the term Habesha has been framed as a racial construct, as an ethnic device, as a national paradigm, as a source of social recognition, or as a mobility tool according to the ways children of immigrants’ positionally navigated their social condition. In all of these conjugations, the adherence of the term Habesha with the ancestral land dynamics or with the diaspora social space itself have never been at stake. *Second generations’* Habesha identification, in this perspective, emerged as a constant

group-making project (Brubaker, 2004): the effectiveness of this project, far from being related to an ancestral ascription, lays precisely in the entanglement with the classifications they are structurally confronted with both in mobility and in immobility.

In this work, actually, I did not aim to get off an ontological dichotomy in order to reproduce another one, opposing movement against stasis. First of all, in the production of a second-generation condition, the normative relation between mobility and immobility itself structurally collapse: compared to the processes reproducing the national paradigm, in children of immigrants' experience rootedness structurally configures as a route, as a journey to somewhere else. At the same time, children of immigrants' spatial immobility structurally reproduce them as uprooted subjects. Furthermore, by celebrating spatial mobility as the answer to the structural differentiation Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins experienced when confronted with the national paradigm, I would have reproduced a perspective based on a methodological nationalism. By equating the reproduction of a hegemonic Italianness to the Italian national borders, I would have underestimated the historical, economic, symbolic structures reproducing a transnational Italianness and its effectiveness in the reproduction of Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins spatial mobility paths (see chapt.6). As I showed in chapt. 8, on the contrary, spatial immobility may activate powerful processes aimed at mobilizing a second-generation condition out of the national paradigm. The structural configurations arising in the present European social space as an entanglement of wider historical and geographical processes generates powerful sites (as the neighborhood of Milano Porta Venezia) where children of immigrants may mobilize their ancestral identification in order to conjugate their social condition out of a differential paradigm.

By centering the ethnographic enquiry on the relation between mobility and immobility, therefore, I did not aim to reproduce any ethical or finalistic value. On the contrary I tried to deepen an analytical perspective on the social value of this relation in the understanding of children of immigrants' lifepaths, and the structural processes it intersects.

By working a second-generation condition out of the national paradigm, in fact, the analysis structurally entangles with a series of wider structural phenomena: I had to make sense of the ways postcolonial structures, diasporic spaces, and the forced migration issues entangled with their processes of social identification. Whether these structural processes entangle with historical, national and political issues related to the Ethiopian and Eritrean social space, their salience is far from being a mirror of the ancestral land dynamics. It clearly emerged all along the work. The connotation of a Habesha identification as a symbolic site of incorporation of a self-valuing

blackness I experienced in Milano (chapt.2), for example, structurally clashes with the diasporic and the ancestral land's hegemonic representations of the term as a marker aimed at distancing from a black racial connotation. The understanding of this shift can be traced precisely in the children of immigrants' lifepaths in Italy, in their parents' postcolonial condition, in being framed since the 80's as a racially connoted group in the pretended Italian racially homogeneous space.

We can apply the same perspective in order to make sense of the children of immigrants' massive engagement in the refugees' flow in Milano between 2013 and 2015 (chapt.3). An issue that has always played a central role in the reproduction of the diasporic context of Porta Venezia, turned out to represent a space of ethnic engagement in the children of immigrants' social experience only when it intersected the Italian public discourse and entered the altero-referential paradigm reproducing Italianness.

The Habesha second-generation condition therefore, rather than representing the intersection of disconnected social and symbolic ontological spaces, lays in the incorporation of the structural phenomenon reproducing the Ethiopian and Eritrean transnational social field within the paradigm reproducing Italianness. By ethnographically investigating how these structures are reproduced, resisted, modified out of the national paradigm, it is possible to analyze the ways children of immigrants mobilize their condition.

