Anna Triandafyllidou (2002) 'Religious Diversity and Multiculturalism in Southern Europe: The Italian Mosque Debate'
Sociological Research Online, vol. 7, no. 1,
<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/1/triandafyllidou.html>

To cite articles published in Sociological Research Online, please reference the above information and include paragraph numbers if necessary

Received: 7/1/2002    Accepted: 28/5/2002    Published: 31/5/2002

♦ Abstract

Abstract
In southern European countries, where immigration is a recent phenomenon, cultural and religious diversity brought into the host societies by non-EU immigrants has become an important public issue. The controversy over the construction of two new mosques in and around Milan, in October 2000, offers a suitable example for the study of attitudes and views on religious diversity in Italy, its recognition, acceptance or rejection. In the first part of the paper, I shall discuss briefly the size and composition of the immigrant community, the socio-economic position of immigrants in the host society and the legal provisions for naturalisation. In the second part of the paper, I shall concentrate on the 'mosque issue' and the dubious emergence of views and practices favouring a multicultural society and citizenship. The analysis is based on material collected from four major newspapers with both a regional and national circulation. The material will be analysed quantitatively with a view of identifying the main 'voices' involved in the debate and the thematic dimensions that organise it. A qualitative methodology of discourse analysis will be used to identify the prevailing discourse(s) and also how the different positions put forward by the dominant social and political actors are linked with specific features of the Italian political and party system. In the concluding section, I will discuss critically the Italian version of multiculturalism emerging in the mosque debate.

Keywords:
Culture; Immigration; Italy; Multiculturalism; Political Parties; Press; Religion

♦ Introduction

1.1

Italy is a 'new' immigration country, having experienced migration as a host only in the past fifteen years. Regional diversity and centrifugal tendencies both at the cultural and political level have characterised the Italian nation state ever since its creation in 1860. The bases of the national unity have been judged by many scholars and politicians (see, for instance, Galli della Loggia 1996; 1998) to be weak and problematic. Regional cultural and economic diversity has at times been seen as endangering or defying the national unity and as providing for an insufficient basis for identification and political organisation. However, there has been little doubt that this diversity can be accommodated in a common national whole and that there are important elements of commonality that make of Italian citizens a nation (Diamanti 1999, Nevola 1999, Rusconi 1993; 1994). The new immigration towards Italy however puts a further challenge to this debate and to the very conception of
the Italian nation and nation-state as an internally diverse community.

1.2

The immigrants that have reached the Italian shores or crossed the Italian borders in the 1980s and 1990s come predominantly from Central and Eastern European countries, Asia and Africa. Although roughly one third of them are Christian Catholics and another 20% of other Christian denominations (Protestant and Orthodox mainly), Muslims represent the single largest religious community among the immigrant population with an estimated share of 36.5% at the end of 1999 (Pittau 2000: 177). Moreover, the immigrant community is highly multinational and multicultural in itself including people from over 31 countries of origin (Sopemi 2000), who bring with them a large variety of cultural and religious practices and customs (Pace and Perocco 2000). Thus, the new immigration brings with it an important challenge at the normative and the policy level. As the contribution of economic migrants into the Italian economy starts being recognised (Reyneri 1998; Reyneri et al. 1999), the question rises of how to integrate immigrants in the Italian society. The recent law no. 40/1998 puts the emphasis on integration mechanisms, including a whole network of consultative bodies and set of instruments (Zincone 2000a; Zincone 2000b).

1.3

The policy question is posed at the level of policy design and implementation and in this respect the First and Second Report on Integration (Zincone ibid.) and an ongoing comparative study (Triandafyllidou 2003) provide for a first assessment of the situation. However the question of immigrant membership in the Italian nation and, more specifically, of whether and to what extent immigrant religious and cultural needs can and should be accommodated in the host society raises a challenge at the normative and thus implicitly at the identity level as well. Should it be assumed that a relatively homogeneous national culture exists or should Italy be seen as a multicultural society even without non-EU immigrants? What kind of multiculturalism is desirable and/or plausible in the Italian context? Is a civic, liberal form of nationalism (Kymlicka 1998: 147) prevalent in Italy or should the nation be defined as a closed ethno-religious community? And if a common civic culture provides the basis of identification among Italian citizens to what extent can immigrants become members of this civic nation and under what preconditions?

1.4

These are some of the questions posed and which open up a wider debate of whether Italy will follow a multicultural path towards immigrant integration in conjunction with further integration into the European Union, or whether these two processes will take opposite directions and a boundary will be built between Europeans and non-Europeans to replace for the Italians, non-Italians distinction of the national state order.

1.5

The question that I want to address in this paper involves a double, policy and normative concern. Using as a nodal point for the immigration debate a specific event that received wide attention by the media and party leaders in the last months of year 2000, I want to explore the kind of multiculturalism that is debated in Italy. In line with Modood’s (2001) argument that institutions and contexts embody values, I use the issue of the new mosque construction at Lodi and in Milan, in October 2000 as a specific ‘multicultural crisis’ that reveals the values that structure the Italian debate. I also explore how the issue of immigrant integration and the overall debate on multiculturalism relate to, and indeed may be instrumentalised by, the Italian political and party system. In order to fully contextualise multiculturalism debates and practices of religious pluralism it is necessary to consider not only dominant discourses on nationhood but also a set of more specific cultural and political features that characterise a given society (see also Jacobs 1998; 1999).

1.6

We therefore need to take into consideration the radical changes that have marked the
Italian party system in the last decade. During the 1990s, the Italian Communist Party (PCI),
the second major political force throughout the post war period, transformed itself into the
Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS) (Democratic Party of the Left) of a more social
democrat than communist orientation. Democrazia Cristiana (DC) – the dominant political
force since the 1950s – and the smaller Socialist party (PSI) collapsed under the public
corruption scandals in 1992-93. New parties were formed during this period: Forza Italia a
right-wing, liberal party was founded by the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. The regional
Leagues merged to form the Lega Nord under the leadership of Umberto Bossi and the
traditionally fascist political formation Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) transformed itself
under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini, into a more moderate right-wing party, the Alleanza
Nazionale, which in the last few years has rejected its fascist roots.

