The making of the Padanian Nation: Corruption, Hegemony, Globalization and Legitimacy

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the relationship between state failures and state legitimacy in Italy. The study is based on a one-year ethnographic field research in Varese City. The political party Northern League and its followers (Leghisti) has been chosen to observe the state-society relationships. It has been discovered that among others, three factors were instrumental in the process by which the state-society relationships has been deteriorated so as to open the path for an alternative legitimacy claim such as Padanian nationalism. Initially, revelations of political corruption and illegal state practices, failure of the state to address problems related to globalization such as global economic integration and uncontrolled immigration were instrumental. Later, struggle of hegemony and subjugation between the League and the state has been another important cause for deteriorated relationships. This study also provides qualitative data on the processes by which those deteriorated relationships and state failures contributed the rise of xenophobia and suggests that this failures of the state coupled with the problems brought about by the uncontrolled immigration and global economic expansion is likely to open a path for criminalization of both immigrants and local people.

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Hatice

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this study is to analyze state-society relationships in Italy through the lens of the historical development and political struggle of a political party in Northern Italy. The emergence of the political party, known as the Northern League (Lega Nord), as a political force in the early nineties in Italy, is the study's concern. The historical developments that led to the emergence and development of this party are enlightening in the sense that they help us to understand the relationships between political corruption, globalization and economy, and state-society relations. The Northern League can be interpreted as a consequence of a legitimacy crisis brought about by revelations of corruption, illegal state practices, globalization, and intermittent economic crises. The party itself became a challenge to the legitimacy of the Italian state, by starting a counter-hegemonic campaign based on the introduction of an alternative national narrative: Padanian Nationalism.

The invented tradition of Padanian Nationalism makes the movement unique, and thus provides us with an extraordinary understanding of the processes by which nations are created and imagined. It is not a secret that Padanian nationalism, first declared in 1996, is an invention of the leaders of the Northern League, although the Padanian nation is argued to have existed all over history. Being recent, this idea of Padania and a Padanian Nation provides us with an example of how the struggle for hegemony is fought out as a political struggle. Such a struggle is constructed through national narratives, invented and alternative readings of histories, and negotiations among several alternative identities.

In addition to a nationalist narrative, the party is often categorized within the context of the "far/new-right" movements that are on the rise in most of the Western European countries. Characterized by a rejection of multiethnic societies, these new-right movements are becoming

more and more of a concern owing to their xenophobic and racist discourses, which always seem to be instigating radicalization and violence. Although the members of the Northern League (*leghisti*) share the same rejection for multi-ethnic environment with its entrepreneur style of politics, and an electorate comprised chiefly of consisted of *petit bourgeoisie*, they have always remained nonviolent and peaceful. With an ideology of civility and an explicit rejection of racism and xenophobia, the Northern League remains accessible even to a Muslim-Turk researcher, and provides us with an opportunity to understand xenophobic tendencies not only in Italy but also in the wider European context.

Some features of the movement, make it difficult to understand and define. Such as its being bottom-up and top-down at the same time, the electorate of the party mostly preserve's pre-modern social structures. They have civic and ethnic discourses at the same time. They can be regarded as an example of the failure of yet another nation building project of the hegemonic type, and the irony is inescapable that while the party has a discourse on core periphery relations most of its supporters are rich. These features are part of its richness, allowing us to test the existing literature and broaden our understandings of nationalism and identity formation. Different scholars have defined the party differently, often reflecting that moment in the development of the party, because of their focus on a specific historical moment or period. It has been defined as: populist (Bull and Rhodes 1997), protest (Biorcio 1997), racist (Cole 1997), new-right, ethno-regionalist (Winter, et al. 2006), subcultural (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001a), and political entrepreneur (Allum 1996). The richness of its features and the seemingly controversial claims advanced by its proponents have made the explanations about the emergence and persistence of the movement interestingly varied and yet insufficient to explain all of its aspects; the simple fact is that most of the scholars have wanted to bring the movement into alignment

with some predefined concepts and categories of political science. Nonetheless, the multiplicity of explanations is a demonstration of the richness and relevance of this movement to the understanding of dominant discussions about aspects of western polity such as nationalism, regionalism, racism and xenophobia

The research question informing this study is "What are the relationships between state legitimacy and state failure?" Focusing on the phenomena that are affecting the state-society relationships, I hypothesize that the following three factors degraded the usefulness and legitimacy of the Italian state in the eyes of many: the revelation of political corruption and illegal practices of the state; the convergence of the state and global capital, which transformed the Italian economy over the last thirty years; and uncontrolled immigration, which was poorly addressed by the state.

The whole issue of Padanian Nationalism relates to "legitimacy" in five different dimensions. First, as is is seen from a diachronic perspective, a legitimacy problem was an inherent aspect of the long-discussed and famous "incomplete modernity" or "domination without hegemony" of the Italian state. The state was able to achieve only a low level of legitimacy based on its belonging to the imagined community of all Italians. It can be argued, however that several factors created a community of interest and delayed the onset of the crisis of legitimacy, among them being these four: alignment of the society along the ideological cleavages produced by the Cold War; a degree of homogeneity provided by education and migration: a system of patronage known as *partitocrazia*, and economic well-being. And yet that moment passed away owing to the end of the Cold War, economic crises, and corruption scandals. Secondly, in a historical moment in which the relationships between organized crime and political parties were unveiled, when covert networks of social engineering achieved through

infamous “strategy of tension” were revealed, and when mass political parties were shaken with by indictment of almost one-third of the parliament, disappointment with the Italian state grew sharply. Thirdly, the Northern League’s strategy of illegitimating the Italian state by pointing up the insufficiencies of the various state agencies was proved to be an effective way of influencing public opinion in the North. Fourthly, the party itself created and used a political discourse of Nationalism to legitimize its claims for secession, and initiated a struggle to challenge the Italian hegemony.

Thus in this study, I will focus on the emergence, development, and political strategies of the Northern League, doing so, in order to understand the state and society relationships starting from a historical “moment” that was marked by a low level of legitimacy, at least for the electorate of the Northern League. Furthermore, immigration and emigration intensified the perception of "otherness" (in a Barthian sense) and helped to construct a distinct Northern identity. Other factors, such as preexisting social structures and the agency of the charismatic party leader, are also have been of greatest importance. All in all, the Mafia operations and Maxi trials that marked the 1980s, the operations mounted against the covert structure known as Gladio in the early 1990s, the police operations waged against vast political corruption in 1992 which delegitimized the Italian state on the one hand; and on the other hand economic crises, the globalization of the economy, neo-liberal economic policies, the rise of China, the European Union, and a wave of immigration all brought into intense doubt the usefulness and effectiveness, and thereby the legitimacy, of the Italian state.

The body of knowledge that accounts for the emergence of nations and nationalisms will be provided in the later chapters of this study, and used to help us understand the Northern League and Padanian nationalism. I believe that none of several explanations of nationalism is

exhaustive and adequate, in terms of understanding all nationalisms. Always there will be unique characteristics, and those several explanations can help us understand this phenomenon in an eclectic way, with each explaining yet another aspect of it. As this study is focused mainly on legitimacy, the definition of a nation by Gellner is preferred the most useful for the purpose of this analysis. He defines the "nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy which holds that the boundaries of the national and the ethnic unit should be congruent" (Gellner 2006). Thus in addition to his emphasis on legitimacy, Gellner also is providing us with the principle that national and ethnic units should be congruent, and right there we have one of the major challenges inherent to the nationalist discourses being shaped by the European confronted by globalization and immigration.

The discourse of nationalism is predicated on the existence of subjects who imagine themselves comprising a nation. Thus, it is crucial that a national narrative be passed down to new generations. This body of knowledge, which includes a historical narrative and interpretations of life in a national way, requires an active process of domination and subjugation over available knowledge and discourses, especially when alternative, challenging discourses are available. In order to understand the process by which Italian national discourse is being challenged by such alternative discourses as Padanian Nationalism and conspiracy theories, the Gramscian concept of "passive revolution" will be used. In addition, Foucauldian concept of "subjugated knowledge" will contribute to our understanding of this process by which alternative legitimacy discourses fight for supremacy.

The unit of study of this research is most basically members of the political party Northern League in the city of Varese. Varese was chosen specifically right in the beginning of the research owing not only to its historical importance for the Northern League but also because

the Varese section of the party is one of the most active branches involved in party politics. Moreover the city of Varese, sometimes called as the Stalingrad of the Northern League, is likely to represent the Northern question in Italy with the greatest force and cogency. This is not only because the most influential leaders of the party, such as Umberto Bossi and Roberto Maroni, are from Varese, but also because its history, in terms of economic rise and decline and problems with immigration, makes it an apt example of the host of problems that the northern Italians have been facing. In fact the city has proven its importance and appropriateness during the course of my fieldwork, the city section became the arena of a power struggle in the spring 2012 that resulted in a real revolution by dethroning the legendary leader Umberto Bossi and thereby radically recalibrating the power balance in the party.

Non only party members in Varese but also Varesini, the native inhabitants of Varese, are of concern for this study, for I argue that the Northern League is a medium through which a lot of Varesini are able to make their voices heard, or to react against the effects of various external impacts. Although not all Varesini are party members, it has been confirmed on several occasions that the claims of the party embody most desires and problems of Varesini. Nonetheless, the support of Varesini is contingent upon other variables which reflect the people's flagging faith in the utility of politics to solve their problems. The sheer fact that even though the party pointed to the corruption scandals that shocked the country as one way of seeking to delegitimize the Italian state, the fact that many of its members were caught up within them in the Berlusconi government, has cast a cloud over it in the eyes of most Varesini.

The analysis of the state and its relationships with society causes us tri-fold methodological difficulties: observation and analysis; impacts of phenomena that are external to the country; and the need to combine synchronic and diachronic perspectives. How can we

observe a state? Trouillot (2001) argues that in order to study a state, the first task of an observer is to transform an object of discussion into an object of observation. He proposes that the state can be observed only through its effects. He proposes four effects that a state is supposed to produce, and invites us to study them in order to understand the state. Those effects are identification, isolation, spatialization and legibility. His anti-empirical stance presupposes a proper nation-state that is producing its effects through a process of nationalization. Although I agree with Trouillot that the state can be studied by assessing its effects, I argue that the effects created by the state are not limited to the four he proposes. For we must remember that in addition to intended effects of a state, there are unintended effects on society caused by the *failures* of the state. Thus, this study will neither focus on the four effects provided by Trouillot nor will provide other possible effects. Instead the state-society relationships will be discussed in their relation to more general themes, meaning largely that we will be looking at state effects whether they are intended results of hegemonic practices or unintended results of state failures.

In addition to taking into account the internal dynamics of the society and effects produced by the state, I also will analyze those external impacts that change lives of the people and structure their reactions. Given that globalization is a phenomenon that is more and more impacting the lives of people and degrading the governing capacitance; this dissertation would be a miss if it did not investigate the impacts of the phenomena related to globalization on the state-society relationships. It remains there, however, that the state is able to mount a kind of inertial resistance to the negative impacts of globalization on economy and social life: such factors as neo-liberal economic policies or problems related to immigration. Nonetheless I argue that problems, deemed by some to be aspects of the Italian state, have intensified its legitimacy crisis.

The need to find an approach that takes into account the historically specific conditions that midwifed the Northern League into existence in a specific place and time requires us to incorporate a both historical perspective and a synchronic probe of the experiences in daily life. It is crucial to understand the ways and situations in and through which traditions are invented; histories are socially constructed; nations are imagined; perceptions of core-periphery, civility vs. ethnicity, common destiny or enlightened interests are negotiated. One also must see how nations emerge via constructions of elites and/or transformations of society, from the top down or from the bottom-up, or through constant negotiations of all these phenomena.

The ethnographic field research, more specifically participant observation was used in this study for data-gathering purposes. An approximately one year sojourn; first in Milan and later in the city of Varese, is the bedrock upon which virtually all of this study's observations have been reared. In addition to interviews with members and non-members of the party, archival research also was required to account for the diachronic aspects of the phenomenon. Moreover, daily scrutiny of newspapers and TV shows allured the researcher to trace the fight of hegemony and counter-hegemony as it plays out through subjugation of knowledge.

The participant observation, defined often as "deep hanging-out," proved to be an apt way of observing and of tuning into the real thought that often is fortuitously shrouded under party discourse. Moreover, my fieldwork coincided with several crises including economic and political scale up on the national level and a corruption crisis inside the party that spelled the end of the leadership of its founder. These coincidences provided me with opportunities to observe naturally occurring discussions on fundamental ideas of the party; and to observe the ongoing negotiations of stances, ideologies, and identities within an ever-fluctuating political environment.

Nor was the benefit of participant observation limited observing party members. My long stay in Varese with my own family allowed me to experience the discontents of both immigrants and local people. As an alien who was suffering from heavy regulations, the negative attitude of the local people, and poor socialization; I was also able to observe disturbing behaviors of some immigrants such as invading parks to maintain their domination in public areas. My stay in Varese also allowed me to also speak to Varesini who were not members of the Northern League, and thus I was able to compare the concerns of those radically different, and even opposed groups: the locals and the immigrants. It was through these observations that I came to realize the strong need to understand the people being labeled racists or xenophobes.

Making full disclosure here and now of my identity as a Muslim Turk, I go on to disclaim any desire to explain, blame or justify any of the culture-specific prejudices of Italians or the beliefs, attitudes, and traditions of the immigrants; some of whom are muslims who came to Italy from such countries as Morocco, Libya, and Iraq. At the very least I wish to make the reader understand how difficult for Varesini to come close to; and *á fortiori* to understand this foreign people. The aim of my argument is not to justify any parochial sentiment or racist outbursts, but simply to point to the need for a wider and more profound understanding of xenophobic sentiments. My hope is that this investigation will likely to help us to understand that wider European context within which radical-right movements are on the rise and a real threat of racism is appearing, as it is in the cases of Breivik in Norway and of neo-Nazi's in Germany. Although the Northern League is a much more moderate and nonviolent organization, for that very reason, it provides us an opportunity to observe how globalization, and more specifically immigration are negatively impacting lives of Europeans; and provoking reactions that deserve to be closely analyzed. It also is crucial to investigate the state and other actors' policies toward immigration,

given the certainty that those will impact the lives of the receiving populations or at the very least structure their reactions. This investigation into receiving population's real experiences with immigrants is likely to help us go beyond the common "solution," which boils down the little more than labeling people racists or xenophobes. What history teaches us is that intimidating people by labeling them racists does nothing to enlarge or assuage parochial sentiments. When we instead wisely endeavor to trace the root causes that foster these sentiments, we take the essential first step toward understanding the sufferings and concerns of local people. That approach will both help to convince locals that they are not being demonized, thereby lead them to view immigrants less passionately, and lead the immigrants themselves to reconsider where they best fit into the community's social life and their struggle for rights may most effectively be mounted.

CHAPTER ONE:
Methodology

Section 1.1: A Theoretically Informed Methodology

Theoretical studies of the relationship between state, and society, and of constantly shifting power-relations are rich and enlightening in various respects (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Gramsci, et al. 1972; Hobsbawm 1992; Laitin, et al. 1985). And yet, the study of the state challenges the anthropological enterprise that is based on ethnographic observation (Claessen and Skalník 1983; Ferguson 1990; Trouillot 2001). As Trouillot (2001) indicated, the real task for anthropologists who study the state is to transform an object of discussion into an object of observation. In other words; his remedy for the study of the state is to observe it strictly with regard to in its effects. He said that an anti-empirical stance is needed to identify state effects that we then are able to observe and analyze. He identified four effects that are characteristic of the modern state: the isolation effect, the identification effect, the spatialization effect, and the legibility effect (Trouillot 2001). The isolation effect refers to the production of atomized individuals. This effect echoes various conceptualizations such as governmentality (Foucault, et al. 1991), as homogenization (Gramsci 1972), and so as gelding (Gellner 2006); and refers chiefly to government policies applied, to transform a population into subjects by breaking all allegiances other than that to the state. The identification effect is "the realignment of these atomized individuals along collective lines within which individuals recognize themselves as the same" (Trouillot 2001:126). The most politically relevant of these identities is national identity, and is central to this study. The legibility effect refers chiefly to the creation of a common language and a "culture" in that terms broadest sense by centralizing and heightening control over the production and dissemination of knowledge. The importance of a common language, a

"National popular", collective memories and control over knowledge are long discussed (Anderson 1992; Foucault 1980; Gellner 2006; Gramsci, et al. 1972). And finally there is a spatialization effect that relates the collectivities of atomized individuals to a territory through the production and control of historical knowledge. As may be inferred from the foregoing explanations, these effects are limited to the political indoctrination of a population by a proper nation-state and imply deliberate action; they almost personify the state, disregarding the fact that state officials are part of the game. In addition, Trouillot (2001) disregards other effects that states might be producing in other areas of life, even through their failures and undeliberate actions. Thus I, unlike Trouillot, will adopt a more empirical approach understanding very definitely the state-society relationship, and that allows me to assess the results of all state practices, to include also improper actions of the government officials and policy failures. Thus this study's specific areas of interest will be political scandals, bureaucratic inefficiency, Nation-Building process, economic transformation, globalization, and most importantly, the practical implications that these phenomena have for real.

This formulation of state effects will help us to understand state-society relationship in Italy, where; the state (1) widely failed to create atomized individuals, and old allegiances persisted (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001); (2) failed to provide a universal homogenization of language, and linguistic differences persisted (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001; Gramsci 1972; Huysseune 2006), (3) failed to create a strong identification with the imagined community of Italians (Dickie 1996). Ironically, the biggest contribution of Trouillot (2001) to my study stems from his failures. For WhereasTrouillot's analysis is implicitly predicated upon an ideal typical modern nation state that is functioning properly to transform the lives of its citizens. However, as Ferguson (1990) has demonstrated, in his analysis of development programs, that miscarried state

actions also can create state effects. Building upon that, while still emulating the anti-empirical approach of Trouillot (2001), I am brought to ask one of the central questions informing the methodology of this paper: What happens when the state fails to create these ideal typical state effects?

Finally, with all of the foregoing collectively being referred to as "the social construction of the past" (Bond 1997; 2000), collective Memory (Halbwachs 1982), social memory (Connerton 1989), the playing with our perceptions of the past, is an important part of the process by which legitimacy is constructed. As Bond (1997) argued, the dominant version of history is always vague to allow re-interpretation. Moreover the latter, the process of "the social construction of the past" is always prone to be used as a means of domination, subjugation, resistance, and collusion (Bond 2000). Representations are intimately related to power structures and sometimes are themselves a source of power because they reflect how people are defined by others and by themselves. Thus, claims about the past are made within a political arena, a place where power holders struggle to control the production and dissemination of knowledge and thereby create dominant subjugated versions, while subjugating alternative narratives (Foucault 1980). Quite simply, history writing and the control of knowledge often are used to legitimate existing power relations (Bond 2000; Laitin 1985).

Connerton (1989) provides us with a valuable understanding of the dynamics through which the relations between our perceptions of present and of past are negotiated. He makes a distinction between individual memory and social memory and builds his explanation upon it. Memories structure the perception of the individual. Our perceptions are structured by both our own experiences and our historical knowledge about the past. We constantly re-interpret the past

under the influence of our structured perceptions and as an answer to emerging subjective positions and needs. Thus, when it comes to the process by which meanings are created, there is a symbiotic relationship between the present and the past (Connerton 1989). Moreover, the construction of identities, and especially of national ones, is predicated upon claims about the past upon who gets to write his or her version of history. Aside from history writing and control over knowledge, the past also is constructed and interpreted socially. Commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices characterized by repetition, ritual, collective action, communication, and symbolic actions are the ways in which social memories are constructed.

Informed by the theories of state-society relationship such as construction of national identity and legitimacy, I will observe three different but interrelated processes which jointly explain the jousts over legitimacy: the state effect produced by the Italian government; the strategies of the Italian state employs to maintain legitimacy and the coherence of its citizens; and Padanian Nationalism: both as a challenge to the legitimacy of the Italian state and an alternate legitimacy claim.

Notable among anthropological contributions to the study of legitimacy, Kurtz (1984) demonstrated the strategies of legitimation used by the Aztec state. Among these were, economic welfare (redistribution and markets); creation of a social distance between ruler and ruled; an ideology (including religion and symbols); consolidation of power, sometimes via state terror; political socialization (state organization of political cleavages in society); and control of information. And yet useful such insights may be, the literature on legitimation informs us that there are no universal strategies applicable to every society and thus implicitly cautions the

researcher to stay mindful of the unique aspects of each particular society (Coicaud and Curtis 2002); (Gilley 2009); Kurtz 1984).

Although I have not taken a strictly empirical approach to the study, I do regard the analyses and theories provided in the literature as being incomplete and not always consistent with reality because of the involved writing-up process, which requires definitions, conceptions, and causal relations. I do not simply disregard them, but rather take them as contributions to explanation. Those demurrals having been noted, I can say yet again that the methodology of this study is informed by the theories of hegemony, social construction of the past, nationalism, and legitimacy.

The unit of analysis for this study is voters of the Northern League in Varese that consists of sympathizers, supporters, and members. In order to make a meaningful sampling, I have chosen to conduct my research in the city of Varese, which is located in North Italy, has very strong support for the party, and is the place where the leader of the Northern League was born. As of 2009 the city had a total population of around 80.000 and its economy is based on industry and specialized agriculture. It is one of those places in which a pre-modern, community based lifestyle persisted, despite the high level of industrialization. The city also, however, includes a high ratio of migrants from the south and immigrants from North Africa.

Basically, the methodology for this research is an ethnographic study based on participant observation and informed by the above-mentioned theories. The contribution made by an ethnographic methodology to this kind of problem is that it provides us with the chance to perceive the state-society relationship I a way that goes beyond theoretical causality to include the reception, acceptance, and negotiation of any hegemonic or counter-hegemonic practice.

Ethnographic field techniques that have been used in the course of the study are participant observation; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews; direct observation; photography; and archival research. Direct observation and participant observation is the main contribution of ethnography to our understanding of political socialization as it occurs via in the form of a nationalist movement, for those give us the chance to observe the intricate processes of identification and mobilization. Moreover, social constructions of the past in the form of commemorative practices and bodily activities are best understood by observation. Borrowing from the literature on social constructions of the past, I have found that it is crucial to observe the places where these reinterpretations occur, such as: school settings, peer relations, gathering places at ceremonies, monuments, public meetings and demonstrations, and most importantly: family.

As legitimacy is most intensely related to the perceptions of individuals, interviewing is another technique that has allowed me to grasp the reception, apprehension, and meaning of hegemonic practices, at least on the discursive level and as a way of triangulating with the observations. The basis of the questions are hegemonic practices aimed at attaining legitimacy, such as: perceptions of claims about belonging; history; "other"; memories; enemies; patronage networks; economic wellbeing; and finally, the monopoly over violence, education, and information.

Moreover, given that the League challenged legitimacy of the Italian state and yet claims at the same time to have a distinct identity from some "other" it was crucial to observe the inclusionary and exclusionary practices marking the boundaries of different imagined communities. Thus, in Barthian terms, the boundary-markers that distinguish the membership and

nonmembership were another focus of this study. Therefore, direct observation was one of the main techniques used in the field.

Section 1.2: Ethical Concerns

In anthropology, ethics is chiefly a concern for the wellbeing of the population that is being studied. Informed consent and confidentiality are the operative principles here. Confidentiality is provided by self-keeping of records, notes, and names to ensure the anonymity of the interlocutors involved. Informed consent requires a broad consideration of the risks involved on the interlocutors' part, because the fieldwork results in a dissemination of the produced knowledge.

As the present research is related to both state-society relationship and the construction of social identities as opposed to other identities, the involved risks are of two levels: legal and social. On the legal level, it is hypothetically possible that the interlocutors disclose information regarding their distrust or even hatred of the state, which may constitute a crime. Confidentiality is of the essence, to obviate this risk by using psedonyms I have maintained confidentiality and the anonymity of my informants On the social level it is possible, firstly that the interlocutors will disclose information regarding their hatred of other social groups. Secondly, studies that include information about tensions between social groups and between the state and some social groups, are prone to be used as a source of information by governments or international actors eager to incite ethnic violence or civil wars. As explained by Wakin (1992), the example of the Thailand project has shown us how ethnographic data was used to mobilize a population of mountain-dwellers for an uprising against the Thai state.

In order to address this issue I have remained mindful of the potential risks involved, I believe, most of them related to the writing process. It is the researcher who decides what to include in the end-material and how to present it. Not all information about the tensions between state and society, or intra-group tensions, is exclusive. Especially, in the case of the Northern League, most of this kind of information has already been disclosed the manipulations of intra-group tensions so central to party discourse and politics. Thus, it is possible to disarm a potentially explosive situation simply by staying attuned the disclosure that has already occurred.

Section 1.3: Limitations

With respect to my position as a Turk, doing a doctorate in the United States with funding from the Turkish National Police, this might have been a disadvantage in terms of entry-point into the field, given that the literature points to a xenophobic attitude among supporters of the Northern League, the object of which is likely to include Muslims. Simply by being in the field for a long time, however, I have been able build trust. Nonetheless, the fact of my, being funded by the Turkish National Police is likely to be an ethical concern and a cause for suspicion on the part of both the Italian Government and the target population. Although the Turkish National police did indeed provided funding for this project, still; it must be stressed that any fieldwork is a direct offshoot of my interest in the issues of nationalism and legitimacy. Even more to the point, the Turkish government has no knowledge whatever of this project, even of so concrete a matter as when this dissertation is to be defended. The Turkish government provides a general scholarship for a doctoral degree, which requires the fulfillment of the PhD degree only. Because the funding institution is not involved in the process by which the project is designed and conducted and the information analyzed, and it will have no access to information gathered other than the published doctoral dissertation.

In addition to these limitations, most of which have been more conjectural than real, my linguistic ability was another concern at the outset of this project in June 2011. I had a mid-level knowledge of Italian language and I compensated for my relative weakness in this regard by spending my first fifty days in Italy going to an Italian language school while trying to get to know the society at the same time. In a short period of time I had learned enough Italian to run my interviews, and the use of audio recording helped me to transcribe and analyze them.

CHAPTER TWO:
Literature Review

Section 2.1: Theories of Nationalism

A comparative approach to the literature will highlight some of the binary oppositions informing the differences among theorists of the emergence of nations and nationalisms. These include base vs. superstructure; precedence of nations or of nationalisms; precedence of nationalism or of the state, top down versus bottom up; invention versus persistence; imagined versus natural. It can be argued that there is a chicken-and-egg conundrum with respect to the emergence of nations. For some thinkers, nationalism is a consequence of the homogeneity of the population, which itself is a side-effect of capitalist modes of production, urbanization, print capitalism, and education, with all of the factors undermine allegiances to family, clan, and community and thereby producing "subjects" for the state (Anderson 1992; Gellner 2006; (Smith 1971). Other thinkers opine that states use nationalist ideologies to impose homogeneity on the population (Hobsbawm 1992; Kedourie 1966; Nairn 1977; Gramsci 1972). Gramsci (1972), in his notes on the history of Italy, rather than taking part in this discussion, acknowledge the need for a degree of homogeneity if a population is to become a nation, and gives advice on how to create a nation in a situation where there is a lack of homogeneity.

It is possible to trace the roots of nationalist thinking back to the enlightenment and German romanticism. Such an undertaking should be informed by the fact that there is a difference between "nationalist thinking" and "thinking on nationalism." While the first is an ideological claim that presupposes nation as a natural entity persisting over time and assumes that humans naturally organize themselves into nations, the second approaches the phenomenon of

nationalism from an analytical standpoint. Given the fact that in this study I will analyze the emergence of a movement with a nationalist discourse, I will be reviewing the literature on the philosophical roots of nationalism in enlightenment thinking, and providing theories as to the emergence of the nationalist ideologies in order to analyze the issue of Padanian nationalism, I clearly will engage in "thinking on nationalism." This preference is informed by Gellner's (2006) proposition that nationalism cannot be learned from its prophets because they have "false consciousness."

According to Kedourie (1966), the roots of nationalist thinking run deep in Kantian philosophy. Although Kant was a universalist morally his distinction between the "noumena" and "phenomena" informed nationalist thinking. The binary of noumena versus phenomena suggests that our perception of the noumenal world is always distorted and that we are "slaves of contingency" and "iron necessities." Therefore, this distorted phenomenal world cannot be the basis of morality. The implication is that such a basis should be found in ourselves, free from our distorted perceptions of the noumenal world, but making free will the real virtue. This idealization of free will also idealizes autonomous will, which makes self-determination the ultimate goal (Kedourie 1966;(Ozkirimli 2000).

Rousseau's contribution to philosophical basis of nationalism is in his equation of free will with the general will, thus making citizenship and patriotism ultimate virtues that can be achieved only through education. The contribution of the German romanticists lay in the idealization and definition of the nation for the first time as an entity persisting over time. Here we have the basis of most nationalist ideologies. Herder, a German Romanticist, believed in the uniqueness of national cultures and gave prominence to language as the basis for traditional,

historical, and cultural commonalities. For him, a nation is just a big extended family. Fichte's contribution to nationalist thinking came through his emphasis on language plus his acknowledgement that nations are formed historically. In this regard, we would do well to remember that Germany and Italy both were forged comparatively recently into nations out of several ethnic groups, and that both produced important nationalist thinkers such as Fichte and Herder in Germany, and Mazzini in Italy. (Kedourie 1966; Ozkirimli 2000).

Reviewing the literature on nationalism, following Özkirimli (2000), it is possible to place the "thinking on nationalism" into four categories in terms of their basis of explanation: (1) economic transformation, (2) social transformation, (3) political transformation and (4) ethnic transformation. As the repetition of the word "transformation" makes clear, there is a near consensus among the thinkers on nationalism as to the relatively recent emergence of the nation-form during the industrial era; it is the causes thereof that create the dividing-lines between the different approaches.

The first approach, economic transformation or political economy, stems from the Marxist tradition and explains the emergence of nations in terms of core/periphery relations, uneven distribution and division of labor; in global (Nairn 1997; Wallerstein 1991) and the strictly national (Hechter 1975) contexts. The second approach, political transformation, is a more actor oriented approach, meaning that nationalism is understood in terms of social engineering coming in the form of; (a) invented traditions (Hobsbawm 1992), (b) elite constructs to maintain status quo and disguise inequalities (Brass 1985), (c) diffusion of enlightenment ideas through western hegemony (Kedourie 1970), and (d) a form of politics used for maintaining legitimacy (Breuilly 1993). The third approach, social transformation, explains the emergence of nations and

nationalism in terms of the social transformation brought about by industrialism (Gellner 2006) or by print capitalism (Anderson 1992). Finally, ethno-symbolists emphasize the importance of pre-existing ethnic features such as myths, symbols, memories, and values, and argues that the emergence of nations can be explained only with reference to those features (Smith 2001). Armstrong complements this with a Barthian approach, for he regards ethnic and national identities as being relational; that is, they are meaningful only to the extend that they exist in tandem with some "significant other" (Smith 1971).

Section 2.1.1: Political Economy Approach

The political economy approach is informed by the core-periphery distinction. Wallerstein's world-system analysis relies on the same distinction in the global scale. For him, nations are constructions of the modern capitalist world system, and they are created to cope with internal disintegration and external aggression in order to aid the expansion of the global core and make international trade possible through the protection of national borders by national governments (Wallerstein 1991). For Wallerstein, states precede nations and construct them. The idea informing nationalist movements is that the international state system is hierarchical, and nation-form being the only legitimate way to challenge the subordinate position of a people within that order because humans naturally organize themselves into nations. This ideology of nation-state as natural entity that fosters cutthroat competition at the international level also serves to legitimize the status quo, while and disguising the global division of labor and the resulting inequality.

Tom Nairn's explanation of nationalism is predicated upon the same distinction of core and periphery although his model is constructed on a smaller scale. For Nairn, nationalism emerges out of a confrontation between the center and the periphery that is the result of the exploitation of the latter. Being helpless, the elites individuals of the periphery have nowhere else

to turn but to the mass of people. The former are Gramsci's "organic intellectuals," they manipulate the message (that is, nationalist ideology) for the people in order to mobilize them for a counter-hegemonic struggle. All of that leads to assert that such movements are likely to be populist, romantic, nostalgic, and utopian at the same time. The function of the intellectuals is to construct a national culture very similar to the National Popular of Gramsci.

Finally, Hechter (1975) provides a framework for applying a core/periphery interpretation to nationalist movements at the sub-national level, namely internal colonialism. In the course of analyzing Scottish nationalism, he proposes some criteria for internal colonialism. A fundamental part of his formulation is uneven development and distribution based on regional and/or ethnic cleavages. Other characteristics are: monopoly of dominant groups over commerce; complementary position of the periphery in the economy (i.e., production based on one commodity that has no value without its complementary parts that are made in other regions); cultural division of labor. In addition to these relational criteria, also adequate communication, occupational stratification, and residential segregation are required if a regional nationalism is to happen.