The analysis of a second-generation condition, therefore, does not aim to reproduce a holistic perspective in order to make sense of children of immigrants' identification patterns. On the contrary, by focusing on the entanglement that structurally or positionally fuels the (unequal) relation between *ancestral land* and *receiving context*, a second-generation condition emerges as the material representation of interconnected historical processes, spatially wide social dynamics and socially deep structural transformation. Different group making processes, based on different forms of identification than the place they were born and raised in, therefore, may be investigated under the same perspective. The analysis of the processes of reproduction of a second-generation condition in a mobility perspective may represent a vantage point to analyze the tactics of mobilization of children of immigrants' subjectivities, as well as an analytical site to work the national paradigm and its processes of reproduction in the present global scenario.

In this frame of reference, therefore, the analysis of a second-generation condition may represent a powerful tool of cultural critique (Marcus, Fisher, 1986) where an anthropological perspective over the children of immigrants' social identification patterns serves as a starting point to work the structures of inequality reproducing the modern national paradigm.

Patriarca (2010) in her analysis on Italianness states:

The challenges of the emerging multicultural Italy require new forms of public discourse, less self-referential and more open to the outside world. Creating a more inclusive and more open society will not be possible without critical reconsideration of old national myths and discursive habits (p.276, *my translation*).

All along the work I confronted with the colonial and postcolonial paradigm sustaining an altero-referential Italianness and the racial discourses it enacts. The reproduction of the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins as differential Italians, in this perspective, represented part and parcel of the national paradigm they are confronted with. At the same time, the navigation of a second-generation condition allowed to work on the micro, meso and macro structures of inequality reproducing the relation between a hegemonic Italianness and the processes intersecting children of immigrants' condition. From the unequal regimes of mobility reproducing the Mediterranean route, to the structural deficit in the management of the refugees' flow, to the massive emigrations from Italy to the northern European contexts, the analysis of a second-generation condition turns out to be the mirror of a static and fragile paradigm fueled, as well as constrained by the present unstable European structures. In the widespread and growing necessity of the anthropology to site as a non-hegemonic knowledge and as a privileged space to critique the contemporary hegemonic structures (Saillant, Kilani, Graezer Bideau, 2011), the investigation of a second-generation condition, therefore, turns out to be a tool of cultural critique as well as a space of social and political engagement.

In the making of this work I came across a series of processes I could not explore in their significance because of the structural limitations rooted in the fieldwork experience, as well as the time limits of the ethnographic research. The perspective on the second-generation condition I elaborated, starts from framing the children of immigrants as "mobile subjects". An analytical starting point that takes for granted their formal recognition as Italian citizens. Whether all along the fieldwork it had been very rare to come across Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins without Italian citizenship, the possibility to move, actually, is not automatic in the Italian children of immigrants' social experience. The citizenship law reform takedown of December 2017, in this perspective, has been the material representations of the differential processes reproducing a second-generation condition. Further analysis on the ways children of immigrants navigates their second-generation condition in a situation of structural immobility may open new analytical paths on the relation between mobility and immobility constituting the children of immigrants' social experience. The theoretical choice to

focus on a mobility perspective have been crucial in the selection of the ethnographic sites. My choice to not investigate the Italians of Eritrean origins' relations with the ancestral land represented part and parcel of the location tactics I elaborated. I did not aim at deepening the social dynamics connected to the "return" process; on the contrary I realized the necessity to bring counter diasporic mobility out of the ontological (and teleological) space of the return.

In the making of the fieldwork, on the contrary, I would have liked to benefit of a wider and longer exploration of the children of immigrants' relation with the European social space. I sited the analytical perspective in a socially, economically and symbolically oriented space as Italy is, where the public discourse never faced the differential and historically-based processes sustaining hegemonic Italianness. An analysis of the second-generation condition in countries confronting with a multicultural paradigm would have been an interesting comparative field. In this perspective, the analysis on the Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins in London (see chapt.7), could have been paced in tension with the social condition of the English citizens of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins. Further explorations in the analysis of children of immigrants' mobility in the European social space, in fact, can enlighten the transnational structures reproducing their second-generation condition, and, at the same time, open to wider analysis on European citizenship and the reconfiguration of national and ancestral belonging.

In the present global scenario, the second-generation condition and its tactics of mobilization is the sign of the national paradigm fragility. Despite what I showed with this ethnographic journey, the radical consequences of this disenfranchisement between the national paradigm and its growing constituent part are yet to come.

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