1.7

Among the new political formations of the 1990s, the Lega Nord has attracted much
attention by the Italian and international media, politicians and scholars, because of its
extremist actions and discourse, including the proclamation of a Padanian Republic on 15
September 1996, its racist discourses against non-EU immigrants and more generally its
populist and often vulgar language.

1.8

After the collapse of the last DC-PSI coalition government in the early 1990s, a short-lived
coalition between Forza Italia and Lega Nord came into power in 1994. It was soon
replaced by the centre-left coalition L’Ulivo headed by Romano Prodi as Prime Minister in
May 1996.[3] The Ulivo incumbency marked a period of relative (by Italian standards)
governmental stability. The last national election of May 2001 brought into power a right-
wing coalition formed by Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord. The participation
of this last in the national government has marked an end to its secessionist claims. Aside
from decentralising political authority and public administration, an effort started already by
the previous centre-left government, the new government’s platform includes policies for the
further liberalisation of the economy and the labour market, reform of the welfare system
and a restrictive immigration policy.

1.9

Furthermore, the Italian case is characterised by the contested link between Italian national
identity, the Italian Republic, and the Catholic Church, and the ways in which this link has
structured the political party spectrum in the post war period.[4] Italian debates on
multiculturalism are also related to the issue of regional diversity that characterises Italy
and the recent secessionist claims of the Northern League party (as well as their more
recent abandonment in favour of an advanced version of federalism). The shifting Othering
strategies of the Lega Nord between Italy, Europe and Muslims/immigrants provides for
important insights as to the context within which multiculturalism and immigrant integration
are to be implemented. Another important feature that interferes with multiculturalism
debates is the somewhat paradoxical link between Italian national identity and integration
into the EU (Triandafyllidou 2001; 2002). Moreover, the gradual ‘normalisation’ of
immigration in the late 1990s and the increasing emphasis on immigrant integration coexist
with a diffuse use of terms such as ‘intercultura’ or multicultural education, the precise
policy or normative content of which remains vague (Chaloff 1999).

1.10

This paper is divided into two parts. In the section that follows I will briefly outline the main
features of the immigrant population in Italy and their level of integration into the host
society. The aim of this section is thus to discuss critically the social, economic and policy
background against which multiculturalism debates or practices should be seen. The
second part of the paper will concentrate on the ‘multi-cultural crisis’ of the mosque
construction issue at Lodi and in Milan in October 2000. Through the analysis of the public
and political debate on that issue, I will highlight the different versions of multiculturalism supported by political parties and other social or political actors.

**The Immigrant Presence in Italy**

2.1 On 31 December 1999, there were 1,490,000 legal immigrants present in Italy (Pittau 2000: 176), who account for 2.6% of the total 57,269,000 resident population (as of 1995). This percentage is lower than that of most ‘old’ immigration countries in Europe, like France, Britain or Germany. Although present throughout the country, foreigners concentrate in the urban areas of the centre and north of Italy where work opportunities are greater, especially in the tertiary sector and mostly in the informal labour market. Immigration was until recently confronted through temporary administrative measures and special legal provisions – so-called ‘amnesties’ – aiming at regularising undocumented immigrants, who had already settled in the country (Sopemi 2000; Vasta 1993; Veugelers 1994; Woods 1992). After more than a decade of ‘emergencies’, a comprehensive law was voted by the Italian parliament in 1998 (law no. 40/06.3.1998 enacted in October 1999) creating a unitary corpus of norms that regulate the rights and obligations of foreigners in Italy, their stay and work conditions and other matters regarding family reunion, social integration and cultural and political life in the host country. In recent years, the Italian government has been providing for a limited number (a few tens of thousands) of legal entries per year as a means to control and regulate immigration towards the country.

2.2 The ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the immigrant population is reflected in the ways in which immigrant workers are inserted into the Italian economy. Some analysts assert that ethnic specialisation in the labour market is particularly strong (Campani 1993: 515). Indeed, some sectors may be identified with specific national groups. For instance, migrants from the Maghreb and Eastern Europe find jobs in the construction sector. Seasonal jobs in agriculture rely heavily on male workers from Latin America, India and Sri Lanka. Trading is largely characterised by self-employment in informal activities such as street vending and involves immigrants from Morocco, Senegal and China. Domestic services employ women from the Philippines, Albania, Poland and Eritrea. Chinese communities are mainly engaged in handicraft activities. The occupational distribution is accompanied by the regional distribution of migration chains, that is, the concentration of certain nationalities in specific regions within the country: Moroccans in the industrial north, Chinese in the area around Florence and Prato, Senegalese in the small cities of the north east. It is worth noting that a large proportion of immigrants who hold a stay permit for work purposes, is employed in the informal economy (Reyneri 1998).

2.3 Despite their weak economic position, immigrant networking has flourished during the past decade giving birth to informal networks (Knights 1996) and a number of immigrant associations (Collicelli 1997; Palidda 2000; Zanfrini 1997). Furthermore, representatives from immigrant communities were incorporated into the major Italian trade unions like CGIL and CISL. The integration of the newcomers into trade unions was seen by the latter's leadership as the best way to protect the rights of both domestic and foreign workers and preserve their bargaining power towards employers and the policy authorities. Religious (Catholic) non-profit organisations, the Caritas in particular, have played an active role in immigrant integration, regardless of the immigrants' religious faith. The activities of Caritas have benefited from its extended network of local associations and voluntary networks that exist nation-wide. The Italian state has promoted and to a certain extent funded these activities, which often substitute for public services.

2.4
Thus, although independent immigrant institutions like national associations, political parties, minority media, educational bodies or religious hierarchies have not yet developed, immigrants are partly integrated into Italian structures of representation. Their political participation, however, remains in the sphere of denizenship. Although legal immigrants enjoy, at least in theory, equal access to work, public housing, education and health services as citizens do, they have neither passive nor active political rights.

2.5

Immigrant naturalisation has hardly been an issue of concern in Italy. In a symbolic move the Social Affairs Ministry declared 1999 to be the 'Year of the New Citizens'. Nonetheless, 1999 was not really the year of the new citizens, since the naturalisation process remained arduous and a majority of the thousand annual applicants were rejected. According to the SOPEMI report issued in January 2000 (Sopemi 2000: 34), '[t]he 'citizenship' promised by the government is one in which the immigrant can hope to receive a permanent residence card after five years, eliminating the need to meet the criteria for biannual renewal.'