The most basic contribution of the political-economy approach, to our understanding of Padanian nationalism, is made by to highlight the economic dimension of the issue. Wallerstein's world-system analysis, which proposes that the only legitimate sort of competition in the modern world system is that which happens between autonomous nation-states, is reflected in the Northern League's discourse, the desire for secession and an independent Padanian state. Alluding to global economic competition, the League calls for the secession of the industrialized and richer north so as to attain better integration into the world market.

This plank in the League's platform can be read as (1) an attempt to leave the poorer south (often described as "burden" or "parasite") behind, thereby rendering the North economically stronger vis-a-vis other nations; and (2) not a reaction of the periphery to the core but rather an attempt made by a semi-core to become a part of the core and thus further penetrate global markets and drop the "burden" off its back.

Nairn, although chiefly interested in the core/periphery relation at the international level, helps us to understand why the Northern League adopts a populist, nostalgic, and utopian stance; because ultimately its only resource is the mass of people. He also makes us see, however, that the League's leaders inevitably are Gramscian organic intellectuals forming a nationalist ideology: the nation as an imagined community. Finally, Hechter's (1975) contribution is important despite the fact that his formulation is focused on the secession of the poor. We should be mindful that being peripheral is not always related to a factual situation of economic exploitation and that not all exploitations end up in completely depriving of people's resources and thereby producing a poor periphery. Rather, it is the perception of being peripheral that matters when it comes to mobilizing masses of people, and of course this knowledge is instrumentally used by the Northern League every time it depicts the corrupt government in Rome being the core exploiting the hard-working northerners for the sake of subsidizing the lazy South and a corrupt bureaucracy (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001b; Go\mez-Reino Cachafeiro 2001; Huysseune 2006b)

Section 2.1.2: The Political Transformation Approach

Theorists categorized here as having Political Transformation approach have an actor-oriented stance, emphasize the importance of the power relations, and believe in the importance of the role of the intellectuals and ideas. The distinction between Political transformation and Political

Economy approaches is predicated upon the fundamental discussion of Marxism based on the relative importance given to the infrastructure or super-structure. While Political Economy approach prioritize the infrastructure, Political transformation approach is marked by an emphasis on the importance of super-structure.

The most famous of the contributions to the political-transformation approach is the "invented tradition" formulation of Eric Hobsbawm. For Hobsbawm (1992), nations and nationalisms are products of social engineering. Nationalism is the most important of the invented traditions, the chief precondition of which is the fragmentation of individual lives as a result of industrialism. His formulation echoes the functionalist-equilibrium theories and Anthony Wallace's formulation of revitalization. The gist of it is that in periods of rapid social change, old structures fail to respond to novel situations and the need to create order and unity becomes the priority. That need is fulfilled either by the adaptation of the old or the invention of something new. We are not, however, talking about a spontaneous invention on the part of the people; to the contrary, Hobsbawm believes that new traditions always are constructed from above by the dominant powers, with the help of intellectuals. Given this dual source of nationalism, Hobsbawn argues that when we study the process whereby national identities constructed we should acknowledge the importance of the social constructions of the past on the one hand, a legitimating ideology and cement of the nation, on the other hand as an important factor creating a sense of belonging and influencing the perceptions of individuals.

A second contribution to the political-transformation approach is made by Breuilly (1993). His definition of nationalism well explains his stance: "political movements, seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments" (Breuilly 1993:2).

He proposes three that beliefs are characteristic of any nationalist movement: (1) “there exists a nation with an explicit, peculiar character. (2) Interests and values of the nation take priority over all other interests and values. (3) The nation must be independent” (Breuilly 1993:2). Breuilly proposes that nationalism as an ideology has three main functions: legitimacy, coordination and mobilization. Thus for Breuilly nationalism is a form of politics, and it can be utilized either to legitimate or to challenge the status quo.

The third contribution is related to the roles of the elites and intellectuals in the formation of nations. Whereas Brass (1985) argues that the nation is an idea invented by the elite to disguise inequalities and legitimate the status quo, Hroch (2007) proposed three elite-led stages of nationalism: invention of the nationalist ideology by a small cadre of intellectuals, dissemination of nationalist ideas and finally mass movement. Kedourie (1970) comes to mind as the most prominent theorist emphasizing the importance of the role played by intellectuals in the formation of nations. According to Kedourie nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe during the Enlightenment, chiefly via the Kantian philosophy. The proposition that "the good will can only be autonomous will" is explained to be the basis of all nationalist thinking. The contributions of Fichte and Herder, then caused the idea of nationalism to crystallize as the notion that "the linguistic community must determine itself and take up its destiny”. Kedourie’s analysis of colonialism echoes Gellner's analysis of social transformation caused by industrialization. For Kedourie, colonialism razed the existing economic infrastructure, and introduced literacy; traditional ties and authorities were undermined, and new cleavages constructed, and thereby a new of marginal westernized elite emerged. This stratum of intellectuals is the basis for his analysis of nationalism in colonial situations. He understands nationalism as a doctrine that is being spread like a disease through travel, reading, and education with intellectuals inevitably

being more often infected by this "disease." He cites as examples the Greek and Turkish nationalisms that occured, he argues, only because a cadre of westernized intellectuals constructed the nationalist ideology. In the first case a Dutch educated intellectual, Adamantios Korais, invented Greek nationalism based on a restorative nostalgia for the ancient Greek past and a glorious utopian future that could be attained only through independence. In the second case, the "Young Turks" movement invented an ethnic identity of Turks, as opposed to a religious identity of Muslims. Kedourie argued that both of these peoples as nations were constructed only after the foundation of the nation states of Greece and Turkey respectively through hegemonic education. Another example provided by Kedourie is that of his own country, Iraq: first the invention of intellectuals, and later a construction of the state.

The political-transformation approach has high explanatory power, as it allows us to link several aspects of the phenomenon, such as power and hegemony, together with any structural transformation that also is occurring. And yet emphasizing as it does the role played by the superstructure in constructing nations, this approach underestimates the importance of individual and social processes whereby invented traditions are received and adopted by the people. Nonetheless, it gives us some clues, and some hints helping us to understand and to incorporate into our analysis the processes of social construction of the past: writing history; individual and collective memory acted out in the form of celebrations, rituals, symbols, museums, and science; and finally the "intellectual moral leadership" provided by intellectuals that fosters the birth of a national culture and education system.

For the purposes of this study, the political-transformation approach helps us to gain a broader understanding of Italian nationalism and its failures. It also allows us to incorporate

agency into our analysis, in the form either of state apparatuses or intellectuals. Finally, it shows us how nationalist ideologies are used to either for attain or challenge political legitimacy.

Section 2.1.3: The Social-Transformation Approach

The contributions of Benedict Anderson (1992) and Ernest Gellner (2006) can best be seen as falling within the social transformation category because both view nationalism as being a dependent variable of social-historical developments: industrialism for the first, and print capitalism for the latter. Gellner is the theorist who provides the most elaborate account of nationalism. His definition of nationalism is based on political legitimacy: “nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy which holds that the boundaries of the national and the ethnic unit should be congruent”(Gellner 2006:1). The basis of the legitimacy for him lies in the fact that "power holders and the rest are the same." On that basis he constructs his argument that a nation is dependent on the existence of an actual or a proposed state: “there can be no nation without a state” (Gellner 2006:1). He maintains that “nation” is an elusive idea predicated upon two main criteria: having the same culture (in the broadest meaning of that word), and a shared sense of belonging to the same nation. There also, however, are real-world factors required if a nation to emerge: integral homogeneity (maintained by killing, expelling, or assimilating others; small minorities do not violate this principle) and external autonomy, which is possible only via the existence of a sovereign state that provides self-determination.

In analyzing the emergence of nations, Gellner takes a stance precisely opposite to that of Kedourie, arguing that nations gave birth to nationalisms, not the other way around. He provides a very detailed and elaborate account of how various social transformation caused by industrialism forged nations out of populations.” Inspired by Ottoman and Roman conscription

strategies, he says that The first effect of industrialism is what he called “gelding,” the principle that a soldiers only attachment should be to the state. By taking children from their families at early ages, the two aforementioned empires were successful in cutting all previous religious, tribal, traditional, and familial ties. What Gellner (2006) means is that such factors as the migration caused by industrialization and cosmopolitan environments where socialization occurs at work, school, and other settings have resulted in a rupture of familial and tribal ties, with added influence of changes in family structure towards nuclear family. Thus, with the help of education, the only attachment of a person that remained was to the state. This was a shift from traditional (tribal, religious) identities to civic ones (citizenship, occupational groups, associations, etc.) The shift was facilitated above all by the spread of knowledge, and the centralization of the control over available knowledge through literacy and universal education. Literacy and schooling provided centralization, storage and standardization of knowledge, which implied political and cognitive centralization. At this point, invoking Weber's definition of the state as a "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force," Gellner argues that the monopoly of legitimate education is more central and important than the monopoly of legitimate violence. The importance attributed to education by Gellner stems from his understanding that the emergence of nations is a process whereby a high culture usurps local cultures and vernaculars. This high culture becomes almost a lifeblood, and minimal shared atmosphere within which all can breathe, speak, and produce. Gellner’s determinism is apparent, for he implies that humans are irreversibly committed to industrial society, a commitment which means homogeneity, which results in the nation-form.

Anderson (1992) is the other prominent figure who views the emergence of nations and nationalism as resulting from social transformation that are themselves the consequences of capitalism and industrialism. For Anderson, the nation is an imagined community; imagined in

the sense that "its members will never know, meet or hear of most of them, yet in the minds of each, lives the image of their communion" (Özkirimli 2000). His formulation of imagined communities springs from his understanding of the community as a small aggregate of people having face-to-face contact. By reverse implication, any community larger than a village is regarded as an imagined community. Anderson coined this term in the course of his attempt to understand nationalism, but now it is widely used to denote any kind of social belonging based on comradeship. At this point the differential between the nation and other imagined communities emerges: the quest for sovereignty because, nations by their very nature crave autonomy.

Anderson's analysis of the emergence of nation is predicated upon two fundamental principles; language and memory. Linguistic homogenization is the first step. Print capitalism comes first and foremost for Anderson it is the basis of both linguistic homogeneity and the imagining of a nation. It made possible the mass production of books, novels, and newspapers, thus imposing monopolies upon knowledge-production and dissemination. This mass production made the fixation of language possible, with the dominant vernacular (often the vernacular of the dominant) becoming the hegemonic language and thereby undermining other vernacular languages. Coupled with the diminishing power of the Catholic Church, the Reformation promoted the printing of sacred texts in vernaculars, thereby scanting the importance of sacred languages. The dominant vernacular became the language used in administration, religion, and most importantly of all, in education. Education both homogenized people linguistically and served as the medium through which the idea of the nation was spread. Anderson argues that the print languages also maintained a fixity of language and thus made the claims of antiquity possible, which became the basis for counter-hegemonic claims against the primacy of sacred languages.

Finally, Anderson provides a fascinating account of how novels and newspapers transformed the imagination of people by imposing a society and creating a progressive time-perception. Novels on the one hand depict an imagined world in which the actors live in a "society" that is presented as a sheer sociological reality. Members of this imagined society are inevitably connected in the minds of readers. Newspapers on the other hand, by providing a timely product of mass consumption, purvey a sense of time that is passing and progressing. Moreover, the selective events reported in the newspapers are connected to each other only in the shakiest and most contingent of fashion.

The social-transformation approach in general has been criticized for being deterministic in its explanation of the emergence of nations and nationalism, and for underestimating the importance of preexisting ethnic features. Counter-arguments are made which cite those mostly non-western cases in which states preceded nationalisms and nations (Kedourie). Then too, Smith persuasively argues that the existence of a language community is not sufficient basis for a nation, as evidenced by the case of Scothland.

The contribution of the social-transformation approach to our understanding of Italian and Padanian nationalism remains a matter of heated discussion. The whole experience of Italian nationalism can be interpreted both as a counter-argument to the social-transformation approach and as an example of what happens when a transformation fails: "the famous incomplete modernity of Italy." The Italian experience can be taken as constituting a counter-argument because first, the Italian state preceded Italian nationalism and the Italian nation; and second, Italian industrialism and print capitalism did not result in the rupturing communal ties and the

dissolution of local cultures, thus producing atomized individuals with adequate linguistic homogeneity. Rather, variations in culture in its broadest meaning persisted over time.

Nonetheless, in line with my criticism of the social-transformation approach as disregarding power relations, if these theories are complemented with the Gramscian understanding of hegemony, they quite adequately explain certain failures of Italian nationalism. Both Anderson (1992) and Gellner (2006) implicitly assume the existence of a hegemonic power that defines the boundaries of the nation-to-be, and controls the production and dissemination of knowledge; they do not, however, include it in their analyses. The latent existence of this hegemonic power can be detected in Anderson's emphasis on linguistic homogeneity and in Gellner's (2006) argument that monopoly of the means of education is more important than the monopoly of means of violence. If we are to complement this approach with a Gramscian understanding of hegemony leads us to see that Italy's historical experience of "domination without hegemony" well explains the lack of complete national linguistic homogeneity and the persistence of local identities as implicit protests against a hypothetically over-homogenized national identity.

Still, the social-transformation approach does not sufficiently explain the emergence of Padanian nationalism, for it came long after industrialism and grew out of Northerner's distinct experience of communal industrialism. We must complement it with Gramsci's insights into the wide range of factors causing regional identities to persist and with Anderson's wise positing of the importance of "imagined community."

Section 2.1.4: The Ethno-symbolism Approach

The main contribution of the ethno-symbolist approach, to use the term coined by Anthony Smith is its emphasis on the importance of preexisting ethnic/cultural features. Smith (1971) acknowledge many instances of construction or fabrication of nations, but he argues that in order for nation-building efforts to be successful they must base themselves on relevant preexisting social and cultural networks. Pakistan is proposed as an example. He argues that although the name "Pakistan" was coined by a Cambridge student, and Pakistani nationalism was implemented by the party led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, using the state apparatus, without a preexisting collective identity based upon religion there would have been no Pakistan. Moreover the Balkan nations of Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians all existed as communities within the Ottoman "millet" system (Özkirimli 2000).

Smith's contribution helps to further our understanding of the Northern League, for it extends our attention from present-day constructions to preexisting identities and communal ties. It has been hinted by Diamanti (1993) that Padanian nationalism is the construction of an organic elite, but I believe we still should pay attention to the pre-existing cleavages, communal ties, and identities; in this case, the famous provincialism of Italy. In this way we will get a sense of the narrative of a nation as a social construction.

Another theorist, who has been classified as an ethno-symbolist (by Ozkirimli 2005) is Armstrong. In the Barthian tradition, Armstrong argues that it is not the communalities among members but their differences from nonmembers that best explain the emergence of a nations or any group identity, because it is not meaningful to be a member of a group when there are no non-members.

Armstrong's contribution explains in part the emergence of the Northern League in a specific place and time; in a place where immigration and emigration were creating an environment of multiple cultures, the cleavages between which represented the struggle for resources; and in a time when the resources were becoming scarcer, the rivalries more acute, and the group identities more distinct.

Section 2.2 Diachronic Analysis: A Brief History of Italy

In order to analyze a movement that claims independence from the central government and whose discourse is that of a national-ethnic unit within a nation-state, it is necessary to look at the broader nation-building process. In 2011, Italy celebrated the 150th anniversary of its unification, Yet the foundation of Italy as a state and emergence of the Italian nation is a relatively new issue as compared with the discourse of being Italian at the ideological level. Like most nationally ideological claims, this one also seeks its roots in ancient civilizations and perceives the nation as persisting throughout the history of humankind.

The creation of the Italian state (Risorgimento) and the Italian Nation came not via a revolution of the French type; rather, it was a matter of the unification of the small city-states under one rule. That the political unification of Italy was accomplished goes without question, but, the degree of its cultural, linguistic, and ideological unification and/or homogenization is often debated. According to Gramsci (2005) the unification was not a process of bringing together all the fragments of a nation under one aegis, but rather a process of domination of North over South. Be that as it may, some words uttered by Massimo d'Azeglio in 1861, right after the unification, best articulate the invented nature of Italian Nationalism: "With Italy made, we must now make Italians" (Dickie 1996:1). Thus, the nation of Italians did not exist before the

unification, but it was something to be created after that. The fact remains, however, that the founders of the Italian state were not successful in creating a homogenous national culture. Gramsci concludes that this was not merely because they were incapable, but also because they did not care.

Section 2.2.1 Unification and the Southern Question

The southern question has always been an important aspect of political life in Italy even though Mussolini officially declared that the southern question was had forever been resolved. Notable in this regard is Gramsci's analysis of the southern question in the early twentieth century. His seminal article, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question," is still enlightening, for it gives us some much-needed clues about the structural problems that exacerbate the north-south divide even today. Gramsci argues that the reason for the persistence of the problem is the problematic nature of the unification process: "The northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the south of Italy and reduced them to exploitable colonies" (Gramsci, 1972: 441). Therefore, he argued that the south was not unified with Italy but colonized by the northern bourgeoisie. He sees the remedy as an alliance between the workers of the North and the peasants of the South against the existing bourgeoisie and capitalist hegemony. In the course of analyzing the press, the education system and the traditions of the North, he states that an ideology was spreading in the North against the South nurtured via stereotypes of *mezzogiorno*: southerners as backward, lazy, incapable, criminal, and barbaric in nature. They were deemed the main impediment to the northern drive toward a rapid social development of Italy. It is worth noting that even at that time, Gramsci was debunking the pseudo-scientific grounding of stereotypes about southerners, as for even now, we still can detect the influence of Cesare Lombroso's work on criminals in present-day stereotypes. Asale (2002) analyses the discussions of race and criminality in contemporary Italy, and their

relationship to policing practices. She argues that although Lombroso's theory of the born criminal, which says that "certain phenotypes can determine individual or community criminality," has long been disavowed by all respectable scientists and academics, it still widely shapes the public discourse on crime and criminality and thus has a real influence on policing practices.

Section 2.2.2: Terrorism and the Cold War

The Cold War between the USSR and the US turned Europe into an arena of struggle for political dominance. The involvement of the US with the internal politics of Italy, through NATO, has been a widely discussed issue. And of course during the war, Italy was literally conquered by the allied powers before it was left to the Italians again. As was revealed later, however, it was not totally left, but in part remained under control. As Gold (2003) said, especially with its Marshall Plan funds the U.S. became a part of Italy's internal politics, openly expressing its support for the Christian Democratic Party by making distribution of the plan's funds a propaganda tool.

The years after the war were marked by fear of communism, a fear fueled by terrorist attacks. The Christian Democrats have long played upon the people's fear of communism, and by doing so have been able to stay in power over four decades, although each coalition has lasted only for nine months on average. The period between roughly 1970 and 1980 was marked by terrorism and could not be understood until the revelations in 1991 that the involvement of the US was not limited to aid and propaganda.

In 1974, "Giovanni Tamburino's (a young magistrate) inquiries revealed the existence of an organization called the *Rosa dei Venti* (Weathervane) which was coordinating acts of terrorism as a prelude to a right-wing coup" (Ginsborg 2003a:349). The secret organization drew some of its members from the Italian secret service and the military, and was established by NATO. The

allegation was that this group was organizing terrorist attacks against both the left and the right at the same time, to manipulate the political alignments of people. The aim was to control the political attitude of Italians through fear and to create a social stratum of the radical right. This notorious phenomenon became known as "the strategy of tension". Even today this concept has its place in the Italian political nomenclature, and is still being used to delegitimize rivals by hinting at dirty alliances with secret groups such as the Masons. Tamburino even went so far as to arrest a general, a senior member of the Italian secret service. The time was not ripe for such a bold move however, given the political climate, and Tamburino's revelations were so astonishing that they were hardly taken seriously, although and covert cabals within the judiciary were very quick to grasp the situation and to defuse it. The case was transferred to Rome, and the general was released after a few weeks.

A wave of terrorism followed the global unrest of 1968-1970. Fear, prompted by not only the terror but also emanating from the hinted "strategy of tension," reached such a fever-pitch that the then leader of the center-left, Enrico Berlinguer, in 1973 broached the notion of an "Historical Compromise" between the three major political parties; Christian Democratic Party, the center-left and the Communist Party were to form a coalition. And yet the stark fact is that this proposal was a result of the fear from the infamous strategy of tension. As Schneider and Schneider (2003a) note, military coups in other countries were taken as object lessons by Italy's left. And even in Italy, although they failed, there have been two attempts at military coups, in 1964 and 1970 (2003:74). As Ginsborg reported, Berlinguer later argued that "student and worker militancy had been countered by the strategy of tension, the mobilization of the extreme right and a deteriorating economic situation. The reactionary forces in this country were seeking to create 'a climate of exasperated tension' which would open the way to an authoritarian government or at

least a permanent shift to the right." (2003:355). Berlinguer also expressed his pessimism about governing the country even if the Communists to gain 51 percent of the votes. Thus, the overwhelming and widespread perception at the time was that democracy had been hijacked by the "reactionary forces."

Berlinguer's project of historical compromise was doomed to be undermined yet again by the actions of secret groups. In 1978 Aldo Moro, Prime Minister and the leader of the Christian Democrats, and sympathetic to the idea of "historical compromise," was kidnapped by the "red brigades," a leftist terrorist organization. The faction inside the Christian Democratic Party that was led by the later Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, ranged against Moro and against the idea of compromise, and refused to participate in negotiations. Aldo Moro was later killed by terrorists., and there died the dream of a compromise solution. As Schneider and Schneider (2003) have noted, the Andreotti faction inside the Christian Democratic Party dominated national politics throughout the 1980s, "provoking the suspicion, still at large today, that it had in some manner been complicit in his (Moro's) sequester" (2003:165)

Known as the "Anni di piombo" (years of lead), the 1970s were characterized by severe political polarization and insecurity. Italy was subjected to several terrorist bombings, the perpetrators of which were not apprehended until 1991. Among others, the Piazza Fontana bombing of 1969, is the most widely known and the supposed perpetrator died while in police custody. The bombing of the Italicus train in 1974 killed 12 people and the perpetrators have yet to be discovered. The bombing in Bologna's railway station in 1980, known as the Bologna Massacre, killed 85 people. With respect to Bologna Massacre, the Italian Supreme Court issued its final decision on the matter in 2005 and found Lucio Gelli guilty; he was the leader of the

Masonic Lodge Propaganda Due (P2) and the Italian secret structure Gladio, both having been discovered by prosecutor Felice Casson in 1991.

Section 2.2.3: Eighties and Nineties: Pandora's Box Opened

The phenomena of widespread corruption, and the convergence of state and mafia, plus the issues of *Italy's being a state of exploitations*, and a *puppet state* had been experienced and complained of by many Italians for quite some time. But although problems were sensed, and resulted in the emergence of small political movements, these reactions were for the most part fragmented and did not coalesce into "*common sense"* a la Gramsci. In the period roughly of 1980-1994, however, these convergences of the state with illegal groups seemed to be on display with all of their nudity, which caused an outrage and further degraded the state-society relationships.

The first of a series of investigations that would drastically alter the political life and the state-society relationship in Italy was a probe of the mafia. At the end of the 1970s the Christian Democratic Party's strategy of continuing the state's deeply engrained habit of practicing clientelism was functional in reforming the Sicilian society through liberating a new middle class from the Sicilian aristocracy. Among the key players was a magistrate Giovanni Falcone. As Schneider and Schneider (2003) have told us, Giovanni Falcone and his friends constructed an anti-Mafia pool consisting of half a dozen magistrates, as a way of assuming joint responsibility for the investigation and of making it more coherent. Many of these collagues had cut their magisterial teeth during the terror operations of the 70s, which were marked by heavy use of "pentiti" (penitents), or as we would say, informants (2003:131-135). By using penitents, a variety of new investigative techniques and international cooperation, magistrate Falcone was able to reveal that Sicily had become the main hub for the international heroin trade to the United

States (2003:137). In 1982 the assassination of General Carlo Alberto della Chiesa, a national hero and veteran of the campaign against terrorism in the 1970s was a watershed for Mafia operations. It not only caused a widespread outcry and incited hatred of the Mafia, but also led for the framing of a law giving more power to magistrates. As a direct result of Falcone's investigations, in 1987, 460 "mafiosi" were found guilty. Among them were the heads of some important Mafia families.

Revealed by these trials, known as the "maxi trials" was not only the extent of the Mafia's power but also the convergence between state and mafia. The latter were shown to have corrupt relations with politicians over government projects. Indeed Giulio Andreotti, head of the Christian Democratic Party and Italy's long-time Prime Minister had, according to the testimony of a penitent, a close relationship with Mafia leaders. A kiss between him and a Mafia leader had long been discussed in the media.

Section 2.2.4: Stay Behind Network of the NATO in Italy

As was revealed in 1991 through the investigations conducted by prosecutor Felice Casson, a secret organization called Gladio was using in Italy, in coordination with the Masonic Lodge Propaganda Due, Italian Secret Service, Italian Military, and NATO, the tactics of the infamous "strategy of tension" to shape political life. The aim was to protect Italy from a possible Soviet Invasion. To that end, some 45 commando units had been established and 139 hidden caches of guns and ammunitions hidden away. The deep secret turned out to be that these secret units and weapons were used to make false terrorist attacks so as to instigate tension between different groups and thereby instill fear that the Russians are coming.

In 1972 an explosion in Pateano, in the northeast of Italy, killed three "Carabinieri" or paramilitary police. The Italian police were quick to blame the Red Brigades, and for years this attack was known to have been made by communists. In 1984, Felice Casson re-opened the case and discovered not only that the police report was a forgery but that the police officer who wrote the report on the explosion was a member of "Ordine Nuovo," a radical right-wing group. The officer concealed the fact that the bomb used in the explosion consisted of C4 plastic explosive, which is widely used by NATO. Merging all of that with the information gleaned from the discovery by chance, in 1972, of an underground arms cache, Casson deepened the investigation and discovered that right-wing groups were being used by military intelligence to stage terrorist attacks for which communists were blamed. He then produced the man who had actually planted the Pateano bomb: Vicenzo Vinciguerra. The latter not only confessed to planting the bomb but also testified that several state organizations had helped him to escape after the explosion, including Carabinieri and Intelligence services (Ganser 2005). The timing of the bombing was instrumental in creating a state of insecurity, demonizing the left, and conventing conservative tendencies into downright reactionary ones. Even the period was marked by student movements and sympathy for the left and social action, an environment was being created that rendered the people more likely to accept an authoritarian regime or perhaps even a military coup. In January 1990, Casson was able to get the required permissions to delve into the archives of the Italian Military Intelligence agency. There he discovered that a secret organization called Gladio had existed in Italy for years and was working in cooperation with Italian intelligence, right-wing terrorists, the NATO, and the US (Ganser 2005).

Given the indisputable evidence unearthed by Casson, the then Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, was forced in Parliament to accept the existence of Gladio. Soon, Andreotti would

became a suspect in several crimes. He has been accused of the ordering the murder of the journalist Mino Picorelli in 1979, in order to conceal his links to the murder of the then prime minister Aldo Moro who, as noted above, was kidnapped and murdered by Red Brigades (Ganser, 2005:10). However the case was dropped in 2002 because the prescription period was ended.

Italy is a country full of secret societies and networks, which include large associations such as the Freemasons and the Opus Dei. Nonetheless, today being a mason in Italy is widely regarded as evil, and as tantamount to being "conspirators." This attitude is due almost entirely to the investigations of prosecutor Casson, which led to a police raid on the house of Lucio Gelli, an ex-fascist and the leader of the masonic lodge known as "Propaganda Due." The police discovered there a list of members that included figures from government, the police, the intelligence services and the business world all of them having cooperated to apply the so-called strategy of tension so as to manipulate public opinion. (Schneider and Schneider 2003a:75). Schneider and Schneider also report that in post war Italy the elites of Sicily, together with some Mafia leaders, became members of Masonic lodges, and Michele Sindona, a close personal friend of Gelli, was instrumental in the laundering of the Mafia's heroin money, within the Italian banking system. (2003:75-77) In addition, the heroin money also was revealed to be used to finance some terrorist organizations and coups abroad.

All of these crises confused most Italians. They were bewildered to realize that the parties they voted for were hand in hand with delinquents, terrorists and foreign powers against their own citizens. Some chose to reject in an attitude that "….. I did not want and still don't want to hear anything about that . if that is true, everything we live and know is a lie. It is just too much

for me" As Francesca(50) said. But for others, this was a revelation of a fact that they suspected to exist for a long time. Therefore, a powerful response did not come late. Although, it is widely accepted that the end of the first republic was kindled by operation of corruption (mani-puliti) in 1992 and fulfilled in 1993 elections, I believe that a referendum in 1991 was a more important turning point in terms of paving the way for a vast judicial operation against political corruption and opening up the political arena for new actors like the Northern League and the Forza Italia of Berlusconi.

Section 2.2.5: Politics of Electoral System

During the Cold War years, Italy's electoral system was based on an attempted balance struck between all regions in the name of political stability. Experience of weak and unstable governments, and the desire felt by those living in various regions to be well represented, shaped an electoral system that allowed smaller parties into the chamber, but basically rewarded coalitions. As a result, Italian political life was shaped into a system widely known as *partitocrazia,* meaning that the biggest party, the Christian Democratic Party, was able to the govern Italy for four decades, even though the longest government did not last for more than nine months (Gilbert 1995). As coalitions were easy to change and disband, in order to form a coalition state resources were used. This spread corruption and thereby humiliated politicians, delegitimized politics, and produced a high rate of absenteeism, which is the case even today.

In 1991, a bill of law was proposed by a former Christian Democratic to change the electoral system. This a marginal amendment, basically aimed at preventing ballot fraud and allowing voters to chose the candidate they want from the party lists was made the subject of a referendum. The referendum became a way of challenging existing parties and the political system known as "partitocrazia". For the measure to gain the day, fifty percent of all registered

voters would have to vote yes, regardless of the absentees. In spite of the opposition coming from the main parties such as the DC, PCI, and PC, and despite their campaign in favor of absenteeism, the results constituted a slap in the face delivered to the parties: in the first favorable vote on a referendum in all of Italian history, "95 percent of those voting were in favor of the proposed change: 62.5 percent of all adults cast a ballot" (Gilbert 1995:87). Gilbert reports that "the result was widely regarded as a poll on the Italians' satisfaction with their leaders" (1995:88); and the message was clear that the then current parties were losing the trust of Italians; to put it mildly, there was a desire for new political actors.

Section 2.2.6: Investigations on Corruption: Mani Pulite (Clean Hands)

Major transformations in Italy were brought about by some magistrates. First, investigations into the Mafia run by prosecutors Falcone and Borsellino were instrumental not only in weakening its rule, but also n uncovering the sinister face of the political system, which was built on a convergence of Mafia and politicians. It was also shown to be a system built on clientelism and the redistribution of state benefits Thereby making a system of corruption a parallel or even de facto and real system in which the state was run. Then in the early 1990s, magistrate Cassone unearthed structure that has become known as "the deep state": a structure that includes numerous state agents including military and intelligence bureaucrats. In the decades since the Second World War, structure had done large-scale social engineering by planning terrorist bombings to manipulate public opinion. Finally, in 1992, magistrate Antonio di Pietro started a corruption probe, dubbed as the operation mani-pulite (clean hands), designed to expose a system of widespread political corruption. It was revealed that that system of corruption had become the *de facto* way of doing business in Italy, with bribes being taken by the major party and distributed to the other parties as hush money. In the defense statements made by some

accused party members and businessmen, they claim their innocence on the grounds that regardless of what the law books may say, giving bribes was the only way to survive and do business, not an anomaly but widespread (Gilbert 1995:126-151).

The arrest of Mario Chiesa in 1992 on a bribe indictment was the first in an upward spiral of operations mounted against political corruption. He was the head of a large charitable organization (PAT) and personally close to Craxi, Prime minister of Italy between 1983-1987 and head of the Italian Socialist party. His arrest turned attention to Craxi who was famous for his extravagant life style and whose name appeared in the operational rolls of the campaign against Propaganda 2 as that of someone who used the money from the state-owned oil refinery (ENI) to finance a collapsing bank in 1983. Relying on the testimony of Chiesa, prosecutors started to send requests to the Parliament that some deputies, mainly of the Socialist Party, have their immunity suspended. As Gilbert (1995) reports, the rate of the bribes was about 10-15 percent; taking into account that billions of dollars worth of projects were contracted each year, the sum was colossal. Moreover, if one added all of the projects that was contracted but never finished, the public loss was huge. Then too, as Gilbert (1995) points out, bribes also were distributed to other parties such as the DC and the PCI. Finally the bribe-network in Milan was revealed to be connected to Rome and a request to parliament was made also for Craxi; which resulted in a fracture in the party, and Craxi resigned.