2.6

Italian citizenship is predominantly ethnic in character because related to kinship by blood or through marriage (Pastore 2001; Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2001). The law allows for foreign permanent residents to apply for naturalisation and does not require cultural assimilation (knowledge of the Italian language, for instance, is not required). However, the bureaucratic procedure established for the naturalisation is so complex, time and effort-consuming that it effectively acts as a deterrent to potential applicants. Thus, while the law adheres to a conception of the nation as a civic community and not only an ethno-cultural one, it does so only in form but not in substance. In reality the main means for acquiring Italian citizenship is through marriage. [6]

2.7

Even though much lip service has been paid to multiculturalism and the social integration of immigrants, the content of such terms remains highly vague and acceptance of cultural and religious diversity is a contested matter. Although the Constitution and law 40/1998 protect immigrant rights, their acceptance in practice is much less straightforward. In some policy areas, efforts have been noticeable. The increasing number of children in Italian schools has prompted to attempts to change the school curriculum to make it more inclusive, although an overall policy for educational integration has not emerged yet. The definition of who or what is 'Italian' in school texts has remained unaltered. Nevertheless, a large number of 'intercultural' initiatives have been launched, aimed at promoting a better understanding of foreigners and their cultures (Sopemi, 2000: table 62; Melchionda 1996).

2.8

The situation in education policy mirrors the overall approach of the Italian state to immigration. As of law 40/1998, the long-term character of immigration has been recognised and immigrant integration has been established as a policy goal. However, this integration is limited in character and does not include a fuller political participation, or the integration of foreign cultures and traditions into the national identity. As the interviewees in a different study (Triandafyllidou 2003) pointed out: 'they have to realise that they are in Italy and they are foreigners'.

◆ The Quest for New Mosques in Northern Italy

3.1

A controversy concerning the right to religious practice of Muslim immigrants in northern Italy has recently revived the debate on cultural diversity and immigrant integration among parties and in the press. The issue was raised after the mayor of Lodi, a small city in the southern periphery of Milan, conceded a piece of land, that belonged to the municipality,
upon the request of an Islamic organisation for such a terrain so that it built, on its own expenses, a mosque. The issue attracted the hostility and xenophobic reactions of the Lega Nord local branch, which on October 14, 2000, organised a public rally to protest against the mayor's decision and the establishment of the new mosque. The issue was followed closely by the national media for a short period and triggered a larger debate concerning the rights of legal immigrants in Italy and also Italian culture and identity and their compatibility with religious and cultural diversity. Issues of preserving 'our traditions' and 'our identity', 'Islamic fundamentalism' and the quest for 'reciprocity between Islamic and Christian countries' were contrasted to notions of 'religious freedom', 'solidarity', 'integration', 'civic values' and their protection by the Italian Constitution as well as the EU Charter of Fundamental! Rights! Nearby a fortnight later, on 25 October 2000, the opening of a new mosque in Milan gave new impetus to the debate and to the symbolic 'fight' between the various political and social actors that took part in it.

3.2

The initial events at Lodi and their follow up in Milan offer two eloquent examples of the tensions arising from the slow integration of the immigrant population in Italy and the challenges this brings to a regionally diversified but nationally mono-cultural and largely mono-religious society. In this paper, my aim will be to analyse the public and political debate triggered by the events at Lodi and Milan so as to highlight how 'multiculturalism' and cultural or religious diversity are defined in the Italian context. I will explore how the different actors define the relationship between the host country and Muslim immigrants, will also highlight the guiding principles which, according to the different 'voices' represented in the debate, should guide the relationship between 'hosts' and 'guests'. Naturally, the analysis will also discuss which social and political actors are given 'voice' in the media and which are silenced. Ultimately, my aim will be to check if there is a specifically Italian discourse on multiculturalism emerging and what are its main tenets.

Methodology and Data

3.3

The material used to study the political and public debate on the Lodi events comes mainly from the national and regional daily press in Italy. The press is seen here as the discursive arena in which public and political debate develops. In line with the agenda-setting approach, I am concerned with how the media describe social reality and present a list of issues on which people need to have an opinion and/or talk about (Shaw 1979). At the same time, the media play a role in constructing 'moral panics', and in particular in this case 'multicultural crises'. The role of the press (and of other mass media of course) was crucial in giving visibility to the Lega's protest.

3.4

The material analysed has been collected from four large Italian newspapers, Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, il Giomale and Il Messaggero, that have a high national and regional circulation. Although a clear distinction between tabloid and wide sheet press in the sense understood, for instance, in Britain, does not apply to the Italian newspaper market, it is worth noting that La Repubblica and il Giomale use generally dramatic and sensationalising language while news reporting in the Corriere della Sera tends to be more sober. Il Messaggero lies somewhere in between the two categories.

3.5

The material collected includes all articles published in the four newspapers in the period between October 10 and November 10, 2000 which referred either to the mosque controversies in Lodi and Milan and/or generally to issues of cultural and religious diversity and freedom in Italy. News reports on immigration and on racial diversity published in this period were also included in the database because they reveal the wider context within
which the mosque issue was debated.

3.6

A total of 209 articles (see table 1 in the appendix) were collected and indexed\(^9\) into a Microsoft Access database. After a first reading of the material, five thematic dimensions\(^10\) have been identified: the citizenship dimension which includes references to citizenship, civic values or human rights; the cultural traditions dimension that covers references to 'our traditions' and 'our values', that define Italy as a mono-cultural society, with a homogeneous and coherent value system; the national and regional identity dimensions which refer to feelings of belonging to the Italian nation or to a specific region or locality; and the thematic dimension of Europe which includes references to the European Union, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and Italy's position in relation to either.

Voices and Thematic Dimensions: Mapping the Discursive Universe

3.7

The quantitative analysis of the press coverage shows that citizenship was the dominant theme that organised the public and political discourse, followed closely by the issue of cultural traditions (see table 2 below). The relative importance of each theme however varied in relation to the different voices cited in the press. Thus, the Catholic Church and the Lega Nord voices coincided more often with references to the Italian cultural traditions than with civic values, in contrast to all other actors whose discourse was predominantly framed in terms of citizenship (see table 3, in the appendix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Dimensions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Traditions</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Identity</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Identity</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = number of articles in which a thematic dimension was indexed.*

3.8

There is a clear imbalance in the representation of the various social and political actors in the debate: the political parties tend to monopolise the discourse having their 'voice' heard in nearly half of the articles analysed. Local and regional authorities and the Catholic Church account also for a large part of the arguments and positions expressed, being 'heard' in nearly one fourth of all the texts analysed (see table 3 in the appendix). Muslim 'voices' in contrast are under-represented, with a total of 11% (8% for Muslim organisations and 3% for Muslim or immigrant individuals). Given that the main events of the coverage, namely the building of new mosques at Lodi and in Milan, started out from a request by Muslims, it is interesting that the press ignores the very 'voices' of the claimants. On the other hand, this is hardly a surprising finding given the structurally marginal position of immigrants and Muslims in the Italian society. Italian citizens' 'voices' are also hardly ever heard (in 13% of the articles) while the Lega Nord activists and local leaders are present in 9% of the coverage.

3.9

Concerning Muslim organisations, little information is given by the press about their activities or role in the Muslim community in Italy. The role of Italian Muslims in such organisations and, in particular, the fact that the creation of the mosque in Milan was
requested by COREIS (Association of Italian Converts to Islam) is downplayed. Tellingly, 
La Repubblica entitles the relevant news report: 'The Islamic community wants it [the new 
mosque], the municipality clings towards a positive answer' (#53), [11] leaving undefined 
who makes part of the Islamic community.

3.10
As regards Muslim immigrants as individuals, the few references to their views or actions 
refer to protest marches in Milan (#92) and Genoa (#194) requesting new mosque 
buildings. In a third article (#91) where the immigrant participation in the 'Rights' Fair' 
(Carovana dei Diritti) and staged protest against the Catholic Church was reported, the 
emphasis was put on the Milan's cardinal response: '[cardinal] Martini to the immigrants: 
you will receive help if you abide by the law. The cardinal met the representatives of the 
'Rights' Fair': the Church listens to your requests' (title and subtitle of #91). These were the 
only instances in which Muslim immigrants were somehow the protagonists of the mosque 
debate. These findings confirm that ethnic minority and immigrant community 'voices' are 
under-represented, usually subordinate to or patronised by the native political actors when 
decisions over issues of their immediate concern are taken (Jacobs 1998; 1999).

3.11
In the section that follows, the press discourse will be analysed qualitatively with the aim of 
answering two main questions. First, who is the ingroup and who is the outgroup(s). My 
focus here is on the symbolic identity politics activated by the various actors in the cultural 
and religious diversity debate. Second, I will identify the principles that guide the Italian 
mode of integrating diversity. My aim is thus to demarcate the contours of an emerging 
Italian approach to multiculturalism.

The Politicisation of the Mosque Issue

3.12
Even though it may seem obvious, defining the Ingroup and the Other(s) is not such a 
straightforward issue. Discursive constructions of Us and Them shift to support varying 
identity claims and, in the case of party 'voices' to mobilise electoral support. In 
multiculturalism debates, defining who is Us and who is the Others is particularly important 
as the extent to which a minority is defined as part of the ingroup conditions the success of 
her claims.

3.13
In the coverage of the Lodi and Milan events, two sets of ingroup-outgroup contrasts 
emerge. First, the ingroup and outgroup are constituted along national lines: on one side 
stands the host society, the Italians and on the other side, stand the 'guests', the immigrants 
and in particular the Muslim immigrants. The two groups are qualified in cultural and 
religious terms. The ingroup, Italians, are assumed to be 'Catholics' or 'Christians', – the 
two terms are used interchangeably – they are 'Westerners', 'Europeans', 'liberals', people 
with 'open minds', who uphold a 'civic' conception of society. The outgroup is the negative 
mirror-image of the ingroup: they are 'non-Westemers', they tend not to distinguish between 
religion and civic values, they are 'fundamentalists'. In this ingroup-outgroup contrast, the 
wider 'West and the rest' dichotomy is used so that Italy is represented as part of Europe, 
Christianity and the West (three groups that are largely seen to coincide in this discourse) 
and differentiated from 'oriental,' 'Islamic' Others.

3.14
A second distinction between the ingroup and the outgroup is internal to the host society 
and reflects the politicisation of the mosque issue in the effort to gain electoral support by 
the competing party coalitions of Ulivo (centre- left coalition in government from May 1996 
to May 2001) and Polo delle Libertà (right-wing coalition, at the time the main opposition
force and currently in government). The mosque controversies at the end of 2000 have been embedded in a pre-election campaign climate and the mutual efforts of the two coalitions to discredit each other's platforms.

3.15

In the press discourse, each party coalition defines its opponents as the outgroup. The division is ideological in character. The incumbent centre-left party coalition represent themselves as the democratic, Europeanist, progressive ingroup, that represents Italy as a whole, and promotes social justice and solidarity. From this perspective the centre-right coalition and the Lega Nord in particular are the outgroup because they are xenophobic, authoritarian, racist, anti-European, violate the Constitution and endanger Italian democracy:

'In the European Right, movements whose message is based on the re-discovery of the territory, on national regionalism and the 'little homelands', have increased their strength. What they have to offer is politically efficient because it does not only promise reduced taxation or jobs but also offers an identity to populations that are alarmed by social insecurity.' (#27)

3.16

In the text above, the similarities between the Lega Nord and Georg Haider in Austria are implicitly emphasised. Moreover, the two are framed as part of the 'European Right' so that right-wing forces are discredited as a whole. At the same time, the governing coalition asserts itself as the political force that will guide Italy into Europe, an issue that plays an important role in defining Italian civic national identity (Galli della Loggia 1998).