Although some of its members were involved, the Christian Democratic Party was largely untouched by investigation until 1993. At that time operations against top bosses of the Mafia resulted in some confessions that Salvatore Lima, Andreotti's "right-hand man" as Gilbert puts it, (1995:41) who had been killed by the Mafia, was Mafia's man in Rome and that Andreotti had

met with mafia leaders, kissing them and being called *lo zio* (the uncle) by them. Moreover, testimonies of *pentiti* (penitents) were pointing to Andreotti's links to the assassinations of Dalla Chiesa and the journalist Carmine Pecorelli; both were members of Propaganda 2 and likely to know about the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro. The investigations even went as far as the Northern League, showing that they had also taken their share from the system of corruption thereby humiliating them and undermining its position as an anti-system party. Allegations leveled against Christian Democratic Party pointed to a similar network of corruption as at PSI, but Andreotti was clever enough to resign from his office and stay on as a senator, thereby retaining his legislative immunity. Then, just when Italy seemed at last to have surmounted all of these hurdles; it fell into a legitimacy crisis.

CHAPTER THREE:
Description of the Research Site and the Party

Section 3.1: Emergence an the History of the Northern League

Parallel to the long-discussed regionalism of Italy, regional/ provincial identities have persisted and small regional parties/associations/movements have been active garnering only minimal amounts of support. More than anything else, and thanks to the infamous "strategy of tension," the global hegemonic Cold War structured Italian political life around ideological differences. The fear of or the desire for, a communist revolution undermined regionalist politics. In terms of the wider political climate, the state-society relationship deteriorated sharply. In the wake of the hard 1970's, known as the *anni di piombo*, Italy was a state that had lost its control over the country with a defeat against the mafia in the south, a kidnapped and assassinated Prime Minister and near surrender to terrorism. Moreover, politicians were busy divvying up state benefits, which in turn resulted in instable governments and in a wide spread system of corruption becoming the de facto system. Finally, whispers of a "strategy of tension" left people feeling confused about the real rulers of the state.

The 1980's and 1990's became the years of revelations, showing that long-bruited rumors about a "deep state" were trued. Little wonder that Italians came to hate politics and politicians and that that mood resulted in famous *astensialismo*: absenteeism from elections. As Passarelli and Tuorto (2012) have shown that the latter grew constantly in Italy between 1968 and 1992, and they opine that the League successfully grabbed the votes of non-voters. They also state that prior to the success of the Northern League there was a "vote market" open to new candidates, as evidenced by the rise of non-voters, the instability of party attachments, and a downward trend in total votes for the two biggest parties.

After 1980, the Cold War started to lose its importance and economic problems began to loom large. As early as 1979 in Venice, and later in other regions of the North, small regionalist movements emerged, fueled by anti- migrant sentiments and persistent local loyalties, and catalyzed by a grotesquely bureaucratized state. As a result of the latter's clientelistic policies the North had long been the taxpayer for the whole country, and during the economic recession the problem became more and more aggravated.

These political transformations humiliated the Italian state and paved the way for an anti-system party, namely: *La Lega Nord*, or as we are calling it here, The League is an amalgamation of various regional parties acting out of the north. Initially most prominent among these political movements was *La Liga Veneta*, or the Venetian league. This had been, of all things, a philological society before it was transformed into a political party. In fact, its scholarly provenance proved to be beneficial for organizing seminars into Venetian language, culture and history; one could say that the Venetian Philological Society made a distinct Venetian identity imaginable. The members of this movement were not part of the old political system, but rather "young, male, middle class, secondary or higher education elites" (Allum and Diamanti 1996: 146).

The original focus of the Venetian League was to build a territorial identity for the Venetian region (Allum and Diamanti. 1996:158). Emerging both as a regional-identity movement and as a reaction to the existing party system dominated by the Christian Democrats, the movement was characterized by low level of institutionalization, which was compensated for by strong family ties. Given their League's unprofessional nature, it comes as no surprise that members were ill adapted to the struggles for political arena. The most important moment with

respect to both the Venetian league and the broader issue of secessionism was the League's contact with Umberto Bossi in 1985, by providing an interest-free loan to his newly founded Lombard League to help it prepare for the elections of 1987. Later, the Venetian League and the Lombard League united into the Northern Alliance in the 1989 elections. Then in 1990, The Lombard League, Venetian League, Autonomist League of Piedmont and Leagues of Liguria, Emilia Romagna, and Tuscany came together to form an alliance which is the present-day Northern League (Allum and Diamanti 1996). After that time, Bossi became the League's most prominent figure and a symbol. Allum and Diamanti (1996) claims that although the Venetian league was basically an ethno-regionalist party, Bossi adopted an anti-institutional strategy. In other words, he made territorial identity the basis for a representation of interests that ultimately crystallized as civil society versus the state. To return to Passarelli and Tuorto's (2002) conception of a "vote market" we now realize that Bossi saw and understood it earlier and better than anyone else. He understood the need for a coalition between the small parties and in 1987 he accomplished the union under the name *Alianza del Nord* (Northern Alliance) and racked up a few notable accomplishments in the elections of 1987 and 1989.

Members of the party often voiced descriptions of Bossi such as "the person who spoke up for the things that we had already been talking about among us. He was one of us, he was not talking like other politicians in a refined manner. Rather he was talking as to be the voice of the voiceless." His commoner's speaking style, which was very strange at that time for a politician and media figure transformed Italian political discourse. As defended by his adherents, Bossi's communication style, replete with curses and gestures constituted a wise strategy to take up more time and space within the media. Whether a tactic or simply harsh language, it was successful in conquering the minds and hearts of a lot of northern Italians.

More than anything else, his and his party's success lies in their understanding that in the eyes of voters the problem lay not just in politics or partitotocrazia, but in the state itself. Thus the party adopted an anti-state discourse and the coincidences of history were kind to them. The Maxi trials revealed a convergence between the state and criminal groups, and a vast system of clientelism. This gave rise to anti-state sentiments and intensified the volatility of voting behavior and the desire for a viable alternative to current parties. As a result, the 1989 elections were a real success for the League. Challenging the old parties for the first time, especially in the north where Christian Democratic Party, traditionally were strong, paved the way toward the party's becoming a real player in the field of national politics in Italy. Moreover, this time around the votes the Northern League gained were not only the votes of the nonvoters. At any rate, the old parties of the system experienced a real defeat, and the volatility of the voter behavior increased. Taken jointly, Christian Democrats and Communists lost almost 15 percent of the votes they had gained in previous elections.

The 1991 revelations of Gladio and Mani Pulite resulted in several government officers and deputies going under investigation and in the eyes of most Italians reduced Italy to a satellite of NATO and the United States rather than an independent state. To the extent that it was a state plotting against its own citizens, and the Northern League was very clever in turning this cynical downturn in Italy's fortune into an opportunity.

In the elections of 1992, the Northern League, relying on its anti-state rhetoric, gained his first major success. Although just a regionalist party, it took 8.6 percent of the votes nationally and gained 55 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 25 in the Senate. It suddenly had become the second party in most Northern regions, taking about 20 percent of the votes.

Most commentators have linked the success of the Northern League in the 1992 elections to the Mani-Pulite (Clean Hands) operations. In fact, when the elections were held the operations were new, and their extent not well revealed. This meant that parties of the old system were able to absorb their losses, hold most of their voters, and establish a government again.

1992 and 1993 were important years for Italy. Almost every day a new scandal was being revealed and a many members of the Senate and the Chamber were under investigation. The regional elections of 1993 showed the extent of the support for the Northern League. In most cities, the Northern League was able to be the first party in the first round. its anti-establishment rhetoric prevented it, however, from doing the necessary coalition for the second turn and candidates failed to be elected in most provinces. It was a success in terms of votes taken, but not of offices won. Still, one victory had phenomenal importance: the League won the regional elections in Milan, capital of the North and heart of finance and production worlds.

This ascending trajectory of success was cut short by two almost simultaneous developments. First was a judicial investigation in which the party was implicated. The allegation was that the Northern League had taken its share of booty, allocated to it by the widespread system of political corruption. Although the amount was not high, this was the first detectable imperfection on the part of the Northern League, and leader Bossi accepted this. Only the party accountant was held responsible. It was a bitter brow nonetheless, for the League idealized the northern identity as resolute, hardworking, civilized, and honest. This was the first scratch on the body of the party. Nor should we be surprised that the party discourse so on shifted from corruption to anti-sate protest and anti-(im)migrant rhetoric.

The second development was the emergence of the man who soon became all but synonymous with Italian Political life: Silvio Berlusconi cleverly to used his media empire and professional marketing tactics to present himself as Italy's new hope. Although he was also a member of the infamous Propaganda Due, and there were doubts about how he built his media and construction empire from scratch, his effective use of media made him look like an appealing alternative to a vote market striving to find any alternative to the old parties. He was definitely an alternative to the Northern League and was targeting the very same electorate: the middle class. Moreover, while the League constrained itself to the North, Berlusconi was presenting himself as a national alternative.

Berlusconi represented not only a rival to the League for votes but also deserted available rhetorical tools for the League to make politics. As a result, the League was pushed from the center to the right. This led in 1996 to the declaration of the independence of Padania: a word, that virtually no one in Italy, much less the word ha heard before. It means the land of the Padanians, the people who in the plains around the river Po, who constitute a nation.

The election of 1994 was a watershed for Italy, representing the end of the First Republic and the beginning of the Second. The traditional parties collapsed and Berlusconi's party Forza Italia rose as the major new political force. Bossi, knowing that the League was strong only in the Northern regions, was clever enough to make a coalition with Berlusconi. Although the League's vote-count dropped somewhat from 1992, the results of this election proved that the League was not a mere protest party but represented a constant social stratum.

In addition to reorienting those political orientations, the 1994 elections also crystallized factions inside the League. Factions represented four regions: Varese, mostly left wing, Roberto

Maroni, Umberto Bossi and Marco Formentini; Bergamo, conservatives, Roberto Calderoli; Veneto, conservative base, Liberal Leaders; and Piedmont, Roberto Cota. Prior to Bossi's decision to forge an alliance with Berlusconi, Maroni had had moved toward an alliance with Mario Segni, a former Christian Democratic and father of that referendum in 1991 on electoral reform which represented a real challenge posed to, and a trigger-point making the end of, the First Republic. Then, instead of Segni, Bossi decided to make an alliance with Berlusconi, whom Maroni was openly against that tainting collaboration.

The League's experience government was short-lived. Adopting a strategy of "sabotaging" the Berlusconi government from inside, the League sundered its support for Berlusconi and thereby paved the way for a government of the left. This strategy had deeper causes and consequences for the League however. Although it received support for the new government of the left, important figures including Gianfranco Miglio, the ideologist of the movement, objected to the new policies of the League and finally either separated or expelled from the party. As a result the authority of Bossi was more and more consolidated and as Legisti puts it, the party adopted a Leninist style of administration whereby whatever Bossi said became a law for many. On the one hand, that style enabled Bossi to navigate the party easily; on the other hand it crystallized resentments within the League, finally resulting in a take over in 2012.

Berlusconi's appeal as a catchall candidate liked by many within the League and supported by Christian organizations forced the League to move from center or left to the right of the political spectrum. In the beginning the League had supporters from all trends as was demonstrated in 1997 when the Northern League established the Padanian Parliament. The parties inside the parliament included social democrats, liberal democrats, national conservatives,

Catholics, and communists, all bearing to a Padanian label. The cosmopolitan nature of that Parliament is in keeping with my fieldwork suggesting that the party had a heterogenous base. The fact remains, however, that its adherents were brought together by kindred grievances, with the resultant real-world conglomeration constituting not a Padanian but a Leghisti movement.

This parliament was demonstrative of the beginning motives and the cosmopolitan nature of the party, which also confirms my observations from the fieldwork that the party had a heterogeneous base, came together because of similar grievances. However the party was able to create an identity or an imagined community that is not Padanian but Legisti!

Given the League's narrowed political arena and Bossi's consolidated power, it had no choice but to move toward a regional discourse even though that meant losing the chance to be an anti-system party at the national level. In 1996, at the annual meeting of the League representing the unification of the Northern cities against an imperial German empire which is seen as analogous being today to as the imperial Italian state, dubbed Pontida, Bossi proclaimed the advent of a Padanian nation. The name of the party later would be changed to the "Northern League for the independence of Padania" and to make it clean that the primary aim of the party was independence from the hated Italian State.

Remarkably, Bossi undertook to write a history of the people living in the North, mainly around the delta of the River Po, depicting them as naturally constituting a nation persisting over time and having Celtic racial roots. These people are Padanians, literally meaning people living around river Po. Like all nationalist ideologies, this one was characterized by historical claims that included ancient roots, the persistence of the nation through time, a national character of anti-colonialism, and a strong work ethic notably akin to Weber's Protestant ethic. The League has

extensively used symbols, historical figures, flags, ceremonies, rituals, and a newspaper *quaderni padani* (Padanian notebooks), to construct and consolidate a sense of belonging and an imagined community of Padanians. Moreover the local vernaculars of the North were presented as constituting a language distinct from Italian, were used by the leader at public meetings. At any rate, this courageous or foolhardy move of declaring the independence of Padania was received very positively, and the elections of 1996 were a success for the League. After that time, it continued to negotiate between secession and federalism according to its position, in or out of government, and remains an important part of Italian political life (Mazzoleni 2008).

The period between 1996 and 2000 were years when the independence rhetoric became prevalent, and the party garnered attention from all over the world. And yet, this independence movement did not look like violent examples from different parts of the world, and the *giuramento* (oath-taking) ceremony looked less like a revolution and more like a town festival at which people enjoyed in the early-spring weather. This period was marked by symbolic political tools including printing of Padanian money and stamps, organizing of a "Miss Padania" beauty contests, and later founding a radio station (Radio Padania) and a TV station (Telepadania), the designin of a Padanian flags and on and on.

This unprecedented and historically fanciful invention of a nation as opposed to the hegemonic discourse of the Italian nation seemed hyperbolic to many; nonetheless it proved an effective way of dealing with factions and regional differences inside the party, an initiative was fruitful in many ways. First and most important, it helped the party to gain votes in the elections of 1996. Garnering more than 10 percent and, more important, success in the North including the "red zones" (historically left-oriented regions) meant expansion of influence for the party.

Granted, the ideas of Padania and a Padanian nation were never taken seriously, and people did not adopt a new identity in one day. To a remarkable degree however, the notion served to humiliate the Italian state and to further challenge its legitimacy. Indeed such a claim, and the public support for it gained, virtually brought to life the long-discussed legitimacy problem and the failure of the nation-building project in Italy. This electoral success also demonstrated that the success of the party was dependent on its anti-system nature and made the party go even further in its protest. Moreover it kicked off the era, which I call The Passive Revolutionary Period *a la* Gramsci.

Nonetheless, this attempt to challenge the Italian hegemony was hindered by the lack of belief in a historically nonexistent nation, by the pragmatic uses it was put to by leaders, and by the controversial attitudes adopted by various factions. Moreover, persecution by the Italian state was not long in coming. Another symbolic attempt, the *Camicie Verdi* an assemblage of green shirts representing a Padanian army, was taken seriously by prosecutors. The party center was raided; Maroni, one of the prominent figures, has been the target of brutality; trials have lasted for years and have become a Damocles' sword hanging over the League.

Bossi, being a northerner, had the spirit of entrepreneurship, and navigated the party according to shifting political winds. Being out of government was becoming detrimental and the base of the party did not buy the idea of independence, although it was useful in many ways. In the elections of 2001 he chose to forge a coalition with Berlusconi again. This resulted in grievances within the party and the party took its historically lowest share of votes: 3.9 percent, the League was not able to gain a single seat either in the Senate or in the Chamber of Deputies.

Once again, however, they were with Berlusconi and the government, and this provided them with protection even while making most Legisti skeptical about the judiciary, which once they had supported when it went after conspirators and corrupt politicians and the Mafia. Given the tendency of the retired judges to become involved in politics from the left, it is understandable that in the eyes of leghisti, the judiciary had become merely a tool of those communists who derided the Northern Leaguers as racists and xenophobes.

On 11 March 2004, something of grave importance happened: Umberto Bossi, the legendary leader, had a stroke. It took more than a year for him to recover. Although gossip was rife as to the cause of the stroke (the hottest theory was that he was with a sexy Italian celebrity in a hotel room), all that it matters is that this event drastically changed the power structure inside the party which in turn produced the Padanian Spring of 2012.

The stroke left Bossi with a paralyzed arm, and undercut his charm by taking away his ability to speak fluently: the most important aspect of his charisma. During the recovery period Bossi lived in secrecy for a while, and his wife and those close to him acted as intermediaries between him and the League. This habit lingered on after the strike, and caused a rupture in communications with the base, that is, the militants of the party. It seems Bossi had been deprived of his real power: the ability to understand people, be one of them, speak as one of them and be their voice. Thus is shouldn't surprise us that the lower ranks of the party and the people around Maroni, grew angrily critical about the "magic circle" surrounding Bossi.

With the scandals of Berlusconi and the League's return to federalist discourse, the League started to gain support again. In 2006 their alliance with Berlusconi lost in the elections against the left, while the League slightly improved its standing. More importantly, it was able to

force Berlusconi into a referendum in 2006: for a constitutional reform known in Italy as "the devolution," which basically proposed the transfer of some state functions to local administrations. This was perceived as being a turning point by which all the dreams of the party were to come true. The referendum was national, however, and strong opposition from the southern regions resulted in a defeat. Fifty-three percent of Italians voted, and 61 percent of the voters said no. This defeat at the national level meant that it was impossible to get what they wanted in that way. It did, however show the extent of the support for federalism in the regions of Lombardy and Venice where 55 percent of voters said yes.

The results of the referendum at least showed an open vote market for the League this time on and including also some southern migrants who were to a degree assimilated into the northern way of life and who also were suffering from the Italian state's clientelistic policies and high taxation. Even they were sympathetic to the idea of federalism, whereby northern taxes would remain in the North.

Upon the revelation that the EU and globalization did not mean that heaven had assured on earth rather that the Italian economy had to surrender to bigger economies such as Germany's, the League's anti-state and anti-EU rhetoric was bought by suffering northerners. And this time the support was broader, including the "red zones," and was moving the League from radical right through the center of the political spectrum at least in terms of economic stance. Moreover the rising number of immigrants from North African countries was producing widespread concern for security, which the League was clever to use to gain support. This was awarded by voters in 2008 when they took 8.3 percent of the votes. The League once again was in the government along with Berlusconi. This time Maroni became Minister of the Interior a fact

which again changed the power-balance within the part. This success was consolidated in 2009 when the League gained 10.2 percent slightly lower than the historic high reached in 1996.

Unfortunately, with the help of the global economic crisis the country's economy deteriorated day by day, and the scandals that implicated Prime Minister Berlusconi reduced popular support for the government. Naturally, the League absorbed its share of public discontent. When I arrived in Italy in the summer of 2011, most comments about the League were blaming it for being always with Berlusconi and being morally tainted thereby. The critics of Antonio Di Pietro (prosecutor of Operation Clean Hands, who established his own party with a leftist tendency) added the complaint that now it was only *La Lega dele poltrone* , (literally: League of Chairs), implying that the party was part of the corrupt political system. As my landlord Angelica put it, when I asked her about the League's discourse against corruption (in fact they were avoiding anti-corruption discourse for a while), the answer was short and simple: "They were always with Berlusconi." she did, however, append his somewhat mollified comment "But Maroni is a serious guy."

In the summer of 2011 the country was hit by an economic crisis for its government debt was greater than its GDP. The government, which included the League, was unable to solve its problems and was seeking a bailout from the European Union. Given the Berlusconi scandals, the sympathy for politicians had dropped sharply, and the lack of a viable alternative was being felt. In addition, a judiciary investigation against a Mason Lodge called P4 (implying a continuum with P2 of 1991) revealed another system of corruption, yet another convergence of criminals and state. Little wonder that a climate similar to that of early Nineties was created, characterized by

an “electoral market” whose clients were bored of politics and desperately in search of alternatives.

Section 3.2: Description of the Research Site

The City of Varese is located in the northwest of the Lombardy region, in the north of Italy. The city is situated on pre-Alpine foothills overlooking the Po valley and the Lake Varese. Next to Varese is the Sacro-Monte Mountain, famous for its monastery that is a pilgrimage destination for Christians. Both the Alpine foothills (Pre-alpi) and the Po valley (Padania) are important not only as geographical factors shaping the economy, but also as symbols associated with local identities. “Varese” means water in the local dialect, a name given because of its position in the middle of a water-rich region with several lakes and dense forests. Varese is a border city, for Canton Ticino of Switzerland is as close as eight miles. On the other hand Milan, the regional capital of Lombardy and the financial heart of Italy, is just 40 miles away. Varese Province has a total population of 80,000 (2012) and an area of 21 sq. Miles.

Varesini (Varesina-female /Varesino-male) is the demonym representing the dwellers of the city of Varese, and Varesotto means dweller in the province of Varese, including the residents of other cities that are administratively subordinate to Varese Province. A varesotto tends to have identification with his city in addition to the province. Others know Varesini as being closer to the outer world, and thus more snob and mean than most Italians. For Varesini, attachment to their own territory is the strongest sentiment that leads to identification. Parallel to that, Varesini primarily define themselves as Varesino/a and Lombardian, thereby confirming the long-discussed provincialism of Italy. Italian and Padanian identities come after those two, and are contingent upon a person’s political attitude. Being a Varesino/a means: living in the city, having

civic attitudes associated with the bourgeoisie, being able to talk in the dialect, and having social ties in the city. Most commonly Varesini are of the middle or higher-middle class, owners of small businesses and artisans. The lower classes tend to include southern migrants and immigrants.

Once a small town, Varese owes much to Benito Mussolini who effectively made it the administrative center of the Province of Varese when he attached seven other small cities to it in 1927. This had a staggeringly strong effect on population: an 82 percent population spurt between 1920 and 1930 which prepared Varese for the so-called economic boom that began after the World War two. As a consequence of this top-down decree by the fascist regime, fascist architecture has left traces in the city. For instance in the city center, Montegrappa Square (Piazza Montegrappa), named after a nearby mountain, one sees the famous tower: *Torre Civica.* is marked by fascist architecture. Simple, symmetric, exaggeratedly sharp edges and monumental dimensions show a fascist intent to proclaim a nationalist glory. Together with the prefecture, these two monumental structures hanker back to the fascist era, even while suggesting that fascism had little success penetrating more deeply into this society. These buildings remain as the only flags of the central Italian state, Rome, and showing its power and its ability to touch even the distant north..

Contrary to these Roman-style fascist buildings, the historic center of the city is dominated by buildings having 19th Century architecture. The church of San Vittore and its bell tower stand right opposite the fascist architecture of the Piazza Montegrappa and its tower. Although built in 1615 it has a neo-classical façade dating to 1715, and given the preserved traces of Austrian bombardment on its bell tower, it represents for the Varesini their struggle for

independence. This church also stands as the masterpiece of the group of buildings in the historic center; those struggled once against fascist architecture and today are trying to fend off an invasion of modern apartments, creeping in from suburbs to surround the city.

Emanating from the Piazza Montegrappa is a street called Corso Matteotti. Named after a politician who criticized fascists and was killed by them, this street is the city's main marketplace. Home to around a hundred shops, it is perceived as being high class, and undeniably home to the most expensive brands that one might not expect to see in a town of this size. A short walk on this street is enough to give one a sense of the Italian tendency to wear high fashion, and of the level of income the city bourgeois have.

One of the main characteristics of Varese and its city structure are the public gardens. With its motto of "garden city," Varese is home to many well-preserved and well-maintained public gardens. Among others, Giaderni Estensi (Estense Gardens) and Estense Palace are the most important. Built as a summer palace for the Governor of the Duchy of Milan in 1778, the palace now serves as the municipal building. The upper hills are occupied chiefly by large 18th century mansions that the elite families of Varese now call home. Indeed those mansions and the gardens jointly characterize Varese.

Varese is one of the cities that most benefitted from the aforementioned post-war economic boom. In addition to the weapons industry financed by the Italian government, Varese is home to big factories like the world famous shoe-brand Divarese (meaning "of Varese") and Ignis, a home-electronics company. The city's economy developed quickly during the boom, also nurturing small producers, artisans, and shop owners. Economic growth spawned yet another phenomenon that has drastically affected the whole northern region: migration. In search of a

better life free, from the Mafia and local landowners, many southerners headed north in search of work. Incoming migrants became the new lower class. Given the age-old negative stereotypes about southerners, and the oversensitivity of northerners to civic life and their powerful attachment to their territory, one cannot be surprised that the relationship between the rural southern migrants and the receiving bourgeoisie remained poor. Nonetheless, the migrants provided much-needed cheap labor for northern producers. As a result, together with the city structure, jobs too have become stratified, with the migrants strictly being workers, and the Varesini small entrepreneurs who benefitted for years from the economic growth. Given the ability to acquire wealth through production and trade, one can understand why Varesini simply avoided government jobs, leaving even important positions in administration and education to the migrants from the south. This division worked for as long as the fast economic growth continued, but with the economic crises of the 1980s, negative sentiments against migrants crystallized and became part of the political game, which coincided with the emergence of the Northern League.

Its proximity to Milan, coupled with an effective transportation system made Varese the place of choice for workers in Milan seeking cheaper housing. Also its proximity to the Swiss canton of Ticino, plus the Schengen agreement that actually provides free passes to Switzerland, resulted in more migrants coming to the city. Wealth is greater in Switzerland, and thus even though Italians in Switzerland earn less than Swiss do for the same job, the income still is good if one lives on the Italian side of the border. Home to an Italian-speaking population who have the same ethnic identity as Varesini and speak in the same dialect, Canton Ticino became a target not only for southern migrants but also for Varese's small entrepreneurs to avoid the high taxes of Italy and to benefit from Swiss tax exemptions for foreign investors. Coupled with the economic crises and the change in currency to the Euro, this proximity meant the loss of an important part

of the productive force of Varese and the North, bringing unemployment and making the migrants rivals of Varesini in the labor market.

Although much less so than in most other countries, big shopping malls have become part of the city's structure and have thereby spread anxiety among the small entrepreneurs of the North. That anxiety, together with other factors such as the inevitable human obsession with prestige, had the consequence of dividing the marketplace between migrants and Varesini. Varesini tend to shop in the Corso Matteotti and the historic center surrounding it, whereas the migrants tend to favor the shopping malls. This division of the marketplace is partly due to income level. Wearing high fashion is part of the Varesini identity, Corso Matteotti represents the romantic "fashion Italian style" and high quality. In the shopping malls one finds cheaper, Chinese-made merchandise, also a favorite for most Varesini, when it comes to the merchandise not related to prestige. Another reason for this division of the marketplace is the relationship between seller and consumer. Varesini are socially networked with shop-owners and other city dwellers. In the shopping malls, the relationships tend to be more formal.

Section 3.3: Description of the Varese Section of the League

The unit of analysis for this study is members of the Varese section of the Northern League. The Varese section is of historical importance for the League, as it is the first branch and home to the most important figures in the party, such as Umberto Bossi and his friend/rival/successor Roberto Maroni. At the time of my fieldwork Maroni was still registered in the Varese section as a "militant". The Varese section of the party is located in the historic center and marketplace of Varese, overlooking the Piazza della Podesta. This building has historical importance not only for the party but also for Italian nationalism, as played host to Giuseppe

Garibaldi during his visit to Varese. It is ironic and at the same time controversial, to have the birthplace of a secessionist party be in a place that is important to national history. And yet party members, and especially "Young Padanians," are nothing if not innovative when it comes to creating images that play with this irony. One sees, hung all over the section's deadquarters, posters containing a photograph of Garibaldi with a red, no-entry circle on his face, and saying "Zona Degaribaldizzata," meaning "this area has been disinfected from Garibaldi. One understands the supposed need for the disinfection, given that Garibaldi made a speech from the balcony of the building housing the section.

This balcony is of phenomenal importance for the party; not only nostalgically but also it is the place where the section is involved in local and national politics. Being the first section, and having the most important figures as members, the attitude of Varese section is important in terms of internal tensions and demonstrations of the attitude of the party. Billboards, occasionally show up in the balcony are the main mediums for the section to get involved into national politics and a point of reference for local and national media. In addition, this balcony is a place for smoking after weekly meetings. This actually means that it is the real place where political masks are taken off and actual politics is negotiated, gossip are whispered, hatreds are spoken of and warmer relationships are built. It is the actual place to socialize in the section and a place to look at the people outside in the streets and to think of daily or ideological issues in a reconstructive way.

Owing to a lack of resources at the beginning and an ongoing tradition later, the League relies on face-to-face interactions as it goes about making politics and propaganda. Engaging with the national media has always been problematic for the League, as seen in Bossi's attempt to use slang in order to grab attention. At any rate the Legisti, or league member have distributed

brochures, set up propaganda distributing tables in the streets, and spread ideas by chatting in cafés and beer houses. There have been reports of secret meetings out of fear of persecution. This first wave of Legisti is legendary for party members, thus making the terms *leghisti* and *militancy* nostalgic. Today, militancy means much less than that, but it remains the keyword and key-persons of the League's propaganda and militants are at least until recently its main source of legitimacy along with Bossi.

At the time of my fieldwork, the Varese section had around 280 members. There are two levels of membership: militants and supporters. *Militants* are full members having the rights to join events and congresses and to vote for delegates. The delegates in turn will vote in congress, or vote for provincial presidents or secretaries, they also can become candidates for all positions inside the League. Thus while the term *militante* denotes political activists in Italy, for the League it has a more important and nostalgic meaning.

The second level of membership is *sostenitore* supporter. This is a temporary position, an apprenticeship or trial period in which the candidate is required to participate in party events and is constantly monitored by the secretary. At the end of this one-year period the candidate is reviewed by senior members of the section and, if approved, offered to the party center as a prospective militant. After approval comes from the party center, the candidate is awarded militantship, which is declared on boards in the section building. Then the new militant is given a membership card with his or her name, but without a photo; instead with a picture represents Padanians as running toward independence while bearing the flag of Padania. Of course the foregoing process is not as rigid as this description has made it sound. Basically, one becomes a supporter and makes good friendships without any problem or serious opposition while participating in important activities; then the award of militancy comes almost automatically.

There is a 15€ and 20€ annual fee for the supporter and the militancy states, respectively. This whole mechanism is useful in many ways. Firstly and most importantly it provides or (is supposed to provide) prophylactic hygiene against the *mafiosita*. For one must remember that in the eyes of the party members, the Mafia not only acts as an armed power and conducts clandestine businesses but infiltrates all aspects of political life. Having a "peripheral participation " period provides the fledging member with a sense of security against that. Happenings in early 2012 demonstrated, however, the ineffectiveness of this method and that there are other modes of infiltration. This will be described in chapter ten. Secondly, this "peripheral participation" period provides a source of energetics activism and free manpower for the League. (The membership of both militants and supporters may be rejected for renewal due to inactivity.) Lastly, the passage from supporter to militancy is often the main medium by which newcomers are introduced to the League's ideals, and more importantly socialized into a group that has a family like environment and provides a sense of belonging.

The chief activities for both militants and supporters are: the weekly meetings in the section every Tuesday; public meetings of the League, street events such as distributing brochures and waiting at the public-information tables and attending other important events as required. One of the most important sources of data for the field study was observation of the discussions that took place during and after the Tuesday meetings of the section, plus the Thursday meetings of "young Padanians." Other events also were followed closely, as I observed encounters between different sections of the League and between members and non-members.

I found that Tuesday meetings were the most fruitful when it came to observing political attitudes, factions, tensions, and even confusions about ideals. The room has six rows of chairs in

front of a table that has been arranged to be suitable for speakers and the walls are full of party posters of historic importance, bearing imaged of Bossi, Maroni and Mayor Fontana.

Meetings start with a short introduction by the secretary of the section covering the latest news from the party, upcoming events, etc. He then introduces the speakers for the night. Meetings are not mediums for discussing party issues, but every week the secretary, by request or his own decision, chooses one or two topics. Thus this is a conference-like environment in which the speakers speak for roughly an hour and than a question-and-answer session begins. In this session all sorts of tensions and important issues are revealed. I heard speech from a taxi driver and truck driver on the new licensing regulations that were causing an outrage, and strikes, on the part of taxi drivers and truck drivers at that time, plus discussions about: the preservation of city water resources; and policies and issues related to the removal of the cross from schools and views on it by atheists and Catholics; the economic crisis; impacts of the government austerity plan on local administrations; how to file or object to against new taxes, problems with immigrants; relationships with the counterpart party in Ticino. The final session attended an anthropologist focused on observations of the Varese section of the Northern League: that was me!