'After the attack at gay couples, [the Lega attacks] the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, and then the last incident, [the attack] at the Islamic communities in Italy.' (#29)

3.17

The Lega Nord discourse reverses the ingroup-outgroup division and represents itself as the truly democratic party that listens to the people but is vigilant (hence, contrasted to those moderate Catholics that are indifferent and passive) against the 'Nazicommunists' (#72) and protects the traditions of the nation:

'Azzurri [Forza Italia supporters] and Lombard [Lega supporters] united against the construction of a mosque: Muslims get out of Lodi (...) One thousand protesters at the march, insults to passers-by [inhabitants of Lodi]: cowards, rabbits.' (#129)

3.18

In the Lega's discourse, the preservation of the popular, cultural traditions and the 'purity' of the nation are more important than civic values. The centre-left coalition is in the Lega's view authoritarian, because Communist, and a danger for the survival and security of the nation. The Lega reinforces its image as the true representative of 'the people' by proposing a 'local referendum'[12] in the Milan neighbourhood where the new mosque would be built (#161).

3.19

The two major components of the centre-right coalition Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale, partly subscribe to the Lega's discourse that defines the centre-left and the Muslims/immigrants as the outgroup. Forza Italia is however against 'any kind of exaggeration'. The 'right of religious freedom remains inalienable' but there is a problem in balancing the situation because if people participate in public rallies 'almost xenophobic (sic)' there must be a reason (#140).
However, the extreme views of the *Lega* and its public rallies against the mosques at Lodi and in Milan divide internally the centre-right wing forces. Thus, *Alleanza Nazionale* and the Christian Democrat party (CCD) argue that they are the civicly-minded conservative forces who will protect the national traditions, while the *Lega Nord* is demagogic and violates the civic values of Italian democracy with its anti-Islamic campaigns. Their positions are in favour of religious freedom but 'respecting balance' and 'reciprocity' (#23). A leading member of the *Alleanza Nazionale* party and grand-daughter of Mussolini, Alessandra Mussolini – in agreement with the party leader Gianfranco Fini (#86) – argues that they have to 'be alert towards the danger of islamisation of society' and defend 'the natural (sic) predominance of the Catholic and Christian religion and culture' (#23). Indeed, taking distances from the *Lega* anti-Islam campaign seems to be motivated more by the fear of losing votes, as overt racism tends to be censored in Italian politics (ter Wal 2000: 348), than by a genuine concern for democracy and civic values. Berlusconi, the leader of the *Forza Italia* party and the centre-right coalition, is reported to criticise Umberto Bossi in private: 'on Islam you make us lose votes' (#34). However, another member of the *Forza Italia* rank and file adds: 'Muslims endanger our purity. Their true scope is to marry our women' (#34).

When the new mosque issue is presented in the Milan context at the end of October 2000, *Forza Italia* rank and file engage into a civic discourse:

> 'the mosque [construction] is alright, because in Italy there is religious freedom',
> 'it is a matter of decency and civility. Muslims in Milan are numerous and there is a need for a mosque' (#161).

Nonetheless, when the Municipal Council votes for the concession of a terrain to COREIS (the Community of Italian Converts to Islam), *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord* abstain from the vote. A *Lega Nord* councillor argues:

> 'If the Municipality is going to give tomorrow a terrain to the mosque, will it not do the same the day after tomorrow with a synagogue, and the day after with an Orthodox church?' (#162)\(^\text{[13]}\)

In this climate of discord within the right-wing coalition, the municipal and regional authorities seek to mobilise electoral support by striking a localist chord. They represent themselves and the city as efficient and democratic Italians contrasted to both the extremist Padanians of the *Lega* and the Communist, inefficient, corrupt left-wing forces of the government.

The Church's 'voice' in the mosque debate tries to strike a fragile balance between supporting the civic values embodied in the Italian Constitution without negating the presumed superiority of Catholicism. Thus, although the Church representatives were in favour of the construction of the mosques and the cardinal of Lodi condemned the priest that celebrated a mass in the *Lega* protest march of October 14, 2000, they at the same time defined popular 'fears [towards Muslim immigrants]' as 'normal' because hosting immigrants, rather than being emigrants themselves, is a new experience for Italians (#102). This discourse is wrought with internal contradictions because on one hand it recognises that the Muslim community in Italy is rather small but, on the other hand, alludes to an 'immigrant invasion'. It favours civic integration of immigrants and religious freedom but defines 'multiculturalism as a dangerous concept that means the end of the European
nation (sic)’ (#90). The Church discourse appears both confusing and confused in front of the quest for accommodating cultural and religious diversity.

3.25
The mosque debate includes two levels of discourse that are inextricably intertwined. On one hand, a more general debate on the recognition and accommodation of cultural and religious diversity in Italian society, which includes a distinction between Us-hosts-Italians-Catholics and Them-guests-immigrants-Muslims. On the other hand, an intense party campaigning for mobilising electoral support in which each side promotes a positive view of itself along a common set of values. The most striking feature of the discourse is that either coalition tries to represent itself as democratic, civicly minded and defending the national interest. They all agree that it is in the national interest to preserve and/or strengthen the Italian identity and cultural traditions. But they disagree on how to best achieve this: through rejecting religious diversity and halting immigration or through a politics of integration into the dominant cultural frame.

Guests and Hosts: Multiculturalism all’Italiana?

3.26
Although the different parties supposedly propose different answers to the quest for recognising and accommodating religious diversity, a careful look at their discourses reveals a significant degree of convergence. It is my aim in this section to outline the common set of values and views that underlie the different party positions and thus highlight a specific version of multiculturalism emerging in Italy.

3.27
The mosque debate is characterised by a given set of values, identity and interest claims that determine the relationship and co-existence of ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’. The values on which this discourse is based are predominantly civic. The main argument is that Italy is a democratic society where civic values are guaranteed for all, citizens and non-citizens alike. Religious freedom is protected by the Constitution (article 8) and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (http://www.europarl.eu.int/charter/default_e_n.htm). To these principles subscribe both political and religious elites.

3.28
In this perspective, solidarity towards immigrants and a desire to integrate them in the host society are also seen as important civic values. Integration however has to be framed in a secular, civic framework, which dictates reciprocity of duties and rights for all. In this context of civic integration, the Catholic Church assumes an active role in collaboration with local and regional authorities (#21, #28, #83, #202). The leading role of the Church is neither contested nor seen as a threat to the civic character of the Italian society by any of the leading social and political actors quoted in the press.

3.29
Integration has to take place under a set of principles and preconditions. First, different groups have to live together under the rule of law, ‘respecting the rules’ that are set by the host society. These rules and laws emanate from the cultural traditions and values of the host society, which should prevail, as, so the argument goes, Italy ‘belongs’ to Italians. Muslim immigrants are welcome to the extent that they abide by the law and customs of their ‘hosts’.