The Varese section is home to people of very diverse tendencies. I found however, that contrary to both the literature and common stereotypes which tell us that Leghisti are mostly former Christian Democrats, The Leghisti in the Varese section were mostly of a leftist background. This was all but visible in their approach to political and economic issues. Moreover strong support of Leghisti in Varese for Maroni who represents a more leftist attitude inside the party is also explainable with that. Nonetheless, party members cannot easily be reduced to such categories as “leftist” or “Maronians.” If we are to understand the upcoming crisis of leadership,

we must investigate some groupings inside the party; some of these are local groupings in Varese, some of factions within the broader context of the League's structure. Both played important roles, however, in that final transformation of the League, or "spring revolution" that I will be discussing below.

Although Bossi is virtually a king in the eyes most Leghisti the League is home to people with a myriad of tendencies and some very strong wills. Moreover, in spite of the existence of the idea of a Padanian Nation, and the common identification as Legisti, it is still organized as a federation of regional units and regional identities. This contradiction is also reflected in its organizational structure. The leader of the party is named Federal Secretary, and for each region there is a National Secretary. This means that the Northern League is understood to be a federation of nations: Lombards, Venetians, Piedmonts, etc. This seems contradictory to the League's ideology which suggests that the Padanian people comprise a single nation, and that contradiction was reflected in the confused remarks made by my informants on the topic of Padanian ideology. The way out of the contradiction, for those able to find it, was to say that Padania is utopia utopia in which all the Nations of Padania can coexist freely, without oppression or exploitation.

One explanation for the inconsistent messages disseminated from the League from time to time, is the presence within it of several power centers and even factions. Then too, there is a broad spectrum of ideas from secession to federalism to autonomy; from a leftist anti-imperialistic stance to conservatism or Christian tendencies; from democratic longings to the desire for firmly authoritarian rule; and finally from more moderate stances to racism and xenophobia. This heterogenic and cosmopolitan nature of the League causes confusion among non-members and in some cases among members, too. On the other hand it provides its leaders

with a plethora of tools they can use to construct policies. Indeed, the party often becomes an object of humor in the mainstream media for its contradictory and ever-changing discourse.

The first appearance of factional groupings came as parties inside Padania, in 1997, when the League decided to establish a Padanian parliament. Those factions continue to exist and I will describe only those I was able to observe during my fieldwork, a time that coincided with a titanic struggle between factions and concluded with a takeover by one of them. The groupings I was able to observe are these

- Barbari Sognanti (Dreaming Barbarians) -Roberto Maroni-Varese
- Eretici della terza fila (Heretics of the third row) /Terra Insubre-Andrea Maschetti
- Bossians- Cerchio Magico and the city of Busto Arsizio
- Venice and Luca Zaia
- Bergamo and Roberto Calderoli
- Young Padanians and Matteo Salvini

Section 3.3.1: Barbari Sognanti: Maronians

Barbari Sognanti (plural) is the name that Maronians (supporters of Roberto Maroni) call themselves in a romantic way. Meaning "dreaming barbarians," it has a strong connotation of ethnicity, as northerners (in fact Lombards) see themselves as being the descendants of Celtic tribes. The word "barbarians" not only connotes this but also conveys the power that brought imperial Rome to its knees. Thus it makes a connection between history and identity. As for "dreaming," it both underscores the longing for a Padanian future and carries an implication of

civility, for those barbarians are dreaming and not fighting. The terms as a whole suggests, by reverse implication, that there is a group of non-dreaming barbarians who have lost their connection to ideals by being corrupt and by dreaming of "chairs," that is, positions. The deliberate choice of "barbarians" also connotes a populist as opposed to a high-class movement thereby alluding to a vertical stratification inside the party and with the "magic circle" being the ruling elite that has ruptured its ties to the base (i.e., the militants) and thereby forsaken legitimacy.

The Barbari Sognanti are powerful in most Lombard cities excluding Busto Arsizio, which is often described as the Palermo of the North implying its high proportion of southern residents and consequent criminality. Varese, my research site, happens to be one of the strongholds of Barbari Sognanti. Varese section is the first branch of the League, the place where Bossi and his sons were militants, and it is home to senior members of the party. I remember my puzzlement as I realised that this section was comprised of enough loyal Maronians to organize a Maroni Night, even though their doing so could have led to their expulsion from the party. Only later did I learn that the very fact that Bossi and his sons were militants was instrumental in creating a reaction.

Bossi is a much-appreciated figure in the party, and that factor alone did much to nurture his boastful and sometimes arrogant attitude. People often expressed their discontent with him for being rude. A few days after Maroni Night, a dinner was organized with Bossi for Varese section. Several people did not attend just because Bossi would be there. His autocratic rule instilled no small amount of genuine fear. When I asked my main informant to be with me at a possible interview with Bossi, he said no and admitted he was afraid of Bossi: "I saw him in a dream,

during the days we supported Maroni against him. He told me you cannot crush planes by throwing stones."

In addition, Bossi's habit of pushing his children into politics and giving them important positions, which would be revealed in the upcoming spring, provoked anger of many and especially of those children's peers. The children's behavior towards others was a source of discontent, and the nepotism factor caused trust in Bossi to diminish as the party more and more came to look like his family business given the added influence of his wife.

Barbari Sognanti is not a group or a faction per se but rather a coalition of discontented Legisti ranged against *cerchio magico.* Maroni was chosen by other discontented leghisti because he was the only one who could mount a campaign against Bossi. First of all, he was one of the founders of the party, a man who fought for Padania for many years and was a close friend of Bossi. Second, he had a strong support in Lombardy, whose residents were unlikely to support a Venetian or worse yet, a Piedmontese. Third, he was more moderate and modest than the other alternatives and did not have a reputation of being racist.

Together with his moderate stance and his oratorical skills his tenure as Interior Minister had given him the reputation, even among people who did not vote for the League, of being a serious man, an unlikely honor for the Italian media to bestow upon a Leghista who was capable of fighting the Mafia. Nonetheless, during my interviews with them, several people from outside the League expressed their reservations about Maroni as part of their overall criticisms of the League.

Among others, the following factions threw their support to Maroni thereby constituted the Barbari Sognanti coalition: Movimento Giovanni Padani (Young Padanians Movement) and Matteo Salvini, in Venice: Luca Zaia and Tosi, in Bergamo: Calderoli; a small group from Varese that I will call *Eretici della terza fila* and a small group of ethnicists organized around a journal: *Terra Insubre* in Varese.

Section 3.3.2: Movimento Giovanni Padani: Young Padanians Movement

If Padania is to become a nation that is imagined as a collectivity throughout the North, this young movement is likely to be the chief founder of it for a few reasons. First, although the older generation has entered the League by a deliberate choice and has used the ideology and the discourses made available by Bossi in a utilitarian way, the new generations' entrance into the party is based largely on sheer sympathy. By being heavily involved in League events they gain a strong sense of belonging. Also, in the League they are provided with a venue to meet, talk, and play and with networks of like minded people. They are given responsibilities and some positions and associated prestige; they achieve small successes that will make them feel good. In addition to weekly meetings of party members, the young Padanians have their own weekly meeting; this mostly covers the planning of MGP events and discussion about party politics and history, and the idea of Padania. The League provides an environment that is friendly and familial. Thus these young people's identification with the party cannot be denied, regardless how chimerical the Padanian identity may be. The most important point in this connection, however, related to the fact that from the very beginning the League has been an amalgamation of various regional parties; it has been organized locally in line with provincialism, and its have taken shape accordingly. This youth movement stands as an exception to that rule. Being organized throughout the North under one name and leadership, allows it young members to identify with a

group that is really Padanian. This identification almost surpasses the local variations and constitutes a basis by which provincial identifications can be undermined. That de facto independence, plus it united demand for power inside the party, is what makes Movimento Giovani Padani a force to be reckoned with, and what made it a very important actor when the schism appeared between Bossi and Maroni.

Empowered by the League's interpersonal, face-to-face, communication and propaganda style the Movimento Giovanni Padani stands as a powe- source more important than its actual man power. Taking as their motto Bossi's words "Walls are books of people" *I muri sono il libro dei popoli*, MGP is conveying the League's messages by writing and affixing creatively designed posters on public walls, a practice that sometimes entails a tag game played with the police. These wall posters and scripts are created by the Young Padanians in a very free environment without, any orders from the party center. It is a very creative process, with in young members spending hours at the computer in the section headquarters and than showing their creations to each other and negotiating both the message and the esthetics. The only guidance I saw them receiving came via occasional phone calls emanating from what I guess were MGP leaders. Thus the, MGP has become the face of the party, able to quite fluently communicate its message owing to its bright and energetic youngsters and relatively autonomous structure.

MGP has another power that should be heeded by all leaders and would be leaders: the power of applause and acclamation. As important as the number of flowers is their visibility, in party settings when a rivalry is at stake! And whoever gets MGP's support also gets a high rate of visibility through applause, slogans, and acclamation. Out of all proportion to their numbers they

provide great visibility and support, which is of great importance, given that undecided members are prone to pledge their allegiance to the stronger side.

MGP was founded in the late 1990s s a way of bringing youngsters inside the party. Over time, as other members grew older, MGP members gained their positions. Membership in the Movement lasts only until one reaches the age of 25, but the founders of the MGP still have great influence on the movement. One of the ex-members of the MGP is Matteo Salvini. He is very influential in Milan, and very clever in the use he makes of the support of MGP. He is depicted by MGP members in a slogan: *"Matteo Salvini, Uno di Noi…"* Matteo Salvini, one of us. He always stands with the MGP during the party events; shouts and applauds with them, sending the message that he too is one of the ordinary people, and thereby a true leghista. Nonetheless, Salvini is someone who is supported by the MGP, not its leader. And even MGP's support for him is contingent upon his ongoing usefulness in helping its members to attain more influence, power and positions. Such a description may seem to be too redolent of an orchestrated strategy, but I did sense something of the kind beneath the movement's aura of quasi-anarcic decentralization, although I never was able to discover its source.

Section 3.3.3: Venice and Luca Zaia

All of the "nations" within the Northern League are powerhouses in themselves, but none of them is as influential as Veneto (Venice). Lombardy may have more supporters but as it is the core of the movement, the entire political struggle happens within itself; then too, owing to its cosmopolitan nature it has smaller factions within it. The Venetian league is the oldest of all the other leagues and it played a by part in Bossi's rise to power. One consequence of this is that it has never been easy to convince its members to believe in such ideas as a union with other

leagues, a Lombardian leader, or a Padanian Nation. Given that their city has its own distinct imperial history, Venetians are known to be very proud of their identity and to harbor, by reverse implication an intense hatred against the Italian state. For this reason it constitutes one of the most conservative branches of the League and thereby is unlikely to take a genuinely leading role in a coalition like the Northern League given its animosity against other regions such as Piedmont.

With its strong base and such charismatic leaders as Luca Zaia, and Tosi, the legendary major of Verona, they are one of the most powerful parts of the League, hence the need for the Lombards to satisfy them if they wish to continue to lead them. As far as I was able to observe Veneto is the part of the League having the strongest regional identity and thus the weakest attachment to ideas such as Padania. Because their support for the League remains almost utilitarian, it is a power that has to be satisfied or lost. Veneti (venetians) are unlikely to jockey for leadership of the League, they scarcely believe, but they are in the game of politics, play with great zest, and has a great influence on it.

Section 3.3.4: Eretici Della Terza Fila (Heretics of the Third Row)

This group is a part of the Barbari Sognanti coalition in Varese. They adopted their name when Bossi referred to them thus after they had protested against him in the "Provincial Congress of Varese" in 2011, which was a watershed in the Maroni-Bossi struggle. Bossi also said that they were former MSI members and fascists who had infiltrated the League, implying that they are not real Leghisti but part of a conspiracy by Masons in Varese. I was not able to interview them but I did "hang out" on several occasions. They are easily recognizable at every event of the

League, given their love for symbols related to Insubria and their obviously more ethnicisist leanings.

Section 3.3.5: Terra Insubre:

Around May 2011, a website called Velina Verde (green veil) started to air blogs that spoke about a conspiracy against Umberto Bossi. In a nutshell, the allegation was that a small group of ex-fascists, led by lawyer Andrea Maschetti and organized around a magazine, was planning to overthrow Bossi by making a coalition with Maroni. The owner and writers of the blogs were unknown but Bossi found the theory reliable and he pointed to some oppositional movements being undertaken in Varese by ex-fascists. I was able to meet, speak to and interview Maschetti prior to and during the spring revolution. He is an intelligent upper-middle-class Varesino, with a strong sense of regional identity. He rejected being a mason and named gossips as conspiracy theorists.

One year later, the historical trajectory brought us to a revolution inside the party. Varese was the linchpin and the key judicial operation mounted against corruption inside the party was the contingent event. The allegations were that party money had been used to finance the renovation of Bossi's house and to purchase a diploma for his son. These might have been written off as minor infractions in corrupt Italy, but a major media campaign was started against Bossi, ridiculing him for saying he knew nothing about it. As a result Bossi resigned and Maroni became the new leader, an election in which he was the only candidate. In a couple of weeks the blog was closed, leaving the suspicion that it had been aired by Bossi's "magic circle."

Terra Insubre is a small magazine published tri-monthly. Around this magazine is a small group of people, led by Andrea Maschetti. Its main focus is to create a distinct identity for western Lombardy (Lombardia Occidentale), that is Insubria, which includes the province of Varese and the Swiss canton of Ticino. The magazine is largely given oven to articles concerning the racial, ethnic, and cultural unity of the Insubria region, and to discussions of such cultural artifacts as tales, legends, and symbols.

Insubria is the name of the region over which the Duchy of Milan ruled from 1395 to 1810. It is confined between the river Po to the south and the San Gottardo Pass to the north. It perfectly fits the bill in the sense that it serves as the ideal, because a historic state, upon which today's claims of independence can be based. The core conception is that the area once called Insubria constitutes a racial, cultural, and ethnic unity, with national borders being merely arbitrary creations that have cruelly divided a people. Insubrists inevitably tend to have a more ethnicist stance and a worldview predicated upon the existence of an inexpungable west-east divide. They also see themselves as being members in good standing of "Europea settentrionale " (northern Europe) as opposed to southern and implicitly Orientalized Italy, and this of course allows them to indulge in the usual stereotypes about a lazy, uncivilized south.

During the spring of 2012 a discussion arouse in the Italian media about an online poll proposing a merger between Western Lombardy and the Ticino Canton of Switzerland thus making Varese and Milano part of Switzerland. Subsequently, Terra Insubre organized an event about Insubria, its participants including guests from Canton Ticino. The activities included folk-music concerts, conferences, movie screenings, and a food fair all emphasizing the cultural affinity of Ticino and Western Lombardy whose residents speak the same dialect. There were a public speeches by

prevalent personages in the Northern League and the League of Ticino, including Andrea Maschetti while Maroni himself, riding high on his victory in the Padanian Spring attended the event to show his support. This participation and Maroni's support for the idea of invoking Insubria pointed to by the media as revealing a Maroni-Maschetti coalition, recalling the Velina Verde.

Section 3.3.6: People in the Middle

Not all the members of the Varese section fall into these factions. Being the oldest section of the League, a lot of members have direct relationships with Bossi, get nostalgia about the early years, and have been able to observe the phenomenal ascent of the party under Bossi's leadership. They (even Maronians) definitely admire Bossi for his leadership and charisma, but they also know Maroni personally and often as a friend. Maroni, unlike Bossi, doesn't distance himself from others, an while that trait is beneficial to him in many ways, such as the building of good relationships and giving the impression that he is one of the ordinary people, he has not always found it easy to convince friends that he should also be their leader. Indeed, while most Leghisti see him as a reliable, serious and intelligent person, few can envision him as the leader able to carry the party to new victories or to actualize the dream of Padania. If a leader is at stake, the perfect definition is Bossi; if a wise man, the perfect definition is Maroni. One might say that many have turned to Maroni as a *pis aller* only because their natural allegiance to Bossi has been thwarted.

The fact that Bossi and his family were militants of the Varese section has a great influence on the Maronian faction within the Varese section. As noted earlier, Bossi's godlike position in the party has made him a very distinctive personage, a fact that many can hardly bear.

Moreover, the personality of his son Renzo known as *trota* (trout), also ruffled the feathers of other militants. The fact that Renzo rose from militancy to office within the league and then to candidacy without doing much "militancy" disturbed many, especially his peers. During the crises of the spring, one of the militants was heard shouting __"it is not only Bossi or corruption! Remember Renzo treating as like assholes!" Thus, although most of the militants in Varese had some kind of sympathy for Bossi, many of them told me that after his stroke in 2004, nothing was the same; *cerchio magico* became more like a wall dividing Bossi from the Leghisti. Before, he was a man of the people as described by Alonzo, an elderly Varesino and senior member of the Varese section, spoke for many when he said this: '"Before it was possible to encounter him in the street and communicate. But now it is impossible, there has been a rupture between the real militants and him."

That rupture, and various milder versions thereof, caused many to throw their support to Maroni. And yet several people shared with me their concern over the League's future in Maroni's hands, finding him Romanized and too loosely connected to the idea of Padania.

Section 3.3.7: Bergamo and Roberto Calderoli

Bergamo, a city in the northeast of the Lombardy region, is renowned for its residents' strong sense of regional identity, The Bergamo dialect is famous for sounding harsh, and often is made fun of by other Lombards. Bergamaschi (the demonym for the dwellers in Bergamo) are deemed xenophobic, if not racist, even by other Leghisti and I felt a mild tension or rivalry between them and Varesini. Moreover, Bergamo is not included within the imagined community of Lombardy Occidentale, and is not a part of Insubria; thus does not fall within the "more civilized part of Padania."

The prominent leader of the Bergamo section is Roberto Calderoli. He is a self-proclaimed racist, although and much of the time he tends to be humorous, the League's reputation as racist owes much to his blunders. Together with the Bergamo base, Calderoli represents the most conservative part of the party.

From a political point of view, Calderoli was very clever to satisfy the feelings of his base; he knew the limits of his power thus made no unseemly grab for leadership. However he was very clever in marketing his allegiance thus becoming a man of all periods and a real survivor after each crisis. Although he is not liked by most Maronians, he managed to survive after the Padanian spring because of his intelligent maneuver of supporting Maroni against Cerchio when Maroni was in need and Bossi was desperate.

Section 3.3.8: Followers of Bossi: Cerchio Magico and Bossians

All Leghisti are Bossians. I never encountered a Leghista who did not admire Bossi, the man who created the party and hatched the whole idea of autonomy/federalism or independence. He started this movement from scratch, striking others as being crazy. Perhaps he really is crazy; he could not have accomplished what he did without a little bit of craziness and a lot of courage. He is still widely admired and people feel nostalgic about the early years when he was more active and was able to speak passionately, dragging thousands of people behind him. All of that having been said, we now need to understand who the Bossians are as opposed to the Maronians, which means we first must try to step within the "cerchio magico" (magic circle).

Although Bossi and those who are close to him rejected its existence, it can hardly be denied that there has been a group of people close to Bossi that protected and supported Bossi's position in the party thereby took advantage of it, and this group included his sons. After the

Padanian spring he himself acknowledged this phenomenon and admitted that having sons in politics was a bad idea.

Bossians do not have a specific territorial base. Nonetheless Busto Arsizio, traditionally the rival city of Varese, is famous for having injected many personages into the magic circle. Bossi has had strong support from Venice, too. Ultimately, however, Bossi's support had roots that run deeper that the merely regional. Despite the widespread discontent that the cerchio magico and nepotism have caused among all leghisti, Bossi has remained the personification of the Padanian idea and thus this movement's indispensable man. Even his rivals have not been able to challenge him openly, and to the contrary, have tried to legitimize themselves through their affinity with him. Given a leader of such powerful magnetism, notwithstanding the Maroni's hesitant attempts it has been virtually impossible for change to arise from inside the league.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Direct Encounters with the State: *Uomini Contro* [Man Against]

> Some of us are Leghista because Bossi is a good person; he made it clear, he attached Formigoni while taking applause.
> Some of us are Leghisti because long, long ago, they were communists.
> Some of us are Leghisti, because Formigoni is not a good person.
> Some of us are Leghisti, because they hate the state so much that we have to create another.
> Some of us are Leghisti, because of Padania not today or tomorrow; perhaps day after tomorrow but it will definitely happen.
> Some of us are Leghisti because they see Switzerland as a promise, Ireland as a poem, and Liechtenstein as a heaven on earth.
> Some of us are Leghisti, because the rest is a desert.
> Some of us are Leghisti, because we have the worst politicians in Europe.
> Some of us are Leghisti because the only state that is worse than ours is Tanzania.
> Some of us are Leghisti because they can no more stand the faces of the Christian Democrats and the Mafia.
> Some of us are Leghisti because they have always had it hard!
> Some of us are Leghisti because they would like to have it, at least once.
> Some of us are Leghisti because we have our grand center in Bellerio street.
> Some of us are Leghisti in spite of the bureaucracy within the League, they make fun of the bureaucracy machine of the party.
> Some of us are Leghisti because whoever is "against," he is a Leghista
> Some of us are Leghisti because "how can you say that Italy is a democracy?"
> Some of us are Leghisti because they dream a country with morals that are different from those in Italy.
> We are Leghisti, because we are not Italians!"

The above excerpt has been drawn from a television program aired by the TV station Telepadania. One of the writers and speakers of the text is Marco Pinti, Secretary of Citizens in the Varese section of the Northern League and an MGP member. These self-definitions of Leghisti are notably Varesini as seen from the point of view of *Barbari Sognanti,* and thus rather utopian in tone and in outlook. This means that they gloss over a number of arguments or

concerns that are equally important for Leghisti such as immigration, and taxation. Nonetheless they do provide us with some valuable clues as to the overall mindset of Leghisti.

If we are to believe the literature on the League the typical Leghista is a former Christian Democratic voter; owner of a small business, proud possessor of a strong Christian culture: unhappy about paying taxes and about having migrants and immigrants around him: all in all, a conservative or even a reactionary. And yet, my own observations in Varese, and my several encounters with numerous Leghista in other cities, have convinced me that the story is not that simple, and thus calls for deeper insights.

In order to understand the leghisti, a multifaceted approach is needed. First of all, one must draw a vital distinction between a voter and a party member. Next, one must analyze the reasons that prompted people of different backgrounds to join, or at least to support the League. For the fact is that the considerable variety found within the discourse testifies not merely to League's fondness for an entrepreneurial model of leadership but also to the very diverse persons, varied desires and differing social ranks, whom the League has been able to unify.

Section 4.1: Taxation

As shown by Kurtz (1984), boasting the economic welfare of a population is one of the most important ways in which a state is able to claim legitimacy. Taxation, redistribution, and a flourishing economy are the most visible and measurable aspects of it. Almost always the goal of political struggle is the ability to eversee the redistribution of resources so as to consolidate power. In order for the redistribution to occur, there must first be a collection of resources, which in our modern society mostly means taxation. When it comes to redistribution, the controversy is

almost always between justness and equality; while taxpayers call for equality in both the collection and the redistribution of state resources, power-holders and government dependents invoke claims of justice in order to distribute state resources according to their interests.

Roma Ladrona is one of the most striking and characteristic slogans of the Northern League. It symbolizes important aspect of party policy: resentment at unfair taxation, seeing government jobs as parasitic, objecting to government spending, and a dissatisfaction with state services.

Of those, the most important in terms of the party politics of the Northern League is taxation. Leghisti, like other Italians, and people everywhere, hate to pay taxes. The leghisti may be split in opinions about all other issues, but they are on common when it comes to taxation. Of course the Northern League is built on more than a generalized dislike of paying taxes. The specific taxation issues are these: so high as to obstruct small and medium-size enterprises often bringing them to the point of collapse or migration; uneven collection; and the North as the taxpayer and evasion as the rule for the South. Italy has a centralized system of taxation, and it became even more centralized during the recent economic crisis. This means that state and local authorities collect taxes that go into a common pool (this pool being the income agency: *agenzia del'entrate*) with the redistribution being entirely under the authority of the government. Such a system has rendered not just Leghisti but also most Northerners are sympathetic to the idea of decentralization or federalism, as it would allow local management of resources and expenses. No single basis of the Northern League is more solid than this one. The appeal of federalism also, however, engenders interest in such ideas as autonomy, secession, and merging with Switzerland. As noted earlier, in 2006, a referendum was forced by the League for "devolution" of some state

powers to the local authorities, and the result was negative as it was a national referendum and most southern regions strongly objected to the idea. In the 2012 election for the presidency of Lombardy, the League's main taking point was to keep 75 percent of collected taxes in the region. It proved to be a winner as the League was successful in that when the reputation of the party was tainted by the corruption scandals.

The centralist nature of the Italian state's approach to collection has come about via uneven development of the country. While the North flourished after the Second World War period and was marked by a high level of industrialization, most of the south remained poorer both because it relied on a more rural economy and because there was so much outmigration to the North and abroad. Thus tax burden of the Italian state was and still is mostly placed on the more industrialized North, where the state has been more successful at enforcing taxation largely because the Mafia has drained away fewer resources there that in the South, via it corrupting influences. This system worked fairly well as long as the economic boom continued, but when it ended in the 1970s, and as economic crises came one after another, there was less income and more taxes for the North.

The tax evasion often was seen as a consequence of the "backwardness" of the south, and nurtured the stereotypes about southerners. Scientific grounding for the bias was also existent. Banfield (1958), in his famous work The Moral Basis of a Backward Society, suggested that what he called "backwardness" of the South was a consequence of an ethos; that is "amoral familism," whereby immediate interests of the nuclear family are deemed more important than the common good. The result of this ethos is a the lack of organized will to attack common problems. Supplementing Banefield's work, Putnam et al. (1993) argued that there is a relationship between

civic culture and the good governance of a state's institutions. The implication of the study is that, owing to the absence of a civic culture, most regions in the south lack the social capital, which these researchers deem important for a democratic culture. They see the precondition of civic culture as being enlightened interest and thus a likelihood of getting more benefits in the future. Espicially when one factors in the presence of the Mafia as a hindrance to the coalesce of communal organizations, these explanations do help to explain the fact that the state has become merely something to be exploited in the South. Nonetheless, attributing a lack of organization and of "enlightened interest" to a vague culture or ethos is likely to nurture discriminatory beliefs.

Moreover, if we are to effectively analyze Italy's lack of organization and the consequent tax evasion, the attitude of the state expressed through its apparatuses should not be disregarded. We should begin by noting, along with et. al. (2000), that "in Italy evasion of central taxes is negatively correlated to per capita regional gross product." As the Italian state is unable to collect taxes from all parts of the country, the tax burden for a taxpaying citizen is higher than it should be. Thus "tax evasion may be understood as a tacit compensation for a higher than optimal central tax burden in the less developed regions." Brosio et al. (2000). Especially given with the history of Italy, which is marked by a high level of clientelism in the South, it can be argued that the Italian state condones tax evasion as a way of compensating the poorer regions. As a result the tax burden for a taxpayer is higher than optimal taxes and thereby the state, becomes merely parasitic in the minds of the obedient citizens who reside mostly in the North.

Leghisti perceive themselves as being exploited by the central government so that politicians can play the game of politics by providing state benefits in exchange for votes. They often can be heard passionately enunciating such home-truths as "If we were to separate from

Italy, we would be one of the richest countries in Europe in terms of per-capita GDP," and "We do not want to sustain the South where they pay no taxes and produce nothing and thousands of people live out of government benefits." The sentiment seen expressed in Fig. 1 is even pithier and more to the point.

Figure 1 A banner of Leghisti, saying the North pays and the South Eats

The issue of taxation and more particularly the North the main taxpayer, came up often during my fieldwork a time when the Italian state was undergoing a major economic crisis and the newly founded "government of technicians" was applying "austerity measures," which largely meant more and more taxes. These tax increases included higher taxes for houses and higher taxes on employers based on number of their employees. This increase was perceived by the Leghisti as being yet another example of the state's failure, the Leghisti's near-obsessive belief that the cleverly embodied expression *fallitalia* (Failing Italy) and '*Itaglia'* (means cutting (tax) Italy). The chief reaction of the state to the economic crisis was to bail out failing banks. Meanwhile, the Leghisti insisted that this crisis had nothing to do with them and thar they were

being forced to pay failings of others. The newly founded government was labeled the government of bankers while the European Union, which was pressing for further austerity measures, became the Europe of Bankers.

As always, the issue that really ranked was the unequal collection of taxes. The government was set to increase taxes on housing and small businesses and for Leghisti, this meant less discontent for southerners because they already were evading taxes. Leghisti often described themselves as a cow, constantly being milked by the government to feed the south. Higher taxes certainly did meant increased costs for small businesses, which in turn resulted in closures, out-migration of the most skilled producers, chiefly to mostly Switzerland, unemployment and a more competitive labor market, all trends that exacerbated the old problem.

Section 4.2: Redistribution

Taxation and its collection by a central agency mean also a widespread system of redistribution of state benefits, plus the politics that go with it. The more the state centralizes its control over resources, the more it is seen as something to be exploited. The issues related to redistribution are almost always part of the daily discussions, newspaper headlines, and media coverage. The specific issues that usually come up are: convergence between politics and the Mafia; corruption; expenditures of the parliament and the senate; electoral benefits of parties; state dependents; waste of money by state institutions; and distribution of taxes to the regions regardless of their contribution to the state budget. This distribution of income also covers issues related to state services such as expenditures of politicians and government officials, government projects such as construction of schools, hospitals and other infrastructure, and related services.

In addition, however, to legal means of government spending and distribution income there are illegal or at least political ways of distribution. This mainly means corruption and clientelism.

Section 4.3: Corruption

Corruption in Italy has become a part of daily life; every day it is possible to see some news item related to a police operation zeroing in on corruption, or several TV programs making fun of wasteful government spending. The main issues that come up again and again are: a general perception of politicians as corrupt; corruption in government projects and government spending; electoral benefits of parties; and government benefits for newspapers. The Northern League can be and often is interpreted as being a result of and a reaction to widespread corruption but as it is more and more perceived as being part of the corrupt system, a new political movement is on the rise, defined by one of its adherents as "like the Northern League as it was before."

After the revelations in the early nineties by the corruption operation named Clean Hands, voters punished politicians by throwing them out. This is often called the end of the First Republic and the beginning of the Second. The Second Republic, symbolized by the rise of Berlusconi, has been a major disappointment for Leghisti, with his name being cited in several corruption cases hinting at Mafia convergence. Moreover even the Northern League, which emerged as an anti-system party, is being criticized for being part of a system that is itself perceived as corrupt. This perception resulted in the aforementioned phenomenon of increasing in Italian political life.

Section 4.4: The Mafia and Clientelism

In order to understand the Italian politics of redistribution, one must take into account the nation's regional divide in terms of wealth as that exists within the context of the nations only very loose unity. This issue of uneven richness and the comparative underdevelopment of the South is often refered to as "the southern question," and far and away the most important aspect of the southern question is the Mafia.

As has been brilliantly explained by Schneider and Schneider (2003), the emergence of the Mafia came largely as a result of the land-tenure policies of the Bourbons and the subsequent land reforms implemented by the newly founded Italian state. In a nutshell, after the recapture of the South of Italy by the Bourbons in 1815, land reform was applied via the abolition of feudal privileges and the enclosure of common lands, thereby creating a land market. The resulting redistribution of lands created a new landowning elite and, every bit as importantly criminalized the poor pastors who had been deprived of their grazing rights. After the *Risorgimento*, the unjust redistribution practices of the Piedmont elite, who had chosen to make common cause with the landowners instead of insisting a reform, caused public unrest and banditry to become prevalent in Sicily. Owing to the new state's avoidance of direct governance and it consequent inability to provide security, these bandits began to sell their protection to anyone able and willing to pay, and this became the structural basis of the mafia.

In addition, the "Historic Left" became the dominant political party between 1876 and 1903. Until that time, northerners had dominated the state. Having strong support from the South, the Prime Minister of that time, Francesco Crispi, provided government jobs to his supporters from the South, thereby paving the way for that clientelism which has characterized Italian

politics ever since, with the Mafia producing votes in exchange for legal immunity and government positions.

This issue of regional differences and uneven development has always been a part of Italian politics. Gramsci's (2005) analysis of the southern question provides us with good insights about the divide as it existed in the early 20th century. The Gramscian analysis of the southern question is actually more a project than an analysis, for he invites the northern workers to forge an alliance with the southern peasants, thereby producing a nationally united proletariat. This version of unification tends to divide the country along economic rather than regional/cultural lines. Italian politics had to bridge over this economic divide in order to rule and to overcome regional differences.

Because of the state's lack of penetration and the existence of the mafia as an alternarive source of power, the South remained relatively underdeveloped and the politicians had to bargain with the Mafia in order to gain votes from there. In this way, the Mafia strengthened its position, gaining immunity against state authority, benefiting from government projects, and consolidating its hold on the local population by distributing what were essentially state benefits.