3.30
This law and order discourse is often complemented by implicit or explicit references to immigrant criminality (e.g. #77) and the risks of clandestine immigrant invasion of the Italian territory (e.g. #93). Moreover, the acceptance or exclusion of Muslim diversity in the Italian society is seen as an issue similar to that of acceptance of gay people. The argument is put
forward both by left-wing local authorities (#87) and the Lega Nord leadership (#29, #82). As if Muslims and gay people belong to a single category of socially and/or morally 'deviant' communities.

3.31
In a more reactionary version of this discourse, the centre-right parties and some representatives of the Vatican argue that integration should be made conditional upon reciprocity at a universal level. Mosques should not be allowed in Italy as long as there are Islamic countries that do not permit the existence of Christian churches in their soil (#76, #77). This argument is used to further emphasise the distinction between the hosts that are liberal and democratic and the guests who raise claims for religious freedom while in their own countries they are illiberal and oppressive. This ‘reciprocity’ argument is however rejected by the centre-left parties and intellectuals (e.g. #19).

3.32
Second, both government and opposition representatives emphasise that Italian identity is fragile (#7, #31, #19, #124): Italians should therefore act to safeguard their national identity and cultural traditions. The traditions of their Muslim 'guests' are seen as inferior and in any case undesirable (#73, #40). All parties confirm the intrinsic value of preserving the ‘purity’ and ‘authenticity’ of the national traditions and identity.

3.33
The discourse is complemented by a third line of arguments that relate to the interests of the host society. The main quest here is to find the ways in which immigration can best serve the 'hosts'. Immigrants are 'welcome' because they respond to economic and demographic needs of the Italian society. They are seen as a 'resource' for the Italian society: they contribute labour that is necessary for domestic businesses and money that is valuable for the national welfare system. Immigrant cultures, religions and traditions are not seen as resources but rather as problems because they have to be galvanised to fit the host society civic and cultural framework. For this reason, Christian immigrants are preferable (#95) to Muslims.

 années Conclusions

4.1
The main aim of this paper is to analyse the emergence of multiculturalism debates and practices in Italy in relation to their specific social and political context. I have thus briefly assessed the size of the immigrant population in Italy, its religious and national composition, the structural position of immigrants in Italian society, with particular reference to their access to the labour market, but also to citizenship and multi-cultural education and also the development of immigrant networks.

4.2
The second part of the paper has concentrated on a specific instance in the multiculturalism debate: I have analysed the public and political discourse developed after a protest demonstration of the Northern League, in October 2000, against the building of a new mosque at Lodi in the periphery of Milan. The analysis of the debate has revealed the marginality of immigrant 'voices' as well as the predominance of civic views concerning the recognition and acceptance of religious diversity. However, a closer look at the different party positions and their discursive construction of alliances and ingroup-outgroup oppositions shows that there is a large degree of convergence in their views. Italian multiculturalism is based on a civic conception of the nation and the host society. While rights appear to be conceded not only to individuals but also to communities – in this case the Muslim communities in Milan and Lodi requesting for a new mosque – their integration in the host society has to take place under the conditions determined one-sidedly by this
last. In other words, the core cultural values of the 'hosts' cannot become a matter of negotiation with the 'new arrivals'. They have to accept the rules and laws of Italy. The issue of citizenship is not raised with regard to immigrants. And it is clear that if any disagreement arises, this has to be settled according to the views of the majority.

4.3

The Italian multiculturalism debate may appear, at first glance, to follow the lines of 'constitutional patriotism' (Habermas 1992). The main line of argument is that immigrants should abide by the host country's laws while their rights are guaranteed by the Italian Constitution. Moreover, the self-conception of Italian society as a democracy imbued by civic values such as religious freedom and equality is emphasised. However, between the lines of this civic, liberal approach, a nationalist line of argumentation can be read, which asserts the intrinsic value of national identity and traditions. The internal diversity of the Italian identity and culture and the strong regionalist centrifugal tendencies are to a large extent silenced. Not only is it assumed that 'for each group there is a single culture, that it is homogenous, that it has always been the same (...) so that one can talk about a group and its culture without any reference to context, to contact or interaction with other groups, to economic circumstances, political power and so on' (Modood 1997: 10), but also that the host group's culture is better than that of immigrants. Both the national ingroup and the Muslim/immigrant outgroup are constructed as cohesive, homogenous blocks. Italy's internal division related to the Southern question (Schneider 1998) or the plurality of Islamic communities present in the country (Pace and Perocco 2000) are ignored.

4.4

The Italian debate does not subscribe to the French tradition of republicanism. Although it has some similarities with it, to the extent that immigrants are expected to assimilate to a dominant national civic culture, it goes beyond the level of civic values to include cultural traditions in the dominant national framework to which immigrants should adapt. It borrows some elements from the British discourse as it recognises the existence not only of Muslim individuals but also of Muslim communities whose requests need to be taken into account. However, the Italian understanding of the national civic culture is much 'thicker' than that predicated by the British liberal communitarian multiculturalism (Delanty 2001).

4.5

The Italian press only pays attention to German policies on immigrant integration (#65, #123). The German Christian Democratic Party (CDU) views are seen with sympathy by Il Giomale while the La Repubblica avoids to take sides between the multicultural positions of the German Socialist party and the 'Germanisation' policy of the CDU. The bottom line of the Italian debate is that cultural and religious diversity have to be assimilated. Contrary to the argument of more radical multiculturalism theories (Parekh 2000), cultural diversity is framed as a 'problem' rather than as a 'good thing'.

It is probably too early to assess Italian multiculturalism debates and practices as the quest for recognition and accommodation of diversity on the part of immigrant groups dates less than a decade. At present, the debate is at best ambivalent, at worst outright nationalist. Even left-wing political and intellectual elites find it hard to separate the civic values of the Italian democracy from their national cultural framework. The fact that both 'host' and 'guest' cultures may change through co-existence and interaction is also largely ignored.

◆ Appendix I: Data and Indexing Scheme

1

Table 1: Distribution of the articles analysed per newspaper
Indexing Scheme
I. Identifiers
Newspaper (Text)
Date (Date)
Page number (Num)

Title (Text)
Subtitle (Text)
Lead (Text)
Author (Text)

II. Voices (all Yes/No variables)

1. Parties and their leaders or other party rank and file.
2. This tag includes the governing parties and the President of the Republic
3. The Catholic Church
4. Lega Nord party rank and file and/or activists
5. Local authorities and/or local party representatives at Lodi
6. Local citizens
7. Immigrants/Muslims
8. Muslim organisations/associations

III. Thematic Dimensions (all Yes/No variables)

1. Italian citizenship
2. Italian cultural identity/traditions
3. Italian national identity
4. Europe and/or Italy as part of Europe

IV. The relationship between Us/the country/the nation and Them/immigrants/Muslims/foreigners/extracomunitari

1. What is the relationship (Text)
2. By what principles or rules it should be guided or on which principles or rules it should be based (Text)

Table 3: Voices and Thematic Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voices</th>
<th>N*</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Thematic Dimensions</th>
<th>N**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political parties</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Catholic Church 51 24

Cultural traditions 28
National identity 23
Regional identity 12
Europe 26
Citizenship 19

Legla local leaders and activists 18 9

Cultural traditions 7
National identity 4
Regional identity 3
Europe 2
Citizenship 6

Local and regional authorities 56 27

Cultural traditions 10
National identity 5
Regional identity 8
Europe 2
Citizenship 20

Local citizens 28 13

Cultural traditions 8
National identity 1
Regional identity 4
Europe 0
Citizenship 12

Immigrants/Muslims 7 3

Cultural traditions 1
National identity 1
Regional identity 0
Europe 0
Citizenship 4

Muslim organisations 16 8

Cultural traditions 2
National identity 2
Regional identity 0
Europe 0
Citizenship 7

* N = number of articles in which a 'voice' was present.
** N = number of articles in which a given thematic dimension and a given 'voice' were simultaneously present.

Appendix II: List of articles cited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rec. Newspaper</th>
<th>Date Page no.</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M 17.10 14</td>
<td>Fazio: 'Porte aperte a chi rispetta le regole' (Fazio [governor of Bank of Italy]: 'open doors to those who respect the rules')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19 LaR 15.10 17 L'identità degli italiani e la paura degli immigrati (The identity of Italians and the fear of immigrants)
21 LaR 15.10 13 Ma il vescovo non ci sta 'C'è libertà religiosa' (But the bishop disagrees 'there is religious freedom'
23 LaR 16.10 14 Il Polo spaccato sull'Islam (The Pole divided on Islam)
24 LaR 16.10 14 'Berlusconi richiami il Senaturo (Berlusconi recall the [leader of Lega Nord])
28 LaR 17.10 18 'Condanniamo chi discrimina. Intoccabili i diritti religiosi' (We condemn anybody who discriminates. The religious rights [are] untouchable)
29 LaR 17.10 19 Il Senaturo: libertà di culto? Non è un diritto garantito (The [leader of the Lega Nord]: religious freedom? It is not a right that is guaranteed)
31 LaR 17.10 20 Fazio. 'No alla xenofobia ma salviamo la identità' (Fazio [governor of Bank of Italy]: No to xenophobia but let's save [our] identity)
34 LaR 18.10 25 'Caro Bossi, così non va' (Dear Bossi [leader of Lega Nord], we cannot continue this way)
40 LaR 19.10 23 Solo 560 mila immigrati ecco l'Islam italiano' (Only 560,000 immigrants. Here is the 'Italian Islam')
65 LaR 04.11 16 'Imparate a essere tedeschi'. Die Welt pubblica la bozza della proposta di legge della Merkel sull'immigrazione. La CdU: corsi di lingua e cultura per stranieri ('Learn to be Germans'. Die Welt publishes the draft Merkel bill on immigration. The CdU: language and culture courses for foreigners)
72 LaR 05.11 4 Bossi: 'Ma il Papa fa il suo mestiere' (Bossi: But the Pope does his own job)
73 G 11.10 8 Martini: 'Gli immigrati islamici devono accettare le nostre leggi' (Martini [Cardinal of Milan]: 'The Muslim immigrants must accept our laws')
76 GMI 13.10 41 Milano sempre più straniera (Milan [becoming] always more foreigner)
77 GMI 13.10 44 'Sull'Islam sono più vicino a Martini' (On Islam I am closer to Martini)
82 G 15.10 14 'Faremo a pezzi la moschea di Lodi' (We will cut down into pieces the mosque of Lodi')
83 GMI 15.10 40 Negli oratori largo ai bimbi musulmani (in the Cathechism schools, more room for
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>G 18.10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Berlusconi: 'La moschea? A Lodi si è protestato solo contro il terreno gratis' (Berlusconi: 'The mosque? At Lodi the protest was against the [concession of the terrain for free]')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>G 20.10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>'Permesso di soggiorno a tutti i clandestini' ('A stay permit for all clandestine [immigrants]')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>G 22.10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>La posizione più delicata è proprio quella dell'Italia (The most delicate position is precisely that of Italy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>G 22.10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Martini agli immigrati: otterrete un aiuto se restate nella legalità ([Cardinal] Martini to the immigrants: you will receive help if you abide by the law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>GMI 22.10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Stranieri e Leonka sgomberati da piazza Duomo (Foreigners a Leonka [Leoncavallo] swept away from the Cathedral square)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>G 25.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gli immigrati divisi reato per reato (Immigrants classified by type of criminal act)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>G 25.10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>In Italia aumentano gli immigrati ma anche i reati (In Italy immigrant [numbers] increase but so do criminal act [numbers])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>G 25.10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>'Troppi extracomunitari? Il rimedio è fare più figli' ('Too many non-EU people? The remedy is to have more children')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>GMI 29.10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>La libertà di culto non è in discussione (Religious freedom is not under question)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>G 05.11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>La Cdu: gli stranieri dovranno frequentare corsi d'integrazione (Cdu: foreigners will have to attend integration courses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>G 05.11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>La giustizia virtuale (Virtual justice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>CdS 15.10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Marcia anti-Islam, Forza Italia con la Lega (March against Islam, Forza Italia [party] with the Lega [party])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>CdS 25.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gli islamici e noi italiani (Muslims and us Italians)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>CdS 25.10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Milano, la Lega contro la nuova moschea (Milan, the Lega against the new mosque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>CdS 25.10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lodi media sull'Islam, anche i lombardi ora frenano (Lodi mediates on Islam, the [Lega supporters] also pull over)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>LaR 16.12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Allah nel tempio dei portuali (Allah, in the temple of the port workers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>LaRFI 11.10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>'Insieme, nel rispetto dei ruoli' ('Together, respecting our roles')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 The top six national groups are Moroccans, Albanians, Filipinos, Romanians, Chinese and Tunisians (Sopemi 2000, table 3).