The effects of such a strong Mafia were extreme in the South. The Mafia became a parallel structure, to the state virtually selling security, curbing all other attempts at association, and limiting private enterprise. Moreover, government-funded projects seeking to right the balance of developmental differences between the South and the North fell victim to widespread corruption. This resulted in underdevelopment of the South and in the people's growing dependence on government funding and jobs. Thus, the Mafia was challenging the state in the south. This broke the Weberian rule stipulating that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate

use of violence, but of course the Mafia had heard of no such rule. Indeed, its insouciance became so great that in response to the police operations mounted against it in the 1980s, Mafia families killed several major police officials and magistrates so as to remind everyone who really was boss of the region. The most famous and phenomenal assassination was that of the magistrate Giovanni Falcone, the man responsible for the widespread operations against the Mafia conducted during the 1980s. Falcone's car was obliterated by a bomb installed under a motorway, with the explosion being so powerful as to be registered on local earthquake monitors. as its rival.

The fascist period, which coincides with Gramsci's analysis, represents an important point in the transformation of the Italian state and way of doing politics. Although there was widespread indoctrination of nationalist ideas, the fascist period was only partly successful in creating an imagined community of Italians. Regional differences persisted, and the Mafia continued to be an important actor in daily and political life, especially in the South. Granted, Mussolini declared war on the Mafia and proclaimed the end of the southern question, but the only tool he could use to gain the loyalty of the southern people was, again, clientelism. As he himself stated (De Stefani, cited in Ginsborg 2003) he provided employment for the southern white-collar proletariat, thereby assuaging his own fear of a Sicilian insurgency. Thus, by the 1930s the state had begun to be southernised, and by the 1950s over half of all civil servants were southerners (Gold 2003). Moreover, the corporatist policies of the fascist regime produced a bloated, highly centralized state, one that controls local administration through prefectures and thus made the prefecture the real administrative unit.

Although nominally re-founded as a democratic republic washing its hands of all traces of the fascist period, in fact post war Italy inherited the fascist tool of pragmatism and made extensive use of it in the forms of clientelism and using state agents and prefectures for propaganda purposed and to intimidate the opposition. Postwar Italy is saw the rise and near-hegemony of the Christian Democratic Party and, more importantly, saw society bifurcated between left and right, with regional differences and tensions secondary issues. Being in power, for four decades, and being supported by NATO and its covert networks inside the Italian state and intelligence agencies, the Christian Democrats were thoroughly statised, and used state resources to achieve their own political ends. Most importantly, the prefectures, formerly used by fascists as propaganda outlets and as places from which control could be exerted over local administrations, became outposts of the Christian Democratic Party. Gold has noted, the prefecture officials organized election campaigns and even negotiated with local notables, via threats and benefits to maintain alliances (Gold 2003:47).

The support for the Christian Democrats came chiefly from the North and especially from the northeast, the so-called "white belt." This support was dependent, however, on its collaboration with a Catholic Organization, Christian Action, and thus in the North the Christian Democratic Party became or at least was seen as being, a mere lapdog of the church. In an attempt to offset that image, the party curried favor on the other side of the peninsula, and the only tool it had with which to garner more votes was, yet, again clientelism. It provided government jobs and benefits, such as retirements with false documents, and the southernization of the state kept rolling on Worst of all, in order to operate in the region the party needed to coopt the clientelistic networks of the Mafia. That deal with the devil served to strengthen the Mafia's immunity to the rule of law.

Thus we see how, step by step and year after year, the Italian state became merely something to be exploited. This exploitation, however, did not bring it the people's sympathy for government benefits did not provide a decent and richer life and the Italian state was to be blamed for the obvious underdevelopment of the south and for insecurity. As a result of all these phenomena, the state society-relationships has never been shaped through the official ideological discourse on nationalism and identity. The Italian state has become a state of exploitation: an exploiter of northerners and something to be exploited by southerners. Far from representing the imagined community of Italians, it was proved itself inefficient, corrupt, and incapable of monopolizing the use of violence.

the 'southernization' of the state has had an inarguably huge impact on Italy's political and social life. One must begin one's assessment by noting the extraordinary fact that by the 1990s 90 percent of all civil servants were of southern origin (Gold:64) Moreover, with the North flourishing as an industrial powerhouse, the North and the South had effectively been divided into tax payers and government beneficiaries, respectively, with government offices in the North being understaffed and those in the South overstaffed. The misery is perfected when one factors in the convergence of the government with the Mafia and the ensuing, seemingly never ending cycles of corruption.

Section 4.5: Government Spending and the Salaries of Politicians

An important aspect of corruption issue is government spending, and in particular, the salaries and retirement benefits of high-ranking bureaucrats and, more importantly, MPs and ministers. This issue is of concern not only to Leghisti, but to all Italians. Social media and TV programs expose outrageous government spending, and the whole political system is made a

laughing stock. A point often made is that the salaries of government officials and MPs are far higher than those of their counterparts in other European countries, even though Italy's GDP smaller. Another story reported that in a time of economical crisis the house of repreesentatives had bought enough toilet paper to last then years.

As the economic crisis deepened in 2011, the Italian government introduced some austerity measures, which included a reduction in pensions. Angelica, a 77-year-old pensioner ad this to say:

> Look, I have worked hard for forty years. I have paid for my pension for forty years. Do you know what I get as a pension? 450 Euro, and my rent is 650 Euro. I could not survive if I hadn't made some savings while I worked. And now they want to reduce it because of the crisis. But tell me; am I the one who is responsible for the crisis? Did I cause it? . . . . . do you know how much politicians get for a pension? I paid for forty years and I get only 450 Euros, politicians get pension benefits in a couple of years and their pension is more than 5000 Euros. And tell me why they don't cut their pension? They say "sacrifice, sacrifice!" Why should I make a sacrifice for your shit while you do not make any sacrifices?

Nor is government spending limited to salaries, pensions and foolish senate expenditures on toilet paper. People observe waste in the course of their daily lives, from the flashy government buildings to the expensive cars provided to bureaucrats. Most visible in the latter regard is the police force. Even though the police use many imported SUV's and some luxury cars, Italy is a major car producer and exporter, and occasionally TV programs will show the

police car parks where hundreds of the latest SUVs sit idly. One cannot be surprised that such excesses harden the Leghisti in their anti-state stance, and turn many of them into outright reactionaries. Here is what Alfonso, a young Leghisti said during one of our walks around Varese:

> Look at those policemen, what do they do, what are they useful for? They do nothing and we have to pay for their expensive cars. While delinquents invade parks and we cannot enter, they (the police) do nothing; they sit in their car and just ticket us for parking. We call the police; they come, talk and go without doing anything. They are Clandestini (pointing to some man who might be illegal migrants); they disturb us, why don't they do anything? They know only how to wander around in their expensive cars the whole day. It is me that is paying for that car and they are no use for me. . . . Tell me, why don't they buy Italian made cars? Would it be that expensive?"

Part of the discussion over corruption is related to government projects. As noted earlier, because of the specific conditions in the South, government projects there have fallen victim to clientelistic policies. Newspapers and TV programs are full of stories about unfulfilled government projects in the south. Construction projects such as dams, government buildings, and factories are started left unfulfilled. This is disheartening not only because of the corruption but because it leaves the South deprived of vital services.

Section 4.6: Government Institutions: Schools and the Police

Government institutions are the places where Italians and the Italian state encounter each other through the mediation of state agents. Schools and the law-enforcement system are the most

important of those politically, since they so easily become a part of identity politics and the de facto persecution of alternative identities. Not only their intended functions but also their deficiencies and failures become important when common services are at stake. In the north, the tendency toward private entrepreneurship keeps for most northerners from getting an education in areas unrelated to the family business. Given its exaltation of the work ethic, government jobs are seen as no legitimate sources of income and government officers as parasites. Thus for as long as the economic boom continued, northerners disdained the government jobs. This resulted in all government offices being occupied by southerners including positions at schools and law-enforcement agencies.

As noted earlier, the northern fondness for private entrepreneurship has meant that southerners have filled virtually all positions in the educational system. These teachers are not just southern migrants, but also southerners have been assigned to the north. Thus they are prone to be newcomers, with different dialects and life styles. Moreover, the fact that teachers generally prefer to work in their own city has created a situation in which the schools in the North are occupied chiefly by newly hired and inexperienced teachers who use their personal networks to help them go back to the south, this undercuts pedagogic effectiveness and in some cases leaves schools with an insufficient number of teachers for schools. The recent austerity measures have left some schools in the South facing closure and this has become a major concern for leghisti. some schools in the south faced the threat of closure, which became a major concern for Leghisti.

Because of the fact that southerners and northerners speak different dialects of Itatlian, many school teachers are regarded as people who do not know Italian well.

Cesare had to say on this subject:

> Let me put it this way, I am sending my son to school to a teacher who can't…forget about speaking it properly, who can hardly speak Italian. We are the part of the country that is productive, that provides employment, that enhances trade and that pays taxes. They take our money as taxes and they send it to the south in exchange for votes. Do you know the result? We have to close some of our schools because there is not enough money. . . . .Because they 'eat', ... In the South government offices are full of people doing nothing, they do not have enough seats to accommodate them. But here there are not enough teachers at schools. . . . . .and now they are closing some of the schools because of the budget cuts.

The police are criticized not only for their extravagant spending but also ineffectiveness in controlling crime, which is believed by many to be disproportionately the southerners' trade. Than too, the position of the police as enforcer of the laws put them in direct contact with the people, and thereby makes them most visible and tangible aspect of the state. Along with the local municipal police, the *carabinieri*, the paramilitary force, is centrally organized, these are, in theory, true men of the republic. On the one hand, the force's existence is a demonstration of the rule of the central government, on the other hand, its ineffectiveness eaves the ineffectiveness of the state. The police do loom large as a major concern in the eyes of leghisti, this is simply because they perceive the police as not an actor in the game but rather a mere tool of Rome or, in some cases, of the judiciary. On the discursive level, the concern is chiefly about their ineffectiveness. When the conversation goes deeper, however, one realizes that the Leghisti are indeed concerned about the police, for they see them as not as mere law-enforcer's but as symbols of the domination of the central government. That view of the police as political tool is steady states where everything is more or less in order. In Italy, however, the concern about the

police has two different root. The first is related to a collective memory of the fascist and than the post-war eras, times when the line between separating the various state institutions, especially the police and the leading party, vanished. The second is related to Schmitt's (1985) argument that the sovereign power is the one that gets to decide the state of exception.

Although the general tendency in today's Italy is toward decentralization and this is the desire of Leghisti, there the police prefectures still stand, a stronghold of the central government. Although no one ever sees the prefectures getting directly involved in politics, none of us would dare to presume that they are entirely our of them. No such assumption woulf be made, certainly, by a fervent Leghista, Aldo, a Varesino. "I see these government offices, especially the prefecture, as the colonial headquarters of Rome, and they are like an invading power to me".

Over the last thirty years, political life in Italy has been shaped, more than anything else, by police operations. When an investigation unearths a scandalous or at least a corrupt state of affairs, the resulting popular uproar has the effect of focusing all attention on the sting operation and none on the overall design of Italy's political life that always corruption to become so endemic to it. Then too political rivals use such operations as an opportunity to beat their rivals over the head.

The League is one of the few political parties that manages to simultaneously chew gum and walk in a straight line; that is to question the political motivations of police investigations without rejecting the allegations made. During the Nineties when Italian political life was reconfigured by all the operations mounted against corruption, the League was the main beneficiary of this trend along with Berlusconi; therefore they supported judiciary seeing it boasting their own role as a path breaker for such operations by weakening the Christian

Democratic establishment in the elections. After the break up of its coalition with Berlusconi in 1996, the league kicked off its campaign for independence by inventing Padanian ideology, thereby shaking up Italian discourse. Most Leghisti perceive this moment as constituting the turning point in their views about the judiciary. This is how Orietta, a mid-aged Leghista puts it,

> They [judiciary] turned against us and together with the media they tried to lynch us. Do you know the Camicie Verdi (Green Shirts) stupidity? Camicie Verdi was a group of people acting like the paramilitary force of the League. But they had no weapons, they did no violence. Right after the *giuramento* (the oath of independence), they (police) raided our headquarter and punched Maroni, stated that the Camicie Verdi organization was a demonstration of the League's desire for separation. Was that a secret? We had declared the independence of Padania a month before that. . . . . Why didnot they investigate the leaders who proclaimed it but only a few poor guys? It was a threat sent to the party rather than a real investigation. . . . . They have not finish the trials even today, they keep them as a sword of Damocles, swinging on our head.

This point in time represents the turning-point in the Leghisti's view of the judiciary. Given that many magistrates entered politics from the left, the Leghisti blamed the judiciary for being communists and a part of the corrupt system of power. The Northern League's move in 2001 to forge alliance with Berlusconi was made with a reluctant base, for most Leghisti saw it as a gambit designed to gain protection from judicial investigations via parliamentary immunity and governmental powers. Although the election was a disaster for the League, due to the League's alliance with Berlusconi, the judicial pressure was eased.

During spring revolution of 2012 the opposition in the party, through a judicial operation, overthrew the legendary leader Bossi. Barbari Sognanti, the coalition ranged in opposition to Bossi, was eager to disregard conspiracy theories and focus on the corruption issue, seeing here a golden opportunity to clean up from the corrupt old administration of the party. However, the Bossians and those in the middle were more cautious. As Alberto put it after the Padanian spring when I asked him about judicial investigations:

> They want us to believe that this was just an innocent investigation (meaning the one in the spring 2012). Tell me why do these communists (the judiciary) always do their operations right before elections? A year ago, Bossi warned us that there were some ex-fascists planning dirty business in Varese. I donot believe that Maroni didnot know about this corruption in the party, because he is the ex-minister of the interior, and the judiciary is always doing this kind of staff…

CHAPTER FIVE:
Hegemony and Passive Revolution

Power struggles are often fought through the struggle of alternative versions of knowledges until one version becomes the dominant and hegemonic. However, a pitched battle is rarely preferred especially when there is an imbalance of power. In the case of Italian nationalism, while the central-dominant power tries to penetrate in the periphery, thereby homogenizing the population into the nation form, local powers fight a "war of positions" by using alternative versions of knowledges. Gramscian analysis of the Italian unification still provides valuable insights about both the Italian unification and the ways in which homogeneity can be created or a hegemony can be challenged.

The dominant historical narrative of Italian nationalism presupposes a cultural, if not also a racial, unity among the people living in the peninsula that is historically rooted in the Roman Empire. The glorious unification (Risorgimento actually means resurgence) accomplished in 1861 came in the form of a war of independence that unified under one flag all the "Italians" who for centuries had lived in fiercely rivalrous city-states and would still have to endure occupation by other European powers, most notably the Bourbons and the Austrians. That narrative presupposes the existence of an Italian people even prior to the reunification. However, the famous saying of one of the Italy's founding fathers, Massimo d'Azeglio, best attest to the invented nature of Italian Nationalism: "With Italy made, we must now make Italians." (Dickie 1996:1). Thus, as was explained in Chapter four on the Italian history, Italy is more a project than an inherited reality and this project has been only partly successful, local identities persist courtesy of as a phenomenon widely known as *provincialismo* (provincialism).

One of the mediums within which the project of Italian nationalism has been constructed is the historical narrative. In order for such a narrative to create an imagined community of Italians, it must not be merely dominant but hegemonic, the only version conceivable as reality. Thanks to famous provincialism and poor penetration of Italian hegemony throughout the country, alternative versions always resisted against the dominant ideology. The Foucauldian formulation of the subjugation of knowledge provides valuable insights about the struggle between alternative knowledges and the tools by which a dominant narrative try to become hegemonic. Foucault also posits that subjugated versions of knowledge mean those knowledge that have been "disqualified" because they are perceived as inadequate or insufficiently elaborated. They are regarded as "naïve knowledge;" their position in the hierarchy of knowledge is very low, and they are not awarded the label of being scientific.

The Gramscian discussion of hegemony and of the ways in which it is build up also can helpful us to understand the specific conditions under which domination becomes hegemony, and the subjugation of knowledge occurs. Gramsci begins his argument by talking about "the unitary elaboration of a collective consciousness". Then goes on to speak about unifying a people by imposing a high culture while undermining local cultures, thereby echoing Gellner's explanation of the emergenge of a nation. Unlike the Foucauldian argument of subjugation of knowledge, Gramsci is more specific about its mechanism and brings together hegemony, intellectuals, and common sense. According to Gramsci, the key hegemony is to rule with "spontaneous consent" and thereby without coercion. Thus the ideal medium through which to establish hegemony is neither the police nor the military, but the intellectuals. "The intellectuals are the dominant group's deputies exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political

government." (Gramsci 1972:12). Quite simply, the role of the intellectual is to convert dominance into hegemony.

Gramsci offers a superb analysis of the proper techniques and strategies to attain hegemony, as well as of the misfires. He acknowledge the need for the presence of "manifold conditions and initiatives and the diffusion of ideas and a homogenous way of thinking from a center," but, he cautions the reader to pay careful heed to local variations. He argues that it was the Enlightenment error that the dissemination of central messages will be received in the same way by all those received it. To forestall this common error, Gramsci puts forth the idea that dissemination of knowledge should be manipulated in order to make people believe, i.e., to and organize their consciousness. According to him, the mental skills, that were taken for granted by the philosophers of the enlightenment, such as deftly combining induction and deduction, generalizing, making inferences, and transporting a criterion of discrimination from one sphere to another are not innate but acquired.

Section 5.1: Passive Revolution and the League

Gramsci has offered is a model to understand the Italian unification: passive revolution. By definition, passive revolution happens when "new claimants to power, lacking the social strength to launch a full-scale assault on the old dominant classes, opt for a path in which the demands of a new society are satisfied by small doses, legally in a reformist manner" (Chatterjee 2010:257). Gramsci applies this principle to the rival parties within the Italian unification: the Moderates and the Action Party. Gramsci maintains that, while the "Moderates" were conscious of the limits of their power, the "Action Party" was "fanatically convinced of the thaumaturgical power of their ideas." The Moderates were aware that the emergent bourgeoisie could not conjure

up the social conditions needed to establish hegemony over the whole nation. This means that by avoiding any land reforms, the moderates did not attempt to undercut the political or economic positions of the old dominant classes. As explained in chapter four, a selective history of Italy, this avoidance from dealing with the problems related to land tenure, was one of the most important causes of the emergence of the Mafia, which further hindered the Italian hegemony and forced the central government to rely more on indirect rule. That avoidance of the Moderates is explained as follows: they only "seek to limit their former power, neutralize them where necessary, attack them only selectively, and in general, brought them round to a position of subsidiary allies." (Chatterjee 2010:255) In other words, they were able to make only "reformist molecular changes" in their attempt to transform old dominant classes into allies. The demands of the new society were to be "satisfied by small doses" legally in a reformist manner.

Chatterjee (2010), in his discussion of passive revolutions, argues their case the claimants to power wisely refrain, first from attempting to break up or transform the institutional structures in a radical way, and second, from mounting full-scale assault against dominant classes (p. 49). In other words they do not attempt to transform either the civil or the political society (state), instead they reforming them in a micro manner, by gaining more and more power in all possible ways.

Section 5.2: Common sense and the issue of Homogeneity

Gramsci defined common sense as the way people deal with daily issues. It provides a comfortable illusion of freedom; but does not allow one to gain an understanding of the greater social, economic, and hegemonic structures. Although he notes that going beyond common sense is a specialty of some intellectuals it must be thoroughly understood. In other words the main task of the organic intellectual is to manipulate common sense, thereby discovering how hegemony is

achieved. Gramsci seeks not to demolish hegemony *per se* but rather to build another hegemony. He is not anti-hegemonic, but he is counter-hegemonic. Thus his call to the organic intellectual is almost utilitarian in its flavor. There is a need for organic intellectuals because in order for hegemony to be built, some local manipulation/adjustment of the presentation of the central ideology are needed. Says Gramsci "the same ray of light passes through different prisms and yields different refractions of light; in order to have the same refraction, one must make a whole series of adjustments to the individual prisms. This is how the intellectuals become the deputies of the dominant group by exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government." Because the source of consent is historically the prestige of the dominant group, the practical role of the intellectual becomes the justification/legitimization of this prestige. The Gramscian definition of "intellectual" has a broader meaning than usual. Intellectuals are the mediums by which the dominant narrative can be imposed. Thus Gramsci's vision includes teachers in schools on the one side, influential media people on the other, but the role of the intellectual in the production and dissemination of knowledge is everywhere implied.

At this point the main concern is the degree of homogeneity of a population. If a truely "common" sense is to be created, the dominant message disseminated by the prestigious elite must be interpreted to the people. In providing them more knowledge, the new elite of teacher and media figures, also to a certain extent homogenizes them. This matters in the present connection [or lack thereof] because for most thinkers, Nationalism is a consequence of the homogeneity of the population, which in turn is a side effect of the capitalist mode of production. Urbanization, print capitalism, and education all tend to undermine the old allegiances to the family, clan, or community thereby producing "subjects" for the state (Anderson 1991; Gellner 2006; Smith 1971). On the other hand, thinkers such as Kedourie (1990) take precisely opposite

track, describing nationalism as a consciously constructed ideology that makes it possible for a state to impose homogeneity upon the population. In his notes on the history of Italy, Gramsci, rather than taking one side or the other in this debate, simply acknowledges the need for a degree of homogeneity if a populace to become a nation, and offers advice on how best nationhood can best be achieved in a situation where there is a lack of homogeneity.

When it comes to the vexed issue of national unity, there are a number of different splits observable within Italy. Gramsci observed, in the early 20th century, a split between the country's South and North he even went so far as to suggest that only the threat of a common enemy could bring them together. Gramsci thought the only possible relationship would be an imbalanced one, based upon domination by the North. Another issue was the urban/rural split, and more particularly the agrarian question in the South. Although neither the Moderates nor the Action Party ever fully addressed the foregoing issues completely, the moderates were successful because they managed to unify all the forces on the right. More simply, they gave no thought to imposing hegemony upon the agrarian population because they envisaged the south being a mere half colony, although later on they consented to exploit as a market. In Gramscian terms, they led the north and alternately dismissed [or ignored] and dominated the south.

According to Gramsci, the failure of the Italian nation-building process was due to the inorganic elites who failed to understand the importance of local differences and acted in a universal way as if they were dealing with a homogenous society. In the first notebook, Gramsci emphasizes local variations among the population in Italy. He states that, every group or small group is characterized by its own ideological or psychological impulses and "every village has its own saint, hence its own cult and chapel." He invites the reader to appreciate the fact that the

reception of whatever idea is being disseminated will be received differently depending on local variations. Gramsci's interest in local variations is predicated on his understanding that, if Italy was to become a Nation, there would have to be a need for a more or less homogenous population. For he also, however, discussed possible techniques to deal with those variations while disseminating a certain ideology, the argument goes beyond the mere appreciation of local and cultural variations

Gramsci's overarching argument is that both sides, the moderates and the action party, failed to build a unified Italy because both failed to take into consideration local cultural variations. Looking at why the moderates outmaneuvered the more progressive action party, Gramsci concluded that the moderates had an advantage: they represented the northern urban force, and the urban forces were socially more homogeneous. Thus, the moderates did not have much difficulty in building their hegemony upon the north.

Moderates were more or less organic intellectuals in the sense of their having been quite genuine expression of the masses, and they were intellectuals because they were more or less of the upper classes. That combination allowed them to spread their influence in a "spontaneous way" over the whole mass of intellectuals who existed in the country and thereby fulfill the two basic desiderata of education and administration: hegemony and domination. As they represented the northern upper classes, however, they were the organic intellectuals of only one region, thus even although they prevailed, they failed to foster truly national unity. The South remained as problematic as ever.

On the other hand, the Action Party failed precisely where their French counterparts, the Jacobins, had succeeded. They failed to mobilize the agrarian population. Gramsci stresses the

importance of forging the urban/rural links, which the Jacobins of France managed to do, and says that the Action Party did not represent the class of which they were the expression. Although they did seem to have Jacobin tendencies, their party program was essentially moderate. They did have a dream of unified Italy, but they failed to mobilize the masses toward that ideal.

In analyzing why the action party failed, Gramsci argues that both coercive power and individual moral leadership me up short. Indeed, both parties' capabilities were limited, and thus they were unable to mobilize the entire society. At the very least, the moderates were conscious of both their own and the other party's capabilities. They knew their limits and did not attempt to make radical changes, instead just seeking satisfy the people they represented and to gain some power. The action party, on the other hand, saw itself building a unified Italy butit was unable to do so.

The discussion of homogeneity is tricky, for populations can be categorized in several ways and a population can be homogenous in one way and yet heterogeneous in other ways. The only solution to the dilemma is to draw various lines of divisions within a given population. Ultimately only two points really matter in connection with this issue of homogenization as a necessary prelude to nationalization. First, and most basically, the more traits are shared by a population the more they become homogenous and the more likely they are to be able to envision themselves as composing an imagined community. And second, as organic intellectuals look at the attribute(s) that are supposed to be homogenizing people, they should sternly ask themselves whether they do or do not conduce to political mobilization. In addition, it can be argued that the more traits shared by a population the more they become homogenous and the more likely they imagine themselves as an imagined community.

Building upon this formulation, it can be argued that the homogeneity of The Northern League's is open to discussion. Historically, the League has arisen out of various micro-regional movements, whit its consequent micro-identities including various dialects of Italian. Moreover, although it started as a middle-class movement of small-business owners, its audience now includes people from a broad range of economic backgrounds. It can still, however, be argued that it has attained a certain degree of homogeneity, consistent with its ideology and historical shifts in discourse. Although by no means uniform, the League does represent a people united by their resentment of Italy's longstanding party system, so tainted by elitism and corruption. Then too, more or less all of its supporters greatly benefited from the economic boom and then severely suffered from the economic decline, as well as from such ill consequences of globalization such as unchecked immigration, and unregulated and imbalanced economic transformation.

From the outset, the Northern League has been represented by organic intellectuals. Although the League comprises several regional movements, it can be argued that each of the latter speaks to a more or less homogenous population in terms of identification, local culture, and local dialect. As we saw earlier, in the overview that began with the Venetian league, the League always represented by members of the target population who think, feel and speak in its terms. Nor can it be denied that the leaders of the League have quite successfully and consciously manipulated the feelings of the masses in the direction of mobilization.

Three basic points must be made about the league at this juncture. First, the Northern League has utilized the lack of sense of Italian unity as that void has opened up in the industrialized North to invent a Padanian nation having its own distinct territory, culture, language, and history.

Secondly, the League has manipulated the people's feelings of having been betrayed by the longstanding party system, and of disgust at corruption, by making those issues the primary focus of party discourse and on every occasion blaming someone else who is not "Padanian." Third, the party has converted the sentiments against migrants from the South and from Africa into anger at the government for this problem. (Huysseune 2006).

Section 5.3: Direct Challenges to the State: Independence vs. Federalism

It can be argued that, although the League has been skillful in criticizing and challenging the Italian hegemony, it has not been sufficiently strategic to attain the goal of a passive revolution. It is true that, the League has been quick to understand the limits of its power and has changed its strategy from a direct attack to negotiation. But taken in tandem with its entrepreneurial style of leadership, this negotiation has resulted in inconsistencies in its discourse and several changes in its claims.

Looking back at the historical transformation of the discourse of the Northern League, it can be argued that in line with the changes in its target population, the discourse of the Northern League changed too. The changes must be seen as related to the League's overarching attempt to create a distinct identity. During the period of the smaller regional leagues, they strove to create an identity of Lombardy or of Venice that was exclusive to the region, an identity comprised of a single language, if possible a single sovereign state. After the unification of the regional parties under the Northern League, however, the discourse was directed toward the creation of a Northern identity, centered around the Padanian nation. Moreover, until the elections of 1994 the discourse of the League was mainly secessionist. After the League gained more power but before it became a part of the government, the party discourse changed to federalism, but tweaked their

position just enough to weaken the prime minister Berlusconi. Right after the dissolution of the government the discourse changed back to secessionism yet again. During this period, the "other" of the League's discourse was either the lazy, delinquent southerner or the corrupt central state. As part of its attempt to gain supporters in regions other than the North and among southern origin, the League changed its discourse yet again with the other of the party now being *mafiosita* rather than the southerners.

These constant changes in the party discourse created confusion among not only non-members trying to understand the party but also members and potential members, often kindling discussions as to the League's true identity. They never added up to any actual change but were explained by the leadership as being steps toward and ultimate goal or different aspects of some desires. At the very least, the sheer wealth of ideas independence, federalism, fiscal federalism, devolution, anti-immigration provided the League's leaders with a wide array of tools they could chose from as they sought to design policies that would challenge the state. Conversely, each such tool could be wielded the league's opponents to depict its members as being merely pragmatic, racists, xenophobe and so on.

One can hardly be surprised therefore that, for Leghisti there is a certain degree of confusion as to the political agenda. There are ideas that please everyone but seem impossible to most, like independence. In other words, some ideas such as Padania are not "bought" but nonetheless adopted as part of one's party identity. The views on independence vary across age-groups, with the younger generation being more likely to desire independence, whereas members of the older generation who were lucky enough to live through the legendary years of Nineties and to witnessed the declaration of the independence of Padania in 1996 relish that moment

nostalgically but still see independence as being almost impossible. The younger folks more often invokes such concepts as glory and honor whereas the older generation is more likely to see the dream of federalism as producing such real world benefits as better economic conditions and less taxation.

Luca, eighteen, is undecided as to whether he should join the Northern League or another independent political party. His father, who is from the southern part of Italy, divorced his mother and had no relationship to his son afterward. Luca's strong identification with Lombardy and negative reaction to the south can be seen as related to this family history. But this could be a too easy conclusion. His ideas about the party opened another aspect of the effects of the existence of the League to social life in Varese.

Luca was very choosy to join party events. He questions everything and has very straightforward ideas. At any rate, while attracted by some aspects of the League, he also finds it too pragmatist and dislikes the occasional changes in the discourse. He accepts the fact that without Bossi and his League the independence or autonomy of Lombardy never would strictly have gained traction, but he still blames the party for using those ideas in a strictly utilitarian way to attain strictly political goals. Let's listen for a moment to the man himself:

> I am not an Italian, I do not define myself as Italian. The only nationality I have is Lombardian. Varesino. . . . . yes, okay, pride for your own city. . . . yes. . . . for a long time I believed in Padania. I have approached certain ideals. I felt myself a Padanian, I share certain ideas but later I understood that a Padanian nation does not exist. Because a people is an aggregate of persons that recognizes each other in a common identity, a common language and a common history, which has also a common state, an identity of a

people. There has always been a people of Lombardians and Frulians. I prefer to speak about "peoples of Padania": All the nations that live close to the geographic area of the Po basin. In the end they have common features; they have their cultures and various languages, but also have common features and similarities.

And than, Padania, we should leave aside this idea of Padania if we want to accomplish independence from Italia. Because, already it is very difficult to struggle against Italia, against a dominant culture, when almost all of the people are profoundly Italianized and Italy has eradicated our culture for 150 years. Therefore, the people outside do not have a perception of Padania. If we want independence, we should point more to the issues related to identity. I think it is a lot easier to direct people as Lombardians, to the independence of Lombardy. If you go to people and ask "are you a Lombardian? they would say yes! And if you go and ask "are you Padanian?" he would say no! Because it is a concept that is not bought by people, because it is more or less belongs to a political party. Therefore, the people who do not feel themselves Padanian. . . . . whenever a person says "I am a Padanian" it is inevitable that s/he is also a Legista. But, there should be something that goes beyond the symbols of a party. Therefore I think we should insist uniquely upon our being Lombardian and on the independence of Lombardia. It will be very difficult, but a real identity will be created. And, once the independence has been accomplished, it will we possible to federalize with other nearby nations. In fact, from a practical point of view it is unthinkable that Padania could maintain its independence even for a moment, because there are regions with deeper attachment to their identities, like Venice. Venetian is a strong identity, and in terms of secessionist ideas Venice is much more advanced than other regions. On the other hand in

> regions like, Piedmont, Liguria, and Emilia-Romagna, independist desires are very low. The idea of Italy has taken roots over there, and unfortunately Lombardy to does not do very well. Still Lombardy has had all the capacity of being independent, twenty five percent of the Italian Nation's GDP is given by Lombardy. We have a bigger GDP than Belgium and the richest countries of Europe! The size of the territory is equal or at least approximate to Switzerland, Belgium or Nederland. Therefore, it can happen if we just think independence. We have the institutions, eight millions inhabitants, which is much more than nations like Switzerland and Norway which have enormous territory but little population. So the requirements for independence exist. It can ever turn into a global or European force, I think. Therefore I do not share the idea of Padania because of these motivations. I am a Lombardian and I want independence for Lombardy, period!