2 The term multiculturalism obviously includes a wide range of cultural, religious, linguistic, or other practices. Although the event studied here might be seen as a question of religious pluralism rather than multiculturalism writ large, I think it is proper to discuss the issue in multicultural terms as the mosque controversy touched upon the overall question of whether and how the Italian society and state should accept not only the religious faith but also the different traditions, customs and habits of non-EU immigrants.

3 After a government crisis, Prodi was replaced in 1998 by former Communist Massimo d’Alema (from the PDS), succeeded in 2000 and until May 2001 by another experienced politician, Giuliano Amato, who had served as Prime Minister of two coalition governments in the early 1990s.

4 The Catholic Church has played an important role in Italian politics in the post-war period, securing overwhelming support for the former Christian Democrat party (Democrazia Cristiana) in rural areas. When the DC collapsed under a series of corruption scandals in the early 1990s, the Catholic Church lost its powerful ally in domestic politics but continued to exert important influence over part of the electorate. Moreover, the Church voluntary sector has played an active role in assisting both documented and undocumented immigrants, regardless of their religious faith, in the past decade.

5 Law 40/1998 showed for the first time the political will of the Italian government to deal with immigration as a long-term phenomenon providing for ordinary, rather than extraordinary or temporary, measures. The law reiterates and reinforces the equality of treatment and rights between Italians and immigrants and aims at a long-term planning of migratory flows with the co-operation of the governments of the immigrants' countries of origin, acknowledging that there is space in the Italian labour market for foreign workers, provided flows and stays are regulated (see also Guida al Diritto, Inserto speciale, 12.09.1998).

6 In 1998, 3,937 applicants acquired Italian citizenship, 88% of whom through marriage to an Italian citizen (Sopemi 2000: table 12).

7 Throughout the debate the terms 'Muslims' and 'immigrants' are used as nearly synonymous. Unless otherwise specified (i.e. when specifically referring to Christian immigrants or to Italian Muslims) all Muslims are considered as immigrants and all immigrants as Muslims.

8 La Repubblica (www.repubblica.it) is a large daily published in a tabloid format, of centre-left political orientation. It has consistently supported the centre-left parties in government in the period 1997-2001 and currently in the Opposition. The language used in LaR coverage is dramatic and tends to sensationalise the news although critical opinions are presented too. The newspaper is published in tabloid format and is organised into two sections: a national and a regional-local edition. The newspaper belongs to the De Benedetti-L’Espresso group of media enterprises. The Corriere della Sera (www.corriere.it/edicola/index.shtml) daily is the Milan newspaper par excellence. It is published in Milan (a Rome edition exists too) in a wide sheet format and has a large circulation at a national level. It is of centre-right political orientation and belongs to the Fiat-Rizzoli group. Il Giornale is also based in Milan and belongs to the Berlusconi-Mediaset group. The newspaper was founded by a famous Italian journalist Indro Montanelli, who
sold it to the Berlusconi-Mediaset group in the early 1990s because of financial problems. Following Silvio Berlusconi's involvement in the Italian politics, the newspaper has become the unofficial voice of his and his party's, Forza Italia, positions. The language used in the newspaper is dramatic, and the coverage clearly partisan. Il Messaggero is the main local newspaper in Rome and is of centre-left orientation. A large section of the newspaper is devoted to local and regional news of Rome and the Lazio region. In terms of format it resembles very much La Repubblica but the language it uses is less dramatic. Il Messaggero (http://ilmessaggero.caltanet.it) was included in the newspaper selection because of its large circulation in the capital city but also as a good case for testing how issues of local relevance, like the Lodi or Milan controversies, were constructed into national ones, attracting coverage by Il Messaggero too, despite this last's regional bias.

9The indexing scheme (see appendix) systematised what has turned out to be a rather large corpus of data. It enabled me to measure how often the different social and political actors were given a 'voice' through the daily press. Both passive/implicit and active/explicit involvement of a given actor in the discourse was counted as a 'voice' instance and within each article several 'voices' could be indexed.

10These dimensions refer to the main line of argumentation used to define the relevant 'problem' and propose 'solutions'. They are complemented by an in-depth qualitative analysis of the data (see section 3.3 below).

11All quotes originally in Italian have been translated by the author. A list of the newspaper articles cited is given in the appendix.

12Corriere della Sera reports the Lega initiative to collect signatures against the building of the new mosque in a Milanese neighbourhood using interchangeably the terms 'referendum' and 'collection of signatures', thus implicitly legitimising the initiative as a democratic action (#168).

13There is a large number of mosques, synagogues, Christian Orthodox or Protestant churches operating in various Italian cities and towns. Some of them, like the Rome mosque but also most synagogues and Christian temples operate in appropriate buildings. In contrast, there are also many small Islamic temples that operate in flats, shops or courtyards of residential buildings, attracting thus some times the discontent of neighbours. The 'unofficial' nature of some mosques, as contrasted to the beautiful temples of other Jewish and Christian denominations, reflects, in my view, partly the long history of establishment of the former as opposed to the recent arrival of larger Muslim populations. On the whole, mosques do not attract particularly the attention of Italian media or politicians, except in times of 'crisis' as the immediate post-11 September period.

14A table published in Il Giomale (#95) concerning demographic growth in Italy is entitled: '[Italians] in risk of extinction' (#93, #94).

◆ Acknowledgements

This article is part of a larger collaborative project on Multiculturalism Discourses and Practices, co-ordinated by Tariq Modood and Adrian Favell and funded by the ESRC Research Sessions 2000 and the SSRC in the US. The author would like to thank the anonymous referees of Sociological Research Online for their constructive criticism and Filippo Benfante for his collaboration in the indexing of the data.

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