Luca's remarks reminds us that although the League and Umberto Bossi are regarded as the pioneers of the idea of independence for the northern regions, nonetheless in the eyes of many the League is regarded as an impediment blocking the emergence of any real movement of independence. True as thath may be, the other side of equation must not be last sight of: that the League's entrepreneurial, non-dogmatic style of politics has served to moderate xenophobic tendencies and thereby curb any possible drift toward the far right. That beneficient aspect of the League reflect, as we have seen, its pool of members who basically are middle class and have an ideology of civility and nonviolence.

Although the League declared the independence of Padania in 1996, the atmosphere was that of a town festival in which people were just enjoying the early spring weather. Symbolic formations inside the party such as Camicie Verdi (military) or Voluntari Verdi (civic) have

never functioned as real paramilitary units; they have been used simply to agitate the central government and thereby further challenging its hegemony. The persecution was not long in coming, and resulted, however, in years of seemingly never ending trials. Although the League is a fervent supporter of anti-immigration laws, there have never been any reports of orchestrated violence perpetrated against immigrants by Leghisti. Moreover, as part of its entrepreneurial model of politics, the League has always strived to bring in immigrants and Italians of southern origin into the party as a validation of its claim that it is not racist but simply desirous of wise regulation. Immigrants even headed a few sections of the League as a sign of that.

Section 5.4: Reappearance of Subjugated Knowledge:

Section 5.4.1: Alternative Ways of Spreading the Word

Dissemination of the Leghisti's message is essential not only in order them to "do" politics and thereby gaining more support but also to set up a hegemony so that a distinct northern identity can be "imagined." Party members often describe themselves as being the victims of absence from and even of false descriptions in, the media. Indeed, Italian television programs and newspapers often stories about the League that emphasize attributes seen as negative by society. Pictures of party members in horn hats create an image of uncivilized Leghisti who merely shouts all the time. The absence of coverage, and biased depictions are supplemented by shows that make fun of Leghisti and the League's leaders. Party leaders' remarks often are listened to with a cynical smile on the interlocutor's face, in discussion programs. In such ways, the League's discourse is reduced within the hierarchy of knowledge, and the negative portrayals of Leghisti as being merely racist are often substantiated by "scientific" accounts.

During my fieldwork, right before the Padanian spring, an anthropological study chiefly of the Bergamo section of the party was published. With its title "L'*Idiota in Politica*" (2011), ("Idiots in Politics", 2011) quickly became an integral part of the media campaign humiliating the Northern League as racists. Although,French anthropologist Lynda Dematteo, the author of the book, has said that she was using the word "Idiota" in a romantic way to emphasize the theatric nature of the League's politics, just the title was enough to humiliate the party members for it fed the widespread stereotypes that Legisti are uneducated or simply stupid.

There can be no real doubt, though, that Dematteo uses the word idiots in a pejorative way so as to emphasize the merely utilitarian nature of the Leaders' stance, thereby disregarding the myriad of tendencies within the League that they must try to keep pace with via even changing discourses; that is via the entrepreneurial model of leadership as defined by Allum and Diamanti (1996). Relying on her fieldwork in Bergamo, she emphasized the xenophobic character of the League. It is hard not to conclude from her unfair approach to the party that she was simply trying to make the Italian left and thereby the mainstream media, happy. She went on to film some short documentaries about the League, zeroing in on the radicals in the League with their Viking-like horned hats so as to imply that all Leghisti are the same. Ultimately, however such attempts to reduce the Leghisti to racist, uneducated and rude buffoons have, beyond their entertainment value, done little more than further radicalizing the Leghisti. They often cited Dematteo's book to me as constituting a prime evidence of their subjugation by the Left and by journalists. I realized that the more ofthen the racist label is imposed upon them they become the more prone to embrace that label.

To combat such nefarious opponents, the League's chief strategy has always been to adopt a face-to-face communication style characterized by missionary style Leghisti wandering around public places communicating the League's message. This was its main style of politics during the early years and those Leghisti often are idealized as "real militants" worthy of emulation.

The party also has worked hard to establish its own newspaper and TV and radio stations. Today, the daily newspaper *La Padania*, Telepadania, and Radio Padania are actively disseminating the League's message. Relatively few are listening however, and most of those are lehgista. As for Bossi's tactic of using racist discourse, improper language and curses to attract attention, it worked very well for a while and helped to introduce the League to the wider society. Ultimately, however, the implied negativity has hurt the reputation of both Bossi and his Legue. Another strategy was to make use of Berlusconi. Criticized coalition of the League with Berlusconi's party had benefits including political survival and immunity from state persecution But another advantage was to enjoy the media power of Berlusconi to take more time in the news and in more positive ways.

The second tactic was articulated by Bossi as *I muri sono il libro del popolo* (Walls are the book of people). Wall inscriptions such as "Padania Libera" (Padania is Free) can be seen all over the north, directing attention to the party. Mostly these works executed by younger members of the party constitute one of the first steps on the road to full membership in the League. In addition to these public wall scripts, every League section in every affiliated city, works independently to communicate party messages through brochures and banners that are hung in public spaces or distributed in the streets. Although such tactics do not totally compensate for the lack of media

interest, they have done a surprising amount, through the years, in terms of gaining support for the league and communicating its message.

That having been said, the minus must now be factored in, alongside the plus. For the truth is that the tactics just alluded to have resulted in more subjugation of the League's way of seeing things. Wall scripts, banners, shouting party members, racist discourse and use of improper language have made it all too easy for the media to stereotype all Leghisti as zealots and racists, and thereby implicitly write their discourse off as being insufficient knowledge.

Section 5.4.2: The Party building as a School

The target population for the communication of the historical narrative and worldview of the Northern League are for the most part, the Leghisti themselves. The "other" played in this scenario is played by schools. Concerns about the schools are not limited to their inadequacy and inefficiency. Schools are the carriers of the hegemony through indoctrination of the state's official ideology. Thus the schools always loom large within the context of identity politics, and they are a major concern for Leghisti. When we look at the literature that explains nations and nationalism, one finds that the common prerequisites of a nation are lacking in Italy and threby call the entire idea of Italy into question: a common language, an imagined community of equal citizens, (Anderson 1992) a common understanding of history spread through education; a sense of being individualized subjects spread through industrialization and urbanization, with the attendant demolition of communal ties (Anderson 1992; Gellner 2006; Smith1971). As Dickie (1996) points out, there are four ways of imagining a nation. First, there is a narrative of history, which we may understand as collective memory; second, there are symbols like flags and clothes; third, there is a geographical space, a territory and finally an enemy or "other." Dickie also points

to the importance of language when it comes to imagining a nation. By thinking in this way we can conclude that Italians are unlikely to be imagining a community that necessarily includes all Italian citizens on every occasion, owing to; the plethora of languages spoken; insufficient educational instilling of an ideological unity; strong ties to local identities represented by symbols and territories; and harshly demeaning stereotypes that make South and North each other's demonized "other."

Most thinkers on nationalism agree that schooling, and thus indoctrination of the national ideal, stands right at the core of every nationalist hegemony. Schools not only purvey the dominant ideology but also propose a narrative of history that allows people to imagine themselves as the comrades of their fellow nationals, living a safely demarcated existence within a specific geographical territory. This also implies a common destiny revolving around opposition to a common enemy. Moreover, schools are the main medium in which a vernacular becomes the common language by which a nation is imagined as a community (Anderson 1992).

It is worth noting here that issue of language comes up on every occasion that brings leghisti together. Although the idea of Padania is a nationalist discourse, it does not promote any vernacular as superior to the others. Thus, the common language for the proposed Padanian Nation is invariably the official Italian language, which is being taught at schools. There are, however, local dialects of Italian that seen by Leghisti as being precious aspects of their cultural heritage and part of their identity. But the League does not have any schools and the state holds the monopoly on education, and the vernaculars are not written languages and their teaching is limited chiefly to family environments. In addition, the fact that most school teachers are of southern origin and therefore speak with a strong southern accent while remaining almost entirely

ignorant of the local northern dialect only serves to further alienate Leghisti from schools. The final very important factor leading Leghisti to perceive their culture as being threatened by schools is the way Italian history is presented as having been first a cultural unity, then a political unification, and at last a common destiny for all of the peoples living in the peninsula.

This imposition of schools as carriers of the national ideology leads Leghisti to counter this ideological claim; albeit mostly in inconsistent and disorganized ways. For instance, the League's banners often include slogans written in the local dialect to underscore its opposition to Italian nationalism. This trend does not go as far as talking in dialect at public meetings, for the regions of course differ in their dialects. Few attempts have been made to explicate the local dialects, via lexicons and compendiums of local stories. Their circulation has remained very limited, however. Nonetheless, because in the schools only Italian literature is taught, Leghisti have been quick to seize upon the need for and alternative literature.

A great case-in-point in this regard, looked at earlier, is the tri-monthly journal called *Terra Insubre* (Land of Insubre) and published out of Varese. This journal not only provides an alternative, dialectical literature and preserves stories, cults, and legends that originally were oral, but thereby implicitly purveys a narrative history of western Lombardy that emphasizes its racial and cultural continuity with the culture of the Celts, an ancient ethnic group ound today mostly in Scotland and Ireland. Such a narrative that proudly unearths Celtic roots not only helps to free Leghisti from their much-hated, and shame-inducing Italian identity but also points to a heroic character-type that is always rebelling against colonial authorities, in keeping with the Irish and Scottish movements for independence. Among the Young Padanians, there is a strong admiration for the Irish struggle for independence, and connections have been forged with Irish counterparts

through visits. The following is what Pasquale 18, told me in this regard. “I have a personal affinity with the Irish struggle for independence. I even love their language, and for that reason I started to learn it. I like their flag and one day I want to visit Ireland.” These narratives and cultural claims also provide a wide range of symbols that are of the highest importance to the fostering of a nationalist discourse, not least a political importance. Even sheer images are extraordinarily important, and the theme that strike me as being the most profound are the “sun of alps”, the wearing of Scottish costumes and corn hats.

But while, the Northern League has an alternative historical narrative it fails to create an alternative hegemony, both because it does not have the proper apparatuses and because it does not aim to do so seriously. Its historical claims, used as political tools to challenge the Italian state, do, however, make it a real anti-hegemonic party.

Foucault (1980) tells us that, in order to challenge a dominant narrative, alternative discourses or knowledge should be used: “it is through the re-appearance of this, of these local popular knowledge, these disqualified edges, that criticism performs its work.” Thus whether knowingly or not, one of the most powerful aspect of the Northern League is its struggle to make visible subjugated discourses/narratives/knowledge that are belying the dominant discourse. These not only serve to foster a sense of identity among members but also works as a medium within which feelings against the Italian state are crystallized. Thus the League’s narrative that counters the one imposed by the Italian political system is more than just a common reference point; it is a gravitational field that coalesces the League’s many disproportionate tendencies and makes it difficult for observers to perceive all of the alternative knowledges housed within.

Because the party lacks the apparatuses needed to impose hegemony even inside the party and because each section has a substantial level of independence, its knowledge are varied and go beyond the official narratives of the party. Thus, in principle at least, the party is open to all conceivable discourses even including conspiracy theories, as long as it defies the Italian state.

So, what is the historical narrative of the League? We have noted the claims about being racially connected to Celts, but what really matters are the several regional units with their provincial identities, traditions, dialects, and so on. The past is constructed by the light of the needs of today, and thus it comes as no surprise that the League's dominant narrative revolves around exploitation. Because the political struggle of today is against the exploitation of the central government, we are given a people of Padania who, the story goes, always rebelled as one against imperial powers and always have been successful. In an age when national discourses are being challenged or even decimated by globalization, this narrative of history is proving itself resilient because its ideal nation is not described in linguistic or racial terms but rather in terms of such virtues as courage, integrity, and civility.

More specifically, the narrative is that the city-states of the North were unified, under the name of the Lombard League, against the invasion of Milan mounted by the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The unifying leader was a courageous commoner, Alberto da Guissano. Because the people stood steadily behind him The German emperor was defeated. That unity and the oath up on which this political unification was built, are reiterated annually, at the League known as meetings of the *Pontida*. The first of one was held in 1996, and there Bossi proclaimed the independence of Padania. In the first years after that strictly symbolic declaration of independence the League began to challenge the Italian hegemony by disseminating its own ideas

and symbols such as Padanian stamps and a Padanian currency. A movie, named Barbarossa, about the legend of Alberto da Guissano was made although its impact have been slight, da Guissano remains a beacon to the younger generation, guiding them towards a rebellious identity that they clearly find empowering.

The effective use of symbols as a way of undercutting dominant narrative works well to the extent of grabbing media attention and ridiculing the Italian government, but, as it lacks the apparatuses to build a noble alternative. What is needed to lend added weight to the symbolizing is real talk, talk that goes beyond historical narratives and party discourses. The party meetings which largely take the form of discussion sessions engaged in at the conclusion of some lectures, arguably are filling that bill by allowing one and all to new world events through the lens of League ideology. Therefore, it can be regarded as an alternative to schools where Italian Nationalism is the main guide for the production of knowledge. However, in the case of the Party, there is not an easily visible or declared ideology, but an untold ideology, which is being produced and reproduced while daily issues are viewed and discussed. Therefore the ideology is rather than a solid theory, it is something to be explored through its creation and reconstruction in the discussions. Views about issues and related history are being discussed and constantly re-signified through the needs and dominant viewpoints of the day. The decentralized nature of the party also decentralized the nature of its political message, therefore it is possible to see differences in the approaches to the issues among different sections of the party, although the main themes remain the same. Moreover, the changing needs of the time result in some changes in the views about the issues too. Therefore, although the party center can be seen as a place where narratives are being created as an alternative to the dominant narratives at schools and in

the media, its message is not uniform but fuzzy and created by the very members, and not always adopted by all because of the absence of a primary authority.

The rejection of the official narrative requires an alternative narrative not only in terms of the birth of an imagined Padanian nation, but also as an alternative narrative of the Italian unification. Again, as in the Padanian Narrative, this is supposed to work for today's needs and it should be used as a political tool; the main themes are exploitation, occupation and convergence with criminals. These themes are useful in many ways; as a tool for challenging the legitimacy of the Italian state and providing an analogy between the fight against Rome with the fight against Frederick Barbarossa. The help comes from the main themes that most conspiracy theories share. As Cesare, a 45 years old male Leghista points out:

> " We all know that there did not exist such a thing like Italia. It was the Masons who conquered the peninsula. They made people believe that this was a liberation. In fact it was an occupation. Italy is a mason conspiracy for us. Garibaldi was a Mason, all the founders of this state were masons. Where did they go after the unification? They became businessmen, and still have the real power in this country. They made convergence with the mafia, they made a deal with the Vatican. ….Do you know what? It is these three powers that govern the country right now. It is not the politicians, they are playing just a game, but in fact the church, confindustria (Italian Confederation of Industrialists) and the mafia are governing this country……..there may be masons among us too, they infiltrate everywhere, one can not know them. But still we are the only political

party that is doing real opposition; that is standing with people not the rich minority."

Section 5.4.3: Three movies and the Shame of Being Italian

Ridiculing Italy is one of the major ways of challenging the Italian hegemony. Although it is not clear if it is done on purpose; it is done in many ways ranging from mocking symbols of Italy to teasing historical narratives or personages. Garibaldi, the heroic general of the Italian unification who actually conquered the peninsula is regarded as the biggest culprit of the conspiracy of the Italian State. As the party office was once the place where Garibaldi lived for a short period of time, as mentioned before, the office is marked "Zona degaribaldizzata" with symbols. The Italian flag, which is often called "tri-colore" (three colors) is regarded something evil, although one of its colors, the green, is regarded as representing the North. In some of the party buildings it is kept in the toilets to mean "it is the only place appropriate for the flag of the 'Italia Merda' (shit Italy). It is also being used for internal criticism, when elected party members wear costumes with the Italian flag for their coronation as treason against the ideas. In 2010, an Italian flag was hung on the legendary and most important balcony in the Varese section. It took the attention of the national media, as it was something unthinkable. It appeared later that the section head of that day was the 'culprit', attempting to criticize the leaders of the party for their becoming Italianized (to mean corrupt) for the hope of a reconsideration of the ideas and the party politics.

Ridiculing is not limited to symbols or the political system as a whole; it also includes the history, which is always open to alternative readings. Party activities included also some movie watching sessions with discussions afterwards. These sessions are mostly attended by the

younger generation, and a couple of elders were supposed to run the discussions. During these discussions I was impressed with the knowledge and the self-confidence of young Padanians. Whether right or wrong they had ideas about almost every topic and self-confidence to fervently defend them. The movies watched in the sessions that I was able attend are: Vajont-La diga del disonore, 2001 (Vajont-the dam of dishonor). Gli Chiamorono Briganti, 1999 (They say bandits to them); Uomini Contro (Man Against).

The second movie is Vajont-La diga del disonore (Vajont-the dam of dishonor). The name of the movie is taken from a river in the Venice region of Italy, over which a water dam was built in 1959. The movie is about the construction, mismanagement and destruction of this dam because of a landslide. The highest of its time, the dam was built to produce electricity and was presented as a demonstration of the capacity and perfection of Italian engineering. However, because political desires and corruption of its managers, the indications of a massive landslide were disregarded, the required precautions and a necessary evacuation of the neighboring towns were omitted. The result was a disaster, which caused the deaths of over 2000 people living in the nearby town Vajont in 1963. Dramatizing the event over a love story, the movie criticizes the corruption and political games, which destroyed people by causing mismanagement.

The story is regarded by Leghisti as a demonstration of how the Roman style of politics ruins their land through corruption. The point was not only clientelism and gaining wealth through bribery. The whole system was built on corruption; and it was causing mismanagement, which in turn results in an ineffective state and reduced wealth and quality of life. The fact that the state was involved in every aspects of life was an impediment of development, wealth and flourishing of enterprises.

The second movie, “Gli Chiamorono Briganti” was in theaters in 1999 for the first time, but the show was suspended after a couple of weeks under the pretext of lack of interest by the public; and the company who owns the property rights rejected to transfer the transmission rights. Therefore, the movie has mostly remained unknown to most for years. The reason this movie was selected for the movie watch session was to reveal and discuss alternative and “more righteous” narratives of history. This movie was obviously contradicting the official narrative of history, and the poor distribution of it was regarded as a demonstration of a lack of democracy and free speech and state oppression for Leghisti.

The movie describes a history of the early years of unification as a struggle for power between actors such as the masonry, the bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, Papa and the Brigands. Contrary to the official narrative that unification was a war of independence against Bourbon invaders and brigandage, the movie tells a story of unification as an invasion by the Piedmont elites who can hardly talk Italian (they were speaking French). During the civil war, people in the south were convinced to fight against the Bourbon state by promises of independence, ending hunger, giving lands to people and ending injustices. However, as described in the movie and readily bought by Leghisti, what they brought was only more tax and tax and tax again. Instead of distributing lands to people, they constituted a new class of bourgeoisie, which further exploited already poor commoners.

Crocco, the hero of the film is one of those who fought for the unification of Italy with Garibaldi, the legendary general of Italian Unification; but disillusioned from it because they did not keep their promise but further exploited people. He becomes a leader of one of those brigand gangs, which is often described as thieves and cold-blooded criminals. However, Crocco describes his

gang this way: “we have been thieves and assassins because of desperation; the desperation that is imposed upon us. We should fight for independence; we should fight for our future; so that our children won’t be the children of thieves and assassins. In the movie, Italian state officials are depicted as incapable administrators and often ridiculed for their tendency to solve every problem with force without justice. Massacres of local people, rape and cold-blooded posing for pictures alongside dead bodies were described as routine acts of government powers. In the end, Crocco loses this war because of treason and the political games of the Italian government.

More than anything else, the theme of the movie is a challenge to and an opportunity of ridiculing the Italian National historical narrative, which describes the unification as a salvation from occupation, oppression and criminality. Moreover, it echoes most criticisms raised by the League, although the movie was not produced by Leghisti. Although the movie was based on events in the south and the hero was a southern, which is described in a manner that is echoing the stereotypes of the south as barbaric and uncivilized, Leghisti did not hesitate to construct analogies between their struggle and Crocco’s, and blamed the state for criminalizing people because of desperation. Giuseppe, a 45 year old Leghista, who has a background in politics in the left parties was the person who was running discussions after movie show, she describes:

> “This movie shows us that the problems we are complaining about were always there. It was because of the foundation of this state as a convergence between dark powers such as the Masonry and the Mafia…….As you see, from the outset they only exploit people through taxes and oppression……..Crocco is a person who fights for his own territory and people, which is like our struggle against this state. ……This state is a tool for the elites to exploit people.”

The third Movie is Uomini Contro, which means “men against”. Produced in 1970, the movie was highly criticized for ridiculing the army, and did not show in most theatres under the pretext of “receiving a lot of threats.” The term “Absurdity” best describes the movie. The plot is a battleground in the North of Italy against Austrians. Emphasizing the sufferings of the war, depicting soldiers as real men who have fears, desires and dreams; rather than devoted heroes, the movie not only ridicule the army over the absurd orders of a general, but also questions the war itself. It shows the meaninglessness of wars and death by showing that most deaths were only results of absurd orders of incapable and greedy generals.

The movie gave a good opportunity to mock Italian state and emphasize its lack of glory. These historical narratives not only help to construct a sense of identity, but they are also useful for honor which Mediterranean anthropologists often emphasized.

As Aldo, 26, points out in a humorous way, he perceives the Italian Historical narrative is not only fake and not worth believing, but also it is without glory, which appears to be one of the important criteria for a historical narrative. It is perceived as something shameful.

> “This Italia is a country of failures. At school they teach us a history of wars. OK, but the problem is we already fought and never won. We lost in the second world war, in the first world war we were on the winning side but we lost all the battles, we lost in Libya, we lost in Africa. This is fallitalia (Translatable as “Italy of failures”)….But there is an exception to that, (laughs) we have only won once and it was against Turks, (laughs), how did you accomplish to lose against Italians? (Laughs)”

This lack of glory, or negative reputation came up on several occasions during interviews about Italy. Although Padanian ideology is not taken seriously for most, it provides a refuge from the negative reputation that Leghisti perceive the Italians have. Therefore, it is a way of externalization of the "shame" of being Italian. As Orietta points out, "When I go abroad, I do not like saying that I am Italian, in most Occasions I say that I am from Switzerland, you know, there is canton Ticino over there, where people talk our dialect." The Padanian identity is seen and works as a refuge from discontents of being an Italian as

Ornella, 60 years old female Leghista explains:

> "Nowadays, people have started to recognize Padania, and they have respect for us. I tell them that I am a Padanian and they know, one of my friends came here to visit me, in the border the police asked why he came and where he is going and he answered; I do not recognize you, this is not Italy, here is Padania and I came to visit my Padanian friends. Obviously he was arrested and it took us a lot of work to set him free."

Davide, a 40 years old Leghista, who is from another city but invited to the young Padanian meetings because he knows a lot about the 90's and the legendary first generation of Leghisti, describes his desire for independence in tears:

> "Do you know why we want independence? When I see this *sole delle alpi* (sun of Alps), I feel that it is something from me, from my land. It is worth dying for. When you ask a person if he is proud of being a German or French, he would say

> yes. This is what I want, I am not an Italian, I am a Lombard and a Padanian and I am proud of it. I want this honor and to get rid of the shame of being Italian…"

And Anna, 23, explained:

> "What do people know about Italy? Pizza, pasta, mafia. I do not want to be recognized with these things. Italians are perceived as ignorant mafia people outside, and I do not want to be perceived as one of them, a country of beautiful women, country of corruption, country of Berlusconi, you see him right, he is a terrible person."

The issue of the image of Berlusconi is interesting in many ways; not only because he has become an unwanted and unavoidable ally for leghisti, but also because he represented an example of the much appreciated northern ethics of private entrepreneurship. Although Berlusconi is a much-hated figure among Leghisti in Varese, he also represents northern values of private entrepreneurship as he started from scratch and became very rich by working. Aldo explained Berlusconi's maintenance of support in spite of several scandals as follows:

> "Look, people say that they hate Berlusconi, but they kind of like him because he represents the dream of median Italian; he become rich from scratch and he is sexually active although he is more than seventy.."

Although Aldo's remarks, being with Berlusconi meant a shame for Leghisti, which Leghisti expressed as "we do not have the face to talk about corruption anymore" and others as "although they talk about honesty and corruption, they have always been with Berlusconi." The shame that stems from being with Berlusconi and being involved in the corruption scandals was one of the

important reasons for the “spring revolution” inside the party, which resulted in the legendary leader stepping down.

Section 5.4.4: Conspiracy Theories

Subjugated knowledge include also conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories have extraordinary explanatory power as in principle they rely on invention of apt causes for consequences, thus provide a comfort for mind as it facilitates to understand complicated processed and externalize the culprit of undesired aspects of lives. When it comes to the history, it enjoys benefits of a reverse reading of history, which one can use to explain current situation by inventing cause effect relationships in the past. Using arguments like clandestine groups and evil intentions, which can never be proved and denied; conspiracy theories, provides a comfort of externalization of guilt by blaming some evil groups. By doing so, the belief in conspiracy theories on the one hand creates a sense of pessimism and despair for changing the wrongdoings; on the other hand it justifies the selfish attitude of caring only for the self-interest.

Conspiracy theories are subjugated knowledge in spite of their popularity. They are regarded as insufficient and inadequately elaborated knowledge. Believers of those theories are regarded as lacking intellectual depth and are often mocked. Those theories do not qualify as scientific knowledge. Yes, conspiracy theories are not scientific knowledge in Popper’s terms as we are unable to prove or deny them. However, it does not change the fact that today, a lot of people believe in those theories and use them to signify the world around them. The members of the Northern League is not an exception. Being an anti-system party (al least in the discursive level) non only low level members but also leaders of the party uses global and masonic conspiracy theories to make politics.

Conspiracy theories voiced in the party meetings include: Italian unification was a conspiracy of Masonry, Christian Church and the Mafia families to rule over the country; therefore, today's system of politics is still relies on these threefold power structure; and the political parties are playing a game to give a sense of freedom to the population; votes in the south are mostly purchased in exchange for state benefits. There is manipulation in elections. Then current economic crisis is a result of global power holders' dirty business and middle class of Italy is paying their debts; moreover, the economic crisis was created on purpose to further undermine state sovereignties' in Europe to establish a United States of Europe. The inflow of Muslim immigrants is a conspiracy to Europe; they are making a lot of children to invade Europe; they are coming to the Europe for missionary purposes. Chinese immigrants are sent by their government to invade the economy of Italy; one day Italians will be a minority in Italy. Judiciary is full of communists and they are designing politics of Italy over judicial operations. Media and therefore all information that is being produced and disseminated is being controlled globally by global powers; and everybody is under constant surveillance of intelligence agencies.

Hollywood movies and constant flow of information about conspiracy theories through social media have their shares in those conspiracy theories to disseminate. However, in the case of Italy, there are enough tools from the daily life for anyone over the age of 30. As explained in the section on history, eighties and nineties were the years of revelations about the state; showing that the state institutions the really governed by clandestine organizations. In the case of mafia operations, it was revealed that the politicians whom the people voted for decades were converged with mafia; giving protection and state benefits in exchange for votes. Mafia was powerful enough to openly challenge the state by murdering several magistrates. Later in 1992

operations showed that the state was run as an enterprise in cooperation with the rivaling parties on a system based on bribery.

However, the real challenge, which belied almost all beliefs of the people was the operation Gladio. It was so shocking that a lot of people chose not to believe it. The allegations were that, the Italian state was in fact run by some Masonic clandestine organization. The intelligence agencies of the state were used to make bombings against Italian people in order to design socio-political structure. One who believes those allegations had to believe also that either s/he had lived under a false fear of leftist terrorism; or the state plotted against him/her to persecute the left. Still, there are doubts that clandestine groups inside the state might have organized outraging massacres such as in Bologna train station and Piazza Fontana in Milan. These revelations not only nurtured the belief in conspiracy theories but also illegitimated the Italian state; making people search for alternatives where possible. The rise of two anti-system parties; the Northern League in the early nineties, and the recent rise of the 5 stars movement can be interpreted as a result of this search for alternative solutions.

Today, most people do not speak directly about the operation Gladio. However, as a sediment of the experiences, masonic conspiracies take an important part of conversations, and party discourse wherever it is relevant. Slogans like “Niente Massoni, solo elezioni” (No masons, only elections) are being used to criticize the imposition of a technocrat government by European Union over Italy. Being a Mason is regarded something negative, and the gossip of one of the party members to be a mason becomes a major concern for other members.

As narrated by Gianluca, a 60 years old Varesini, an ex-party member, explaining his discomfort with the Italian state and his joining to the the League,

> "……it is not only the taxes or migration or corruption that made me hate from this Italian state and 'tri-colore' (three colors, implying Italian flag). You were not here, you should have seen 70's, it was terrible days, one day one man was killed and the other day the other kidnapped. And you could never know who did that. All those explosions etc., ….. and than police could not find any thing, only some poor guys incapable of doing anything by themselves. Do you know Why? (a short pause) do not let me talk……..because it was the state that was doing all of that. ……we have learned later, all was done by some secret guys, masons, NATO etc. can you think that? They were killing their own people…..this is not is a real state, not a state of people but in fact it is a Puppet (marionetta), puppet of mafia, puppet of masons, puppet of EU, puppet of Vatican, Puppet of NATO…"

Although it is varied, the belief in conspiracy is not limited to party members. Having similar desires and a similar anti-state stance a 40 years old member of 5 star movement explained the causes of the economic crisis in Italy this way:

> "..Do you know masons?....Well, they are a clandestine group of people doing dirty businesses and plots against society for their interests. …This is the reason we are having an economic crisis now. This is not a crisis of people, ordinary people did not do anything to bring this crisis. It is the bankers who pushed the state to take debts this much. They benefited from that. Now, the banks are going for bankruptcy and we are supposed to pay for that…..They are using this crisis as an opportunity to design the political structure again……You know what

> happened after the big crisis in 1929; fascist regimes gained more power all over the Europe. Today, they are doing the same thing. All these economic crises are opportunities for far right parties. People lose their belief in their states, in democracy. They expect some hero to come and rescue them. They give their consent to more authoritarian people as they think that those great problems can not be solved by those politicians who do not do anything but speak and steal….People do not vote anymore, they do not trust in neither politics nor politicians."

Luigi, 41, another Varesino voted for the League once, but refused to tell his inclinations for the upcoming elections. He was reactionary to the League; and also pessimist about the whole political system. His distrust with the politics was not limited to corruption for money but the value of voting too. He was suspicious about possible manipulations in the elections: "Tell me Sinan, why do we vote with a pencil? Why can not we vote with a pen? How can I know that they won't delete it and write what ever they would like to write."

With the added influence from the circulating pieces of information from the Internet, he was prone to believe in conspiracy theories. The result in the belief of conspiracies, especially to a godlike global power that is shaping our lives results in a pessimism about changing things. if a person believers that the real control is in some kind of clandestine group, voting became meaningless:

> Do you think that it is the politicians that are really governing this country? You are an academic and you should have heard of global powers that really shape the world. You think that you can change things by doing politics or voting, but it is not you that is

deciding. They control everything, they control information, and Televisions Channels, newspapers and you believe just what they would like you to believe."

CHAPTER SIX:
Globalization and the Failing State

Migration has a long history in Italy. Starting from the so-called economic boom, migration from the rural-south to the industrialized North has become one of the greatest phenomena of the period between the Second World War and the 1970s. Together with harsh conditions in the South, the rapid economic growth of the North aggravated the uneven development between the two regions. The need for cheap labor in the North, plus southerners' desire for a better life resulted in nine million people migrating to the North between 1951 and 1971. Together with poor integration of the country and age-old stereotypes about southerners, this migration caused discomfort at best, anger at worst, among the recipient population.

Of course the uneven development occurred not just on the national scale. Uneven global development has given birth to a widespread immigration problem for all of Europe especially when, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, thousands of immigrants poured in. Italy's proximity to North Africa made it both an entry-point and a destination for immigrants. According to official records there were, as of 2012, around four million legal immigrants in Italy, but the actual figure is most likely much higher given how long the *Clandestini* (illegal immigrants) have been exasperating the authorities.

Migration is always a major plank in all of the parties' platforms not just the League's, but in recent years Italy has had some truly shocking experiences with immigrants, ranging from disasters as see to bad conditions and ill treatment in reception camps. The sheer number of immigrant makes it difficult for the Italian state to handle the situation. At the time of my fieldwork, in 2011 and 2012, the flow of illegal immigrants reached a record high because of the

civil war in Libya. The Berlusconi government had no choice but to allow them to enter in the hope that they would not stay in Italy but rather go their relatives in France.

The causes of migration lie well beyond the control of both (im)migrants and receiving populations. On the one hand the global economic system produces it by deepening the economic chasm between dividing adjacent territories, and the problem is exacerbated by inequality in quality of life and in security. On the other hand the same system benefits from the cheap labor that the immigrant population provides. However, both migration and immigration cause also a lot of social problems for (im)migrants and receiving populations. Without realizing the causes of it both sides are blaming each other for their problems. Both immigrant and receiving populations are thrown into a situation in which they need to find solutions to social problems that are created by broader economic policies while the state authorities approach the issue hesitantly. Indeed, immigration is perceived as beneficial by neo-liberal policy makers because it provides cheap labor in countries where industries are unable to compete with China because of its lower labor costs. Too often, however, the problems caused by (im)migration viewed strictly as crimes or strictly as basic human rights, and that imbalance ends up meaning that the state and other actors in the (im)migration drama just reap its benefits without trying to outmaneuver it, and that solution to the problems are left up to the populations involved. They rarely come up with any, and the situation just degenerates into mutual name-calling, with the immigrant populations demanding more and more services and protections from the state and the recipient population feeling that it is a cow that has no more milk to give. This results in immigrant populations becoming more reactionary towards the state and the recipient population as more and more they see themselves victims of discrimination. And for the recipient population, the utility and thus legitimacy of the state deteriorates, and new conservative political actors emerge in order to

protect local ways of living. This vicious circle is exacerbated, as it becomes a tool for political parties. The left encourage the (im)migrants to seek more and more rights through struggle and labels conservatives as racists, while local people who feel victimized by (im)migration become more radicalized, often internalizing the label "racist."

Given all of the above, (im)migration needs to be studied in a way that incorporates the views and experiences of both sides, since both are victims of the same phenomenon, however much they may blame each other for it. In the case of Italy, before we discuss the views and experiences of each side, we must pay attention to (im)migration as the issue is played out within the broader political arena. Regions outside of the north are not included in this discussion because they have a different experience and lower rates of immigration, but the southern migrants viewpoint on immigration to the North is very much included.

Simply put, Italian political life is divided between the Cold War discourses of left and right, albeit with a few lighter versions huddled closer to the center. Traditionally the left and the center-left support the immigrants through their political parties and syndicates, doing so on the basis of a universal humanitarian discourse. Indeed, some syndicates not only support and organize immigrant populations but also provide them with legal assistance. On the other hand, the right and the center-right have a pool of voters more likely to be suffering from the existence of, and certain issues related to, immigrants. The center right, however, many of whose voters are religious, is less likely to adopt an anti-immigrant discourse. Then again it is not a secret that even though the Vatican supports immigrants on of religious principle, most Catholic voters in the North have a problem with immigrants. And of course, there are, the far right political parties that are virtually fascists and that most northerners disdain. In this climate, the Northern League,

given the fact of both its strongly anti-immigrant rhetoric, its moderate and non-violent stance, remains the only viable alternative for most northerners who have problems related to immigration. Moreover, even in the case of voters for other parties who perceive immigration negatively, the mere existence of the League is somehow reassuring, even though they would never vote for them because they do not believe in ideas like Padania and independence.

Section 6.1: Immigrant Experiences

An immigrant's experience in Italy starts with a confrontation with the Italian state and its infamous bureaucracy, and that is true whether s/he has entered legally or illegally. The first step is to enter the country, and if one is lucky enough to enter the country legally, the first challenge is to obtain a *Permesso di Soggiorno* (Residence Permit)

Section 6.1.1: Legal Immigrants

A residence permit is the document given to aliens allowing them to legally remain in Italy for the specified periods of time Obtaining it is not easy, and requires an often dauning encounter with the infamous Italian bureaucracy. The residence permit procedure begins when you obtain a form from the post office. It needs to be filled in great detail including your permanent address in Italy, which supposedly you should not have before obtaining a resident permit. After paying the required fees you are given an appointment at the local *questura* or police headquarters. The section for immigrants has a separate entrance with a poorly decorated and small waiting room, that is, utterly unfit to accommodate the high number of applicants. Most applicants are expected to wait outside, regardless of pouring rain or sun. Although you are given a specific time, the median waiting time is three hours. Then finally you manage to talk to some police officer who is

not likely to listen to you, because of your foreign Italian accent or simply because he is not interested.

You are most likely to lack some documents, or your photograph does not count as acceptable, and you are prone to be "restarted" forced to go through the whole process again. Finally, if you manage to obtain all the required documents you still do not get your "residence permit". You are most likely to wait about two months until they let you know that it is ready. During that time you need to make another appointment to get finger-printed. During all these processes the officers' attitude is humiliating and the whole process is at best intimidating. And that is the experience of a person requesting a residence permit who has a research visa, and enough funds. The process of gaining a working permit or for a permit for family Reunion is far more difficult and complicated.

After I had gone through all of that, what I felt was anger toward both the Italian state and all those officers with their snobby attitudes. This experience allowed me to partly understand the cynical sentiments that the immigrants' often have and to feel first hand the prejudice directed against them by most Varesini. The negative attitudes of local people and state agents are reciprocated by some immigrants in the form of disturbing behavior in the public spaces.

Section 6.1.2: Illegal Immigrants

Using such methods as embarking on a boat from northern Africa that is headed to the Italian island of Lampedusa, or sailing from Albania to the Adriatic coast of Italy, or even using more sophisticated methods such as forged documents or arriving in a shipment trailer, illegal migrants come to Italy in search of a better life. The issue of these *Clandestini* is a very important one in Italian political life, which to a great extent the political discourse of the parties. While the left

openly supports immigrants and has a discourse promising better conditions and such citizenship rights as voting, the center right has a moderate attitude favoring stricter regulations. On the other hand right-wing parties and the Northern League take an openly negative stance on immigration. Their demands include greater enforcement against illegal immigration and tougher regulations for legal immigrants, plus denying the right to family reunion, citizenship, and *ius soli* or the right of citizenship to children born in Italian territory.

During their years in government the Northern League did a good deal to hasten the formulation of a law known as Bossi-Fini that basically regulates, but at the same time complicates, the official processes for immigrants. In fact, when one takes into account the inability of the government to enforce extradition owing to its complicated and expensive nature, this law practically has made the situation worse for legal than for illegals because of its plethora of requirements. Omar, a migrant from Libya who had been in Italy for three years, when I spoke with him explained the situation this way:

> I have come here in the hope of a better life. I have secretly come in with the help of some dirty man, giving him my mother's few jewels that were left from her wedding. It was worth about 2000 Euros I think. This was all we had, and I was happy that these guys accepted me. Then we embarked on a boat with all immigrants and without any of those dirty guys. They said they have paid the Italians and we should have no problem. We went in the middle of the night paddling and for the most part not seeing where we were going. Then we saw a light coming towards us it was the Italian police, they were not so nice (having a sigh). They took us to a camp in Lampedusa . . . . . After staying for two months

I was able to escape, and in fact the police did not care much when we escaped in front of them. Since then, I am working without a permit and living without a problem. Of course I am earning much less than others but it is still enough for me to send some money back and buy my mothers' jewels back . . . . . This is my friend Abdullah . . . . . He has relatives here and because of that he was able to get a working permit. But we are working in the same place, doing the same job earning almost the same amount. In addition, he has to deal with government officials, pay some taxes, etc.

Abdullah:

It is such a disaster! This guy [Omar] is illegal here, and lives free without any problem, but I have to go to the police station every year with a lot of paperwork, they come to my house to estimate the size of my house, if it is appropriate for living with my family etc. . . . . I have been rejected several times. It is good to be legal, but it is a real headache, ... Again I can work in the places that have hard jobs [he was working in a milk factory] and they were reluctant to hire me in the first place because they had to pay taxes to the government for employing me. Having papers is not enough to rent a house, because people do not care that you have documents or are working, if you are an alien and Muslim they simply do not give, and I can rent a house only in certain neighborhoods known as ghettoes."

Those last remarks of Omar's remind us that it is not just immigrants' confrontation with the state through its agents and processes, but also their distressingly bias-ridden encounters with local people that condition their views and attitudes. In ensuing section we look at the concerns of

Leghisti about immigration and immigrants. Those concerns also are relevant to the immigrants, both because they constitute one side of a discussion and because they stand right at the hearth of the processes by which preconceptions and stereotypes are nurtured and fostered. Thus issues related to Leghisti will also be discussed where it is relevant in terms of their relation to immigrant life.

Section 6.2: Leghisti's Views

At least in the discursive level, the Leghisti's views on immigrants do not see them as being inherently inferior or bad; the complaints are chiefly emerge out of their egocentric perception that they are the bulwarks of civic life in the North and out of the culture shock caused by a sense that one's homeland is being invaded by foreign nationals. Given that such civic life is a cultural construction, we have here a genuine culture clash.

And yet in the national media and the political discourse, the League and its members are often blamed for being racists. One must never forget, as well, that both the left and the church have important roles for not only labeling Leghisti as racists but also inciting their xenophobic feelings of Leghisti. We shall see in the ensuing subsections that delve into some of the issues important to Leghisti; both immigrants and local people are suffering at the hands of a phenomenon that is largely beyond their control and is exacerbated by their habit of blaming each other.

Section 6.2.1: Security or the fear of crime

One of the major issues related to immigration and immigrants is security. It has became a major concern not only for Leghisti, but also for voters of other parties. Crimes ranging from daily experiences to hearsay legends, from pickpocketing to prostitution and drug-dealing right on up

to the Albanian and Chinese mafias, all are associated in the popular mind with immigrants and with Roma people. Interestingly, although the many Italians I spoke with are by now used to have a high number of Muslim in their populations, only a few voiced any concern about the al-Qaeda style of terrorism routinely connect to Muslims. They may have shied away from the topic because they knew I was a Muslim, but my hunch is that day-to-day, crime related security is the really pressing concern for today's Italians.

As mentioned earlier, I spent a couple of months in Milan living as a paying guest in the house of a 77-year-old Italian woman. Just during the period of my stay, she was the victim of bag-snatching three times. She is a perfect mark for a thief not only because she is elderly, but also because she always rides her quite heavy bicycle and hangs her bag on it, thereby making it impossible for her to fend off, much less chase or resist, a thief. Even though she is no fan of Leghisti discourse, and describes immigrants with a motherly compassion, when it comes to issues of crime and criminality she easily gets riled. Several times, I heard her say words to this effect: "what do these people do in those parks all day? They sit and drink their beers all day, how do they survive? Of course they are stealing!"

The security issue is an indeed main concern for Leghisti. During my stay in Varese young members of the section (in fact, members of Young Padanians group) were busy conducting a survey of the perceptions of crime and security held by shop owners in various zones of the city, as those perceptions related feelings about immigrants. The aim was not only to "do politics" but also to push the city police toward stronger law enforcement.

The image of the immigrant as criminal not only arises out of people's daily encounters, but is consciously purveyed by those in the media, always eager to suggest that a particular crime had a

racial basis. None of my informants in Varese reported that they had been victims of bag-snatching or any other crimes, what matters, though, is not crime itself but the fear of it, and it is largely through the media that the fear of crime is disseminated. Every couple of days one sees a news item on a rape or kidnapping purportedly committed by an immigrant, and a steady stream of these inevitably nurtures the fear of immigrants. That fear is sometimes shows its face via spontaneous reactions during meetings of Leghisti in response to the left's calls for greater rights for immigrants. Occasionally one hear a comment such as "get raped by them, and let's see iy you talk that way again"

Such deeply engrained prejudices crop up all around Varese and indeed northern Italy, as was noted in the earlier reflections on the constraints immigrants feel when they are shopping.

Section 6.2.2: Ghettoes

The fear of crime has led to an immigrants/locals division not only of the marketplace, but also the urban space itself. Given home-owners the fears of crime and their willingness to believe the myth that migrants invade neighborhoods one by one and end up depreciating house values through prostitution etc., one cant be surprised that they tend to refrain from renting their houses to immigrants. Moreover, home owners pay a lot of tax out of their rental income, and there is increased state scrutiny when one rents to a migrant although rarely is of service then finds himself stuck with a deadbeat tenant who is not paying his rent. Regulations meant to protect the tenant, the weaker side in a rental agreement, ending up making homeowners chary about renting, especially to immigrants.

My own experience of renting a house in Varese is demonstrative not only of the procedures for doing so but of the special difficulties faced by newcomers. My actual move to my research site

in Varese was hindered by visa procedures every bit as complicated and inconvenient as those I earlier described for getting a residence permit, and I had no choice but to go back to my country for a short period of time. The visa procedures came first, however, and to gain a residence permit one is required to have a stable address. It is a crime to rent a house to a person lacking a residence permit, even if he entered the country legally and is entitled to get a residence permit. This absurd situation all too well reflects the whole system of immigration and visa applications, if not the entire state bureaucracy. It took me two months to find a landlord willing to rent a house to a foreigner without taking the whole year's rent up front. And that small triumph would never have come my way without the assistance of a clever real-estate agent and my friend and informant Luigi, who trusted me because of my affiliation with an American university. Most new comers rely upon the network of old-timer migrants to help them surmount the mutual distrust felt by prospective renters and rentees. When that habit is taken in tandem the inevitable result is that some neighborhoods became highly populated by particular immigrant groups, and these the Leghisti call ghettoes. Although Varese, cannot be said to have ghettoes full immigrants of a specific origin, some neighborhoods on its periphery are indeed highly populated by immigrants. Ghettoes do exist in Milan, the most famous of which is its China town.

It was only on a day in my fieldwork that I began to understand the real importance of territory vis-a-vis perceptions of invasion. A couple of weeks before I left Varese, I was hanging around with two MGP members after conducting an interview with one of them: Luca, the interviewee [he had a stronger attachment to Lombard identity rather than the League's ideals] and Aldo, my close friend. As I was living very close to the League headquarters, we walked together until we got to my house, with the plan being that they would drop me off and continue on their way. I suggested to my friends that we have dinner together. I have offered them to eat with me. Luca

said a hesitant yes and Aldo said that this time he would be paying. I said no, I should be paying. After a short discussion with Luca, Aldo said, “this is our city, and I will pay.” I responded, “this is my neighborhood (we were in front of my house), therefore I will be paying.” The result was a disaster, looking at their disgruntled expressions, I knew I had broken some rule, but I had no idea which. Luca said, “your neighborhood? Ohh . . . . This is . . . . this is . . . . . .” I felt the need to say “I am just joking.” My friends gratefully accepted the gesture and cracked some jokes about my being just like other Muslims who love ghettoes; but I was could see the utter seriousness lurking just beneath their levity. Although I was not an immigrant and was going to be leaving in “my neighborhood” in a couple of weeks, in their eyes, and especially Luca’s I was just another alien encroaching on sacred Lombardian torf.

How, then, are we to explain that over-sensitivity about the ghettoes? The Leghisti perceive them as being unacceptable. They are viewed by Leghisti as parallel states, an invaded part of their own territory that has its own rules; insecure places, full of criminality; imagined realms where prostitution and drug-dealing. These places are assumed to be rampant and that thus are deemed to be off limit. as dangerous places for their children, and this perception nurtures the image of an immigrant as criminal.

Section 6.2.3: Invasion of Public Spaces

Daily life in Varese is relatively laid back. Usually one does not see crowded streets, the exceptions being shopping-sales season and holiday eves. Among the most crowded places thorough faces Corso Matteotti, the main shopping destination for Varesini; Piazza Montegrappa, literally the center of the city; Corso Aldo Moro, a street full of shops that starts from Piazza Montegrappa and ends at train stations; and finally, around the shopping center known as Le

Corti and the *Piazza della Reppubblica.* One Saturday in winter, I was walking back to my home after doing some shopping in Le Corti. I was watching people trying to cross the street from both sides, my mind in search of something meaningful in terms of likely social categories in society. Two people caught in my eyes for they were trying to cross the street from different sides and thus clearly would walk past each other. One was a stereotypical Varesina, a middle-aged woman with obviously expensive fancy clothes including a fur coat and high-heeled shoes. My mind registered her as embodying the protestant ethic of northern people all and the snobby characteristics of Varesini. The other was a male in his early twenties, sporting blue jeans and a hood coat and given his brownish skin color, obviously an immigrant. I could not help but wonder what these two people were thinking if (a big if) they were noticing each other at all. At the moment they met, the man intentionally spat just in front of the Varesina's feet. Hesitating a moment, the woman did not raise her head but then quickly accelerated her pace, and the expression I managed to discern on her face was one of anger and fear.

This shopping center, Le Corti, is situated just next to and partly beneath the Piazza della Reppubblica. The latter park/square, situated in the city center, one hundred meters from the provincial headquarters of the Northern League, next to the theater of Apollo, is one of the most important places when it comes to the ongoing encounter between Varesini and immigrants. Not only is it the place where immigrants introduce themselves on the so-called "culture days" held occasionally, and assemble to protest injustices committed back in their home country, it has came to feel like a safe zone for immigrants, an open ghetto as it were.

Every hour it is possible to see one or more group of immigrants, mostly black, sitting together and drinking beer. Very rarely one does see Varesini entering the Piazza della Reppubblica.

These immigrant groups see this park as belonging to them and they symbolize this belief by engaging disturbing behavior. Not long after my arrival in Varese I entered this space with my wife and kids. I observed them firsthand. The immigrants block "their passages," the same spitting issue cropped up for us as for the Varesina, a near miss of our baby stroller.

Later on, I realized that this appropriation of public spaces is a real issue for Leghisti. Given their strong attachment to their territory, they call them ghettoes and see them as occupied areas, that they cannot enter, and that constitute virtually a parallel state structure. The younger generation is the most sensitive about this issue that goes beyond the Piazza Reppublica to include other areas where immigrants do not constitute the majority but nonetheless are perceived as threatening. It is easy to see, by the way, that one of the things most young Italians do in the public spaces is "love." As Federico, sixteen, puts it in one of the League meetings, "I go to a park with my girlfriend, you know, we kiss each other and hug, and . . . . . you know [smiling], and then these people come and look at us as if they are watching TV and then everything is spoiled . . . . they disturb us."

The mayor of Varese is also a Leghista, and at one of the League's Tuesday meetings he was asked about this issue and why the municipal police do not intervene. He was in a pessimistic mood: "we should understand something, this issue is part of our lives now. This is no more those old beautiful days when you were able to know almost everyone in the streets, you were able to leave the house without locking the door. Those days are gone and will not come again. We can put police in those parks, we tried to do so several times, and it simply does not work. You put police to this park and they [the immigrants] go to another, you send the police to the other one and they go to another. This is no solution. As long as these people are here, they will be here

somewhere in some way, so we should accept and get used to it." His authoritative position caused all others to stay silent, but this issue of immigrants "hanging around" the public spaces all the time has never stopped being central to most discussions in the weekly party meetings.

It is a hot button issue, and if one of the buttons is people's sense of invasion, the other is that valve looms large within the Northern mind: working. Here is what Bernardo, one of the most passionate Leghisti when it comes to the immigration issues had to say:

> These people are in the parks all the time, so, they are not working . . . . . So what are they doing? Of course, stealing; and if they do not work, how can they have a Permesso di Soggiorno [residence permit]? It is certain that they are *clandestini.* It is the fault of the Italian state to have let them in. You see immigrants coming from Libya supposedly escaping from the war. Please tell me, is it only the young unmarried males that are escaping from the war? . . . . . All these clandestini are in those parks drinking, making noise, etc, etc,. And what are the police doing? Nothing. They do not enforce the laws on immigrants. But when it comes to enforcing laws on northerners such as taxes, traffic fines, etc., the state is very precise!

Bernardo's comments well reflect not just the way Leghisti think about immigrants but also the way they link that concern to the central government and their own relation to it. Although they are labeled as racists by the mainstream media and other parties, they see themselves as being discriminated by a state that does nothing to protect them from the southerners and immigrants who are unruly at best, downright criminal at worst.

Section 6.2.4: Immigrant Mafias

The existence of the so-called immigrant mafias is known to time strictly via media coverage and hearsay; no informant reported having a direct relationship to any such organization. The mere term and hearsay, however, nurture the fear of crime, more importantly, the fear of invasion. Because these groups are reputed to be armed, they incarnate the bogey of the invading immigrants. The Albanian mafia is reputed to be a major pimp, "evil guys forcing poor women into prostitution." The Chinese mafia is another focal-point around which numerous conspiracy theories are constructed. The economic aspects of Chinese immigrants and Chinese mafia will be discussed below. For the moment, it suffices to say that the Chinese mafia is perceived as posing a direct security threat, although during the time of my fieldwork, no violent acts against Italians were reported. Chinese Mafia is reputed to be acting only on Chinese immigrants. Indeed, whereas one does see news items about Albanian human trafficking groups, the Chinese mafia, supposedly specializing in money laundering seems to be above all an urban legend. And that of course mean that even untrue and exaggerated stories about it negatively condition the locals' attitudes towards immigrants.

Although the phenomenon of the Mafia has a specific history and structure all its own, most corporate and violent criminal groups are now being called "mafia" not only in Italy but l around the world. While in Italy Mafia families as the Cosa Nostra, Ndangreta and Camorra remain powerful, there seems to be a division of labor in the sense that immigrant mafia groups have been allowed their "share of the action" with the Albanian Mafia being famous for providing prostitution, and the Chinese mafia for smuggling of goods.

Make no mistake, Italian Mafia is still "top dog" in the sense that it looms largest in the eyes of Leghisti and for that matter most Italians. And yet the Mafia's perceived threat is not one of violence, for the Mafia nowhere to be seen in most northern cities. It is viewed there not as an armed gang but rather as a clandestine group tainting the supposedly pristine Northern life by putting its members into important positions not only in government but also, or so at least the fear-spawned rumors have it, the League itself. This is why the membership process includes a trial period allowing Leghista to sniff out any possible Mafia connection while thereby consciously [or showily] distancing themselves from the infamously corrupt Italian political system. Rather remarkably, even during the corruption scandals of 2012 that caused an earthquake in the party, Leghisti maintained their belief in the ideology that mentally pits hard-working honest northerners against nefarious southerners. The real concern about possible mafia influence was voiced by a middle aged Leghista during discussions of the economic crisis that hit Italy at the time of my fieldwork in 2011 and 2012:

> I am hearing that the Mafia is penetrating the North through usury; as most entrepreneurs are having hard times and banks are not providing any support, people have no choice but to go and borrow from these guys. The results will be irreversible; they are going to capture enterprises legally when these people fail to pay back; and they will become part of the market."

Here is another Leghista on the subject:

> Most probably, the government will try to overcome this crisis through the construction industry in the long run to create jobs, stimulate the economy, etc., and this also will cause government projects to go to the Mafia because only they

> have the money to do that in this environment of crisis. That will not only provide them with power and influence but also will destroy the environment and our cities.

To return to the Chinese mafia, the northerners' fear of it directly linked to their fear of ghettoes, for the one relatively real ghetto that is known to them is Milan's China town. Ultimately, however, and as the following comment by Cesare attests, the driving force behind this fear is economic:

> Chinese people are not like others. They are very clever and act in an orchestrated way . . . . . They are not like Muslims. Chinese easily adopt our way of life; they date and marry Italians, they send their kids to schools without any problem, they learn Italian, etc. . . . . But they [the Chinese] are different because they are not like other immigrants. They have money, they come here not just to survive, but it is like an invasion. . . . . Let me tell you something, do you know how the Chinese invade a neighborhood? . . . . . What they do is, first they buy a house, acting as if they are a normal family and paying for the house more than its value if it is required. Then, they convert that house into a whorehouse with a lot of problems and disturbances to neighbors. Nobody wants to rent or buy from that building anymore; and most neighbors prefer to sell their houses. Then when the prices go down drastically, they buy those houses one by one. First the other houses in the building, then the neighboring ones . . . . . Then they sell those houses for higher prices after moving the whorehouse to another place, or they use the place as their ghetto.

Section 6.2.5: The Job Market

When the economic boom sputtered to a close in the early 1980s, the public-sector jobs, largely filled southerners, were no longer despised but rather desired, and their inefficiencies were not tolerated as they had been before. Entrepreneurship was not providing hope, for the economy was sinking and several private companies were either closing down entirely or moving to other countries such as Switzerland, just as the big factories of the North also were closing or were being moved to countries such as China. There was increased competitiveness in the job market and the added influence of immigrants meant that salaries were going down, too.

In a League street event where Leghisti were distributing brochures to explain themselves and so as to register new members, held in *Piazza Venti Settembre*, Twentys September square in the center of the city, famous for its steady population of Albanian immigrants, two Varesini who were not members of the party appeared and began to vocalize their anger toward migrants. After learning that I was an anthropologist studying the League, they eagerly explained their position:

> They say we are racists. Yes, I am a racist and let me explain why. I was working on a daily basis; I worked in Varese, in Switzerland, etc. I worked every day and did a very hard work in the construction business for years. And now they [pointing to some men sitting on benchers, possibly immigrants] they came in, and I am unemployed now. What am I going to do, how am I going to bring bread to the house? . . . . . And you see, they sit over there all day without doing anything! How do they survive, if they do not work? How do they stay in the country? how do they get a residence permit? And this is what makes us racists. I work like a horse, and they sit on the benches and live off government benefits and crime.

One need not be dismissive of either the suffering or the attitude of such embittered locals, as one goes on to insist that the job situation isn't as simple as those comments make it seem. For instance, although Leghisti and others would have to believe that allowing immigrants into the country benefits only the government and factory owners by providing them with cheap labor; and although my landlord in Milan, Angelica, told me that "Italians no longer want to work in the fields," and thereby made me think that they must gladly accept factory work, later I realized that Leghisti also were employing immigrants in their factories and shops even though they were against immigrants. Bernardo, a strong opponent of immigration and immigrants explained the seeming paradox in this way:

> -I have several immigrant employees, two of them are Muslims.
>
> -Why do you not prefer Italians?
>
> -Eh, we Italians are, ... a little bit . . . . people do not want to do certain jobs anymore. The young generation are mostly living with their families, dependent on them. They do not want to do certain jobs. There seems to be unemployment but when you try to hire someone, no Italians show up. They do not want to work with their hands, they do not work at night, and they do not work on Friday nights. They want more money. Most of them are happy in their mother's house and waiting for better, middle-class jobs in which they can work at a desk before a computer . . . . . Immigrants work harder at hard works, they obey, and they cost less.

Thus the de facto division of labor between Italians and immigrants seems to be an offshoot of the controlled flow of immigrants required for the economy to run. Most Leghisti are not against immigration per se; but rather disturbed and anguished by the problems associated with immigrants: lack of civility, criminality, and most importantly, the sheer number and seeming legal impunity of the *clandestini*.

Those illegal migrants must be made part of any discussion of immigration in its relation to the job market. According to my informants, because of high taxes, an employee costs an employer around two thousand Euros per month, only around 1000 of which is the actual salary. That is a big burden for an employer to carry especially in a period of economic crisis, an the burden was increased by the austerity measures the Italian government implemented in 2012. Thus, even though it is risky for an employer to hire an illegal migrant lacking a working permit and thus registration. By doing so he can not only pay a reduced salary, but avoid paying taxes and social-security benefits, thereby making a considerable profit. Criminalizing regular business owners aside all of which means that the job market becomes more competitive for Italians, who are unlikely to work unregistered. Little wonder, then, that the League's discourse insists that its members are not racists, simply against the clandestini. Leghisti insist that the state is the real racist for it allows these people in and exploits them.

Section 6.2.6: Ideology of Civility

Not only the Leghisti, but also most northern Italians have an ideology of civility, and that skewed their resulted in a reputation toward one of being as snobby and conceited. The famous *provincialismo* of Italy entails not only some local identities, but also passionate attachments to a person's city.

The admiration of one's own city also implies an ideology of civility that is coupled with competition between members of different cities. Among others, Varese is one of the cities in which this ideology is most strong; even northerners view Varesini snobby. The ideology of civility implies a strong compliance with the rules and regulations, honesty, respect for others, and being nonviolent. This ideology is part of the Northern League's construction of an ideal northerner as an honest and hardworking person. I sometimes would encounter people who spoke about the percentage of garbage-separation for recycling, city's position in the race against other cities. If some other city outperformed them in this regard, they would immediately blame the *terroni,* southern migrants, or immigrants for their defeat.

Given this sensitivity for a civic life, the fact that the immigrants have their own way of life and do not easily adopt Italian ways of living, makes immigrants disturbing for Italians. Most immigrants are coming from rural parts of source countries and they are not familiar to regulations regarding city life. Complaints of local people are ranging from making noise, to spitting to the streets and littering; from ways of behaving to styles of wearing clothes; from ways of driving to disturbing neighbors. A behavior that is normal to an immigrant can be disturbing for local people. In that context we can understand, if not approve, the outrage they feel when confronted by an immigrant's incivility of the kind that informant's story with her Chinese neighbor attest to.:

> My mother lives alone, and occasionally I visit her. She had a problem with her Chinese neighbor. There was a terrible smell coming from her basement. I don't know what shit she was preserving there or whether fermenting something; but the smell was all over the street. My mother's caregiver went to her door and she [the

> Chinese neighbor] said “this is a free country and I do whatever I like.” I said myself “how can this happen?” So this time I went to her door, she opened it and told me again with her terrible accent [imitating] that this is a free country, and I can do whatever I like to do in my home.” I said “you have no freedom to disturb me, if you do not get rid of that awful smell I will call the municipality and you will be fined.” And the smell disappeared in a couple of days. You see, no one has the right to be so disrespectful.”

Section 6.3: Muslims

Among others, Muslim migrants play an important part in the League’s discourse and Varesini’s grievances about immigration, for they are quite simply, the most intolerable immigrants in their eyes. We must remember that being in the southernmost part of Europe and close to Eastern Europe, Italy has been directly involved in the centuries-long struggle between the Muslim and Christian worlds. Having the Vatican within it, it is one of the places where the crusading spirit has been most deeply felt, and the Venetian Empire, long struggled with Muslims to gain Mediterranean hegemony.

Section 6.3.1: Stereotypes and Culture Clash

Thus one should not be surprised to discover that not only Varesini’s and Leghisti views, but all of Italian culture is full of stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims. Most Italians regard the prophet of Islam as being the anti-Christ. Each morning they eat a *brioche*, a crescent shaped croissant. Given that the crescent moon is a symbol of Islam, this habit unconsciously celebrates the Victory of Vienna in 1683 and implicitly says “We eat Turks for the breakfast.” A chain smoker is a man who “smokes like a Turk.” Although not commonly used, a commonly known

expression of consternation is “mamma li Turchi” (Mother, the Turks are coming), a linguistic holdover from taking of the castle of Otranto by the Ottomans as part of their attempt to conquer Italy in 1480. Italians still remember the sea battle of Lepanto as a glorious moment in history, in which European-Venetian armada destroyed the Ottoman navy in 1571. For the most part they do not regard Sicilians as real Italians or Europeans because Sicily was under Arabic rule, and the Sicilians’s darker skin color is taken as a proof of their racial affinity with Arabs; indeed, for some, the mafiosita is a remnant of a long Arab invasion od Sicily. A stereotypical Muslim is a lazy fat man with an ugly beard, having a harem full of women and a lot of children from each of them, oppressing and beating supposedly subjugated women all the time. The position of women in the Muslim world is another prejudice that is nurtured every day in the media. The veil, polygyny, and the passive stance of woman towards her husband are things that few Italians can understand or stand, and when one also takes into account the fact that Facebook pages such as *Bruciamo il Corano*, (Let’s burn the Koran), which publishes materials that stoke the flames of anti-Muslim prejudices are widely followed by Leghisti, one realizes just how naïve it would be to expect the cohabitation of these two very different cultures to be easy. At least, Cesare was being hones when he said this to me:

> I know that you are a Muslim too but I should say that, Muslims have always fought against us; killed us, they came as close as Vienna. It was not long ago. How can we live together?

As for Bernardo, he is a person very fond of conspiracy theories. That is his right, but I admit I am baffled by his ability to shift gears mentally so as to find one reason after one then to distrust Muslims.

As Bernardo described:

> I have two workers who are of Muslim origin . . . . . One of them has adopted our bad habits; you know, drinking, cursing etc., etc. He is a real mess! However the other one is very clever, hard working, respectful, and kind. Because of that I am suspicious of him; he is probably a radical Islamist,
>
> Why do you think so? Can't there be some good hard working Muslims out there?
>
> I don't know, but it seems to me that these good and kind behaviors are aimed at *seeming* good either to hide him; or to propagate his religion.

Section 5.3.2 The Cross Issue

By examining, the issue of the removal of the cross from classrooms we will be able to see the attitudes of the recipient population, in this case the Leghisti, are being shaped. We must begin by noting that the traditional presence of crosses in classrooms springs directly from Italy's strong culture of Catholicism and that has the Vatican right at its core as a political power. Some Muslim immigrant-rights groups, along with some atheist organizations (an unlikely coalition, not to be seen in most parts of the world) are calling for the removal of the crosses, with both parties invoking that the presence of the cross signifies an implicit Christian influence and breaks the principle of Laicism, which is part of the Italian constitution. In fact both are requesting it as part of their belief or non-belief: for atheists, indoctrination of religious beliefs; for Muslims it is that but also an idol that may well lead to heresy according to Islam.

The literature on the League depicts Leghisti as having a strong Christian culture and as being for the most part, former supporters of the Christian Democrats, but the Varese section does not conform that pattern and most of my informants are former voters of the left, or at least tend strongly toward the left. Moreover, among my informants there were few practicing Christians and a lot of agnostics. And yet quite uniformly they are opposed to removal of the crosses. The discussion that ensued after a debate in the party section between a representative from the Church and representatives of a local association of atheists and agnostics was demonstrative of the actual motivations at work here. There was an imbalance between parties; given that members of the association made a much more elaborate defense of their beliefs, and they were preaching to the choir in the sense that most Leghisti quite readily gave them approval so readily, in fact, that one Leghista, a man of perhaps sixty years, who is a practicing Christian, became angry and left the room. Why, then, the opposition to the removal? Paolo, a senior Leghista, explained it to the discussants as follows:

> Our point is not being against the removal of the cross; we do not reject it on a religious basis. What we are defending is our culture. The cross is part of our culture and we do not want to remove it just because some immigrant Muslims do not like it. This is our country, we are the boss here. When you go to another person's house you have to respect the rules in his home. You cannot say I live however I like! or from now on it is going to be this way. When we go to other countries as tourists we respect their rules, they should do the same. When we go to a Muslim country as a tourist we respect their rules, we take off our shoes where necessary, we wear appropriate clothing and my wife puts on a headscarf

> where it is required. Because that is their country and we respect their rules. They should do the same here…."

Another Leghista, Aldo, was even more blunt,

> We do not have problems with your [atheist] beliefs and if you did not seek to do this along with Muslims, most of us would support this idea [turning to the audience seeking their approval with a hand gesture like saying "isn't it?; and getting a positive response]. And we do not approve of the Church in most respects and we are not happy to take sides with the Church [laughs, while turning to the priest]. But we are be against this because it is presented as an issue related to Muslim beliefs, and if they are not happy with our rules in this country, if they do not like it, they are free to go back.

It is ironic that Leghisti perception of immigrants springs from older, nationalistic and blood-based conception of the Italian nation, a nation of which they are the most reluctant of members! That conception entails a Christian culture if not belief. Then too, while immigrants are perceived by them as being arrogant, Muslims are the population least likely to fit into their imagined community of Italians, given a collective memory nurtured by a long history of religious wars. Perhaps the deepest irony of all is that while most northerners have multiple identities as Lombards and Lombards, in addition to their Padanian and Italian identities, they do not perceive them as being fundamentally incompatible. And yet find inconceivable a Muslim Italian or an Italian with black skin or slanted eyes; they may only be Italians *de jure.* In stark contrast to that deficient version of multiculturalism, Muslims requesting the removal of the cross from schools are trying to construct a more cosmopolitan Italian identity, doing so out of their preexisting

sense that they are, all at the same time, Italians, Muslims and nationals of their parents' home country. I engaged in the following conversation with Fatima, a 24-year-old Italian of Moroccan origin who was born in Italy:

> Do you feel yourself to be an Italian or a Moroccan?
>
> I am an Italian, and a Moroccan at the same time; but I feel more Italian than Moroccan, because I am Moroccan because my family is from Morocco but I am an Italian because I feel, think, live, and talk like an Italian. I do not know the life in Morocco, but I have always lived here, my friends are here, my life is here, I work and contribute to this country . . . . . But as an Italian and a Muslim, I expect my country to take into account my desires and concerns. Italy is constitutionally a secular state, therefore, it should not be imposing a specific religion on its population; and it should take into account the sensitivities of the more than 40000 Muslim-Italians like me."

This issue of the cross in classrooms provides us with a good example of how a problem basically caused by the mere fact that people of different religions can suddenly become something bigger or at least more tractable. Politicians involve the issue strictly as a way of attaining their political goals but at the same time they also uses the state apparatuses to make their new prevail, and that influences the state-society relations. All of that is arguably just part of the democratic game, but its chief, baleful consequence is to make the immigrants more and more reactionary, the recipient population more and more xenophobic. One sees the latter so clearly among the Leghisti, for if the case against the cross in classrooms had been presented strictly by secularists, they probably wouldn't have lifted a finger to oppose it. The sheer presence of Muslims on the pro-removal side

of the debate, however, has turned the cross in the classrooms, as they perceive it, into a redline that must never be passed.

Section 6.3.3: Islam and Women

Another issue that constitutes a barrier dividing the Muslim immigrants from locals is the role of women. Northern Italy has a culture more similar to western ideologies unlike the south where familial ties are stronger. Women avoid being dependent on men, and women's freedom is of the highest importance. However, the most visible side of an Islamic family is the veil of Muslim woman. For most Italians it is not understandable. "The beauty of women is something else…it should not be hidden, I do not understand Muslims covering their women while they always look around at Italian women in a disturbing way" says Cesare.

Some of the concerns were coming from an Italian's way of thinking about veiling. In Italian culture, only nuns are veiled and this implies a specific way of life, which is a personal choice and praised by most Italians. However, when Italians look at Muslim young girls, veiled but flirting with boys it is something incomprehensible. I first understood this when my landlord (77) asked me:

> "Sinan, I would like to ask you a question. These Muslim women, who wear a Burqa or a headscarf, how do they have children…..(hesitating) I mean they have a lot of children, how do they do that? Do they show themselves to their husbands?"

Although anthropological literature (Davis 1977; Gilmore 1986; Pitt-Rivers 1963) on people living around the Mediterranean Sea, points to many resemblances between Mediterranean

cultures regardless of their religious differences; still, Muslim and Christian cultures are different in many ways that makes that limits the integration in the case of a cohabitation. Living as parallel communities is one solution, and this is basically what happens in Italy. However, if you are to bring them together, this requires the resolution of a lot of problems. There are barriers in terms of food, gender relations and marriage patterns. Muslims do not eat pork, and for most of them if they are to eat meat, it should be slaughtered in a specific way. Because of the fact that halal food is not widely available in known markets, and only available in shops and restaurants run by Muslims, there is a divide between Muslims and Italian in terms of where they eat and shop. This helps to make Muslims more introverted communities. Muslims mostly do not have alcohol and avoid eating at dinner tables where others drink alcohol. These rules coupled with some sensitivity like avoiding certain foods, which are suspected of being haram, accentuates the division of restaurants, butchers and urban spaces, thus ultimately create ghettoes. Moreover, it becomes an impediment for them to come together with an Italian for a meal

Moreover, for practicing Muslims, a division of life spaces for woman and man is recommended in extra familial settings. Therefore, if an Italian and a Muslim family are to come together, it is always problematic how to arrange dinner table. This clash of traditions also goes into the marriage patterns. For Muslims, a Muslim man is allowed to marry with a Christian or a Jew; however, a Muslim woman can only get married with a Muslim man. Although intermarriages are not likely, this principle becomes a concern for kids at school when Muslim families intervene into their daughters' relationships while they are more lenient towards their sons. This attitude is coupled with long discussed honor and shame mechanisms long discussed in the Mediterranean anthropology. For most Mediterranean cultures, which include most Muslims, a woman is part of family honor. Dating with a man or extramarital sex means that the woman has

no shame, she loses her honor along with her family. This becomes a shame for the family too. The woman is no more pure and fit for marriage for a man of honor. If you put this principle together with the relaxed approach of the new generation towards dating and sexuality, Muslim families are becoming worried about their daughters' friendships with Italians. This mechanism not only results in self-isolation of Muslim communities but also causes anger when they interfere in their children's friendships with Italians.

Another example is Manuela (55) who has some experience in Islamic countries. Although she worked with Muslim counterparts and built good relationships, one experience in Libya was decisive in her attitude and perceptions about Muslims.

> "I went to Libya for a business trip. I stayed there for several months in order to install an automatization system in some factory. One day I was invited by one of my Libyan colleagues to dinner. We sat together; women were in another room. They were not allowed to sit with us, but they served to us while we ate. I did not say anything but I was very angry, if it is a matter of men and women, why I was sitting with man? It was like men are sitting and women were serving like slaves. I cannot accept that……why are women not allowed to drive in Saudi Arabia? "

Her concern was for the inferior position of women in Muslim countries; however, her main concern was for herself. Islam was perceived as a religion that sees women as mere slaves and anything that is Islamic was a threat to her way of life. The attitude of the League in some cities went beyond mere objection and criticism. The wearing of the burqa, which closes the face totally, was prohibited. This prohibition was justified on the grounds of security, stating that, "we

should see whom we are interacting, we can not know what is there inside, and it can even be a man."

Section 6.3.4: Mosques

As Islam is part of the Italian collective memory as enemy and evil, anything that is related to the Islamic religion is regarded as a threat to their way of life. One of the things that Leghisti cannot stand is having mosques in their cities. Every attempt by Muslims to build a new mosque becomes a national hot topic to which Leghisti object and the Left defends. One major discussion happened when a Saudi billionaire financed a big mosque in Rome. The reaction of Leghisti was very clear:

> "-we are in Italy, this is a Christian country, we have our own architecture, we do not want to see Islamic architecture in our own cities. Are there any churches in Turkey?.....Let's think that way, Rome is the heart of Christianity; having a mosque in Roma means like you having a church in Mecca, is that possible?"

As the demands of Muslims become a struggle, the attitude of Leghisti goes beyond mere criticism and vetoing demands for mosques in the municipal level. Together with the populist style of the politics of the League, the issue of mosques becomes more and more important for the party like the issue of the cross at schools. This sensitivity of local people is seen for the party not only as a threat to local culture, but also as an opportunity to gain support, as also non-voters of the party are unhappy with the idea of having mosques in their neighborhood. Therefore, protests take place in the form of marches. Although they start as anti mosque protests, these demonstrations go beyond that and nurture anti-Muslim sentiments.

In some cases, more radical members of the party make more populist acts causing more and more anger among Muslims. Among others, one of the most important Muslim attributes is the hate of pigs and products related to them. However, it is a highly appreciated and loved food for Italians. Muslims are often made fun of because of their abstention from pork products. This is mostly a minor issue although it divides the dinner table between Muslims and Christians. However, the creative populist style of politics that is being used by the party makes another useful political tool to make populist politics. During the discussions regarding a project to build a mosque in Milan, one of the leaders of the party who is famous for anti-Muslim rhetoric, took a pig and made it wander around and urinate in the area where the mosque was planned to be built. The supposition was that we have contaminated this area for you and it is not possible to build a mosque here anymore according to your belief. This move meant nothing for the Islamic belief, however it resulted in more tension with Muslims; and another occasion for labeling of party members as anti-Muslim.

Section 6.3.5: Perception of Invasion

The reactions of the Leghisti over the issue of mosques was mostly because they were afraid of the expanding nature of Islam, and they were feeling threatened by that. First of all there is a constant flow of Muslim immigrants to Italy, which makes them more and more visible every day. In addition to flow of migrants, there exists a trend of conversion to Islam among Italians. Unlike other immigrant groups, the Muslims' visibility is disproportionate to their numbers because of Muslim women are Veiled and wandering around with their high number of children. Taking into account the decreased population growth rate of Italians this becomes another concern for Italians, which was aggravated by the immigrants' claims for citizenship for immigrants and *ius soli. Ius soli* is the principle that children should automatically get the

citizenship of the country in which she was born regardless of his/her parents' citizenship or legal status. Currently Italian citizenship system is built on the principle *ius sanguinis,* which requires that either mother or father should be an Italian citizen in order for the child to get Italian citizenship.

This fear is not limited to the Muslim population, as told by Angelica: "one day in Italy there will be all Chinese and no Italians." Many informants voiced the feeling of invasion. Together with the decreasing levels of both marriage and birth rate among Italians, resulted in a feeling that the Europe was being invaded by immigrants, among others Chinese and Muslims. This feeling of insecurity gave birth to a high rate of belief in conspiracy theories and helped to create a worldview in which the leghisti perceive the world as dominated by evil powers. The culprit in this conspiracy was global powers and the collaborators were the left and occasionally the Vatican. Bernardo's description of the general picture of Europe in terms of immigration was demonstrative of that.

One concern for most Leghisti is the support given to immigrants by the left and the Church even if they are illegal. The Vatican is providing food and in some cases accommodation for new coming migrants as an act of charity. As Bernardo puts it:

> "They help Muslims in the hope that they will become Christians in the future. But we all know that they will never be Christians. I see a conspiracy against Europe. They are inviting these people in by helping them. I think there is a plan of Islamizing Europe.
>
> ----But who is doing that? These powerless Islamic states? Even the Vatican?

"I do not know (a long pause) may be the left,……but you see they are coming here deliberately, making a lot of children, living out of government benefits, their population is going up, but Italians and most Europeans do not even get married. One day we will be the minority here.

------Is this a conspiracy?

Look what the left is doing. I think what they are trying to do is to agitate the local people, the northerners; thus creating a radical right in order to find enemies for their followers. …….You know, after the fall of the Berlin wall they have no arguments and we see that also they are a part of the Italian system of corruption. They need some enemies to survive. You see how they present us: as racist, xenophobic etc…

-------So they should be happy with the League as they find someone to blame as racists?

No, they do not like us, because Legisti are civilized people and we have never supported violence. You see how they are attacking us these days through the judiciary. They are all leftists. And who is benefiting from the league's losing votes? It is the center left.

Section 6.3.6: Political Islam

Muslims are not only perceived as a population that is incompatible with the local way of life, but also a threat to it. Because of that, among others, political Islam is regarded as the most evil, which is the basis for most controversies over the claims of immigrants for civil rights such as

citizenship, voting and political rights. Political Islam is associated with examples of the Taliban in Afghanistan and sharia law in Saudi Arabia. Fragments of information about these countries constitute the basic information and prejudices about Islam. Most common among them are; 'women have an inferior position just like slaves,' polygyny, the religion requiring Muslims to kill non-Muslims. Together with the post 9/11 environment, political Islam is also associated with terrorism.

These prejudices cause a great concern and fear not only for Leghisti, but also most other local people whose information about Islam is very limited. Therefore, discussions about the rights to citizenship are mostly made different grounds. While immigrants and their supporters make their claims under the aegis of general human rights, reactions of Leghisti and other local people are shaped through their fears and concerns. The right to vote means more rights for immigrants in exchange for their vote; therefore more destruction of the local ways of living. On the other hand, as immigrants are likely to vote for other parties, it is also a concern for Leghisti to lose power.

Moreover, the possibility of an Islamic party is another source of fear for the Leghisti. It is regarded as a direct threat to their way of living, as they see political Islam as fundamentalism that is prone to impose Islamic ways of living. Any won municipality would mean a small Afghanistan in the middle of Italy; in which they might impose Muslim ways of living. This fear reaches to a degree that a question about the possibility of an Islamic party run by immigrants who became Italian citizens, Manuela, a 55 years old women with strong bourgeoisie attitude responded: "I would take a Kalashnikov and go against it." It was a joke but it was a demonstration of her fears.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
Globalization and the Vanishing State

Section 7.1: A Period of Crisis

In the beginning of the century, Gramsci describes the north of the Italy as mostly proletariatized while the south remained as peasants. During the fascist period, this division of labor in the country persisted: the industrial north and agrarian south. After the world war two this division of labor accentuated to a degree that millions of southern Italians migrated from south to the north to join the army of workers.

The period between the Second World War and the early 70's, Italy was one of the fastest growing economies in the world together with Japan and this period is called economic-boom. Together with the economic growth came also a considerable wealth, which in turn resulted in a relative comfort with the state. However, rapid and uneven economic growth had its own disadvantages. It deepened the chasm between the North and the South in terms of wealth and as a result of that Italy has been the scene for a great migration movement from the South to the North. As reported by Ginsborg (2003) between 1955 and 1971, more than 9 million Italians were involved in this great migration (p.219).

This migration wave brought about also problems. Built on the pre-existing territory, the Northern population did not incorporate southerners easily. As early as 1958, although short lived, an autonomist political movement was born in Lombardy region in the North, taking %2,26 of votes in the regional elections (Gold, 2003)

The Anni di piombo' (years of lead) is the name given to the seventies because of widespread terrorism. Seventies were also marked by the end of the so-called economic boom or

"miracle" period of Italian Economy. During the Eighties and nineties, economic crises have become intermittent. Although some periods of improvements were caught, the economic boom of the post World War Two periods was never caught. Together with the globalization of the economy, these economic crises also meant a transformation of the mode of production in which smaller enterprises tended to close, and as a result of post-fordist policies, important brands were sold and moved to other territories where labor is cheaper.

This economic transformation, together with government subsidies gave birth to a new kind of industrialism in the North-east, which is defined as diffuse-entrepreneurship by Cento Bull (1996) This specific type of industrial development was characterized by small or medium sized production (as opposed to mass production of the North-West) based on strong community ties. Cento Bull explains this phenomenon as the basis in which northern identity was built.

Section 7.2: Diffuse Entrepreneurship

It is worth considering that, nations are often regarded as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production, print capitalism, education, mass communication and media. These developments helped to individualize persons by cutting the ties to the old allegiances such as caste, religion, ethnicity, family, etc. However, it is the most industrialized and the most educated part of the Italian population, who can reach the newspapers and television more easily, maintained their local identities and rose against the project of Italian nationalism. Cento Bull (1996) Argues that although the North, especially Lombardy, is the most industrialized and urbanized part of the country, what she called "racialised economy" explains the persistence of local identities and the lack of cultural uniformity. She explains that although there was industrialization, it was not necessarily accompanied by urbanization for the northerners, and

although there was a cultural uniformity, it was at odds with a centralized nation-state (p. 178). Moreover, the northern regions invented a type of industrialization which Cento Bull termed as "diffused entrepreneurship'. This is defined as "geographical concentrations of small manufacturing units operating in closely knit communities characterized by an overlapping of business and family ties, low social and political polarization and a high degree of entrepreneurship."(p.178). The social implication of this kind of economic organization is "the preservation of family as an economic unit and limited modernization, i.e. the persistence of primary ties and localistic community based allegiances." (Bull 1996: 178). Catholic subcultures in these regions defended themselves against urbanization and modernization.(Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001a): 178). This kind of economic political and social organization is concluded by Cento Bull to be "resting on the preservation of a tightly communitarian society which was built upon the distinction between us and the other." which was "politically exploited and ethnicized" by the Northern League (p. 178-179).

Section 7.3: European Union, Economical Crises and the Vanishing Sovereignty

Another move of the state, which meant greater integration with the global economic system was the membership to the European Union. This not only meant the transfer of some sovereign powers of the state to the European Parliament, but also greater economic integration in terms of free trade and movement of the capital and labor. More importantly it meant the change of the currency from lire to Euro. This transformation not only meant that Italy will have only a limited word on the decision regarding the Central Bank policies, but also meant greater equality between European States in terms of costs, which are mostly unequal in terms of quality of products and benefits.

The transition from Lire-to Euro, in 2002 caused a period of euphoria of having the Europe behind. Later it appeared that it is not as beneficial as expected. Having the European Central Bank behind, Italy was able to borrow with cheap interest rates. In time, Italy became a country that consumes more than it produces. Moreover, conversion rate did not make Italians happy and perceived to be manipulated in favor of the banks. More importantly having a strong money together with Germany and France decreased the level of competency of Italian industry against those countries. It increased costs especially those of labor and took the advantage of being cheaper against products of France and Germany, which are of higher quality. Together with complicated and higher taxes small entrepreneurs started to close and move to other countries and post-fordist trends of big factories accelerated. Only the firms that produce higher quality goods were able to survive. As a result, cheaper goods tended to be imported, and Chinese run shops with cheaper goods dominated the market. As a result, account deficit and state debt soared drastically, paving the way for the economic crisis that started in 2007 and came to its highest point in 2012.

As a result of economic policies, which run the state over borrowing, in 2012 government debt doubled the GDP. With added concerns because of the slowing economy, borrowing costs for the government became unsustainable, and the country came on the verge of bankruptcy. Options were to either get help from the European Union or to make a radical move to pass from Euro to Lire and revive the economy by reducing the value of the currency thus increasing competitiveness of Italian goods. This could mean a solution in the long run, but a deepened economic crisis in the short run. The Government were consisted of a center right coalition, Berlusconi and the League were the main parties. The League favored the change of currency and reduction of government spending. Berlusconi, together with the center left, sought help from the

European Union. The result was unacceptable for the League. The European Union (in fact German Prime Minister) accepted to help provided that a government of technocrats should be built lead by Mario Monti, an economist and a former Euro Commissioner. This was regarded by Leghisti as the European Union, in fact German Prime Minister, was assigning a prime minister to Italy. Moreover, Mario Monti was a supporter of the idea of a single market in Europe where capital and labor could move freely, which the electoral base of the League was already suffering. In addition, what German prime minister asking was austerity measures, which meant more and more taxes. Tax for the League meant a way of theft by government from northerners.

As the details of austerity measures revealed, the disillusionment for Leghisti from the European Union turned to a struggle against it. The party took its place in the opposition after several years, and gave the signals that it was turning again to "lega di lotta" (league of struggle) as it was famous in Italy. The austerity project was understood as another global conspiracy as explained by Atillo Fontana, 55, in one of the meetings that was designed to discuss economic crisis

> "…… It is certain that this Mario Monti did not become the prime minister to fight for the interests of people. He is not the representative of people, he is representative of bankers. …..Look what they are offering; they are killing the most productive part of the country by implementing more taxes, taxes on houses, taxes on employment. If you put more tax on people who really create wealth for this country, how can you survive. They are going to close, they wont employ new people, they will fire workers, and most probably they will hire illegal migrants as they are cheaper and no tax payment is required……They are not only putting

more tax on everything, but also cutting a lot of state benefits. They are cutting pensions. How can these poor people survive if you cut their pensions. There are a lot of people who takes less than 500 Euro as pension. Hoe will they survive……..This is just the beginning. More cuts are on the way. They are using this economic crisis as an opportunity to increase the government control over regions and incomes. With the new income agency, all the taxes collected here will go to Rome, and then they will distribute is however they like. So, we will not have control over our own money……They are planning cuts in school budgets, which will mean that some schools will have to close. ……. They expect us to make sacrifices, what sacrifices they do? Do they cut government spending, do they make any cuts from deputies' salaries? No! it is the north that should always make sacrifices……We have nothing to do with this crisis, we did not produce it but we will have to pay …… Please tell me where the whole money that they took from the European Government goes? They go to save banks, you see? …… It is the banks that caused the crisis and it is the banks that is getting the money. …….. This is not the Europe of people, this is the Europe of bankers, masons and international powers. They are using this crisis as an opportunity to centralize the control over countries. They are now calling for fiscal unity in addition to currency. This would mean more centralization…… We once liked the idea of Europe because we saw it as a path to a Europe of regions and peoples. But now they are trying to built a "United Nations of Europe"……. I even suspect that this economic crisis was created for that purpose."

Leghisti, understood this European intervention to the economic crisis as a conspiracy, which was reflected to the banners as ‘niente massoni, solo elezioni’ (no masons, only elections). In response to that, the League, once fervent supporter of European union changed its attitude claiming it to be the Europe of Bankers, not the Europe of peoples as they dreamed of it before. The main target population of the party was suffering from globalization, European Union on the one side and China on the other. Once again, the League was able to represent the very problems of ordinary people with an emphasis on the failure of the Italian state to be on part of people and solve problems.

Section 7.4: Northern Work Ethic and the Spirit of Entrepreneurship

Weber, in his work Protestant Ethics and the spirit of Capitalism, discusses the relationships between beliefs and economic life. In a nutshell, he pictures an ethic shaped around piety in which richness became a representation of the position of a person in front of the god. Together with Pietism this meant that money will be earned regardless of needs and spending of it should remain in the form of investments as much as possible. Money is no more a means to win the next life; it becomes an end in itself. He describes this ethics as one of the causes by which capital accumulation and thus capitalism was accomplished. In the case of Leghisti in particular and northerners in general it is not possible to propose a relationship between religious beliefs and work ethics. However, an idealized work ethic that effectively worked to sustain the spirit of entrepreneurship exists without any question.

Main assets of this ethic can be summarized as follows. Pride is the main asset that characterizes Varesini in particular and in a degree northern people. Pride one’s own city that is accompanied by a strong identification of it, which also gave birth to several demonyms as attributes that are

more important than national or any other identity. This identification with the city is stemmed from a culture of bourgeoisie, in which city dwellers identify themselves in terms of their jobs. This identification with jobs is not limited to individuals, but families; as jobs are prone to pass to children for generations. The flourishing of one's business and one's expertise on it, becomes the honor of an individual and a family. This results in an ideology of work ethic, which acclaim hard work and earning money with one's own effort, while scorns government jobs. Weber explained a strong care for one's own spending as one of the important assets that resulted in capital accumulation. This penny-pinching attitude is represented as a medium by which investments were made possible. Northern people in general but especially Varesini are externally famous for their stinginess. Although this stinginess is not an obstacle to a good degree of ostentatious consumption in cloths houses and cars, care for money is a defining of Varesini and Leghisti in general.

This strong care for money is obvious from the party policies as being strongly against taxes. It is being against taxes that bring together peoples of a variety of different inclinations together. In addition to taxes, almost all aspects of party politics include an account of the issues. When immigrants are at stake, the main concerns become their cost to the government and to the job market in general. When crime and criminals are questioned, the costs of prisons and costs of employing police officers becomes the main concern. This inclinations cannot be attributed to any religious belief because most of my informants were non-practicing and non-believing Christians. Non-believer Christian means the adoption of Christian religion means an adoption of Christian religion as a cultural heritage, being proud of it, but rejection of its basic tenets, however, adopting a secular life and worldview. As explained by Aldo: "In fact, in Europe, Christianism has always been a cover, and people remained mostly pagans or non-believers. I

believe in god but I do not want anybody between the god and me. But Christianity is part of my identity."

But another aspect that is intrinsic to middle size enterprises can be part of the explanation. Marks defined money as the alienation of the man from his labor. The current age, which we is defined as postmodern, accentuated it by alienating people from the money too. However, mid-size entrepreneurs are the part of the society, which are less alienated from their labor. Unlike modern and government jobs in which money is reduced to some numbers in a bank account and has nothing to do with the amount of daily work; form small businesses money is not only some numbers in a bank account, but something tangible that is strongly related to amount of work or trade one does. The shop owner himself accounts for every cent of when while he earns or spends. Together with a culture of accumulating money as a future security or investment caring for money becomes one of the main characteristics that shape the way people look at problems.

This has strong implications for the state-society relationships. As the state is not producing the anything itself and its officers are regarded as non-productive, therefore they are regarded exploiters and parasites getting money without doing anything. Along with other causes, This despise of government jobs became an important obstacle for the northerners to work for the government. As a result positions in the public sector is predominantly left to southerners and deepened the negative attitude against government officers. This attitude has grew stronger because of the intermittent corruption scandals that shook the country, and ineffective stated apparatuses and services. The state became an evil force, which exploits people and kill productive forces.

This work ethic is not only an important aspect of how people perceive the world, but also part of the famous northern pride; the northern pride that sees itself as honest, civilized, creative, hard working, middle European as opposed to southern Europeans, able to produce high quality goods, therefore rich. Experiences in Italian political life such as corruption and global trends that deteriorated the economy meant also questioning of this pride, which Leghisti tried and still tries to externalize it by rejecting both the Italian state and the Globalization.

Section 7.5: Globalization and the Vanishing Pride

Globalization drastically affected the production and social life in the Northern Italy. This effects were basically the sales of big brands to foreign companies, which often accompanied by hundreds of people to lose jobs, a wave of outmigration of businesses to other countries either for lower taxes or lower labor costs. Varese's history in the past twenty years is demonstrative of this process by which northerners' achievements are lost one by one.

Since the 19th century, Varese was known for its high quality shoes. Founded in 1915, the Varese shoe factory fueled economy of Varese for years. In 1982, the majority ownership of the "Calzaturificio di Varese" (shoe factory of Varese), the symbol of economic expansion of the Varese economy since the 19th century was sold to the Benetton group: the "Calzaturificio di Varese" had to leave Varese. Production moved to Montebelluna (Treviso region of Italy where costs were lower) Also the name is changed. The brand became "DiVarese" and left unforgettable traces in the memories of the Varesini.

Furthermore, the real powerhouse of Varese economy, Ignis was sold to American Whirlpool in 1991. For Varesini, Ignis represented more than just a factory and jobs. Its founder Giovanni

Borghi represents a role model for Northern values. This role model represents a kind of protestant ethics a la Weber. Giovanni Borghi is a small entrepreneur who started from scratch, and had all the self attributed virtues of an imagined Northern, he worked hard honestly, with his own investments, without getting help from the state, and step by step became the largest home appliances manufacturer in Italy. The selling of Ignis and Varese shoe factory also represented the end of Northern dream and the ideology of the hard working, successful northerner. Moreover, this marked a turning point for the Northern economy, which was hardly surviving after the end of the so called economic boom in Italy. In addition to that, Varesini felt themselves alone against Global powers.

Section 7.6: The influence of China and Chinese Immigrants

The influence of China as an economic powerhouse, which is able to provide goods in much cheaper prices because of the low costs of labor had effects in almost all countries. Especially in Europe, where labor costs are much higher, the effects were clearer. On the one hand it resulted in an increase in the desire for low cost labor and accelerated immigration, on the other hand a lot of businesses had no chance but either to move their production to china, or to close. In addition, a new wave of Chinese immigrants has been carriers of Chinese influence further benefiting not only from the advantage in the price, but also the wealth that has been accumulated because of China's global production domination.

The rise of china as the dominant provider of goods globally, had effects particularly on cheaper goods, where quality is not the priority. As explained by Ariane, 24, "If I am to buy some coat, I would definitely go and buy from a known brand, but if I am to buy a pen, why should I pay 5 Euros instead of 1 Euro. This makes no difference." As a result of this quite reasonable

choice, “Everything One Euro” stores dominated the Italian cities. Even if the shop owners were not Chinese, the goods that are being sold are more likely to be Chinese made. In addition, contrary to China’s role in the global market as the provider of cheap labor, Chinese immigrants in Italy tend not to work in Italian Enterprises but they are more prone to work for Chinese private entrepreneurs. Chinese immigrants differ from other immigrants as they tend to invest in Italy. Those investments are prone to be either in the form of stores selling cheap Chinese goods or In the service sector. The cost of a man’s haircut in an Italian barbershop is between 18 and 30 Euros, however, if you prefer a Chinese barbershop, the price is 8 Euros. As a result of that, Chinese influence not only damage the production, but also effects negatively the shop owners and the service sector.

With the influence of the European Union and its monetary policies, labor costs in Italy have been highly increased and Italian products have lost their competitiveness in terms of their prices. As a result of that, only surviving enterprises were only the one’s that produce high quality goods; which, either cannot be produced elsewhere, or have competitiveness in the more expensive markets where quality is at stake. Therefore, luxury goods and expensive brands survived and in Italy, fashion became an industry. In time, the production and the perfection of Italian goods became an ideology and a part of Italian glory. The label made in Italy, not only for Italians, but in the global scale, became a representation perfection and quality. Although, its economy slowed lately, the “made in Italy” label remained its significance as high fashion. This also had important consequences, in terms of Italy’s integration with the global economy.

The period of intermittent economic crises of the last 30 years, which has reached its peak in 2011 financial crisis, eventually influenced the factories and businesses that sell more expensive

goods. On the other hand, in the rising economies of the world such as China, a great deal of capital accumulation occurred. Those new capital holders of the world tended to purchase known Italian brands and factories, either to transfer knowledge of production, or to enjoy benefits of their brand values. This resulted in a lot of factories and together with them their supply chain and supplementary industries to close. Increased unemployment in accompanied by a sense of invasion, where all values of the country that had been created by years of work was being worn out.

Italian production industry itself became a market. However, this also created opportunities for criminal activities. The purchase of Italian corporations became an instrument for money laundering when Italian economy has become desperately in need of foreign investment. Chinese mafia has become famous for this kind of money laundering; Italian firms are being bought to provide prestige and to legalize their source of income. This reputation of Chinese mafia as buying northern firms became another concern for northerners and Especially for Leghisti, nurturing the perception of invasion.

The market value of “made in Italy” label in Italy and abroad paved the way for another wave of purchase of Italian firms. However, this is using illegal methods and killing productive powers in Italy. In this method, some foreign producers buy a factory in Italy; however, the production either stops or reduces drastically. Instead, goods are imported from the countries where the costs lower. When the goods arrive, the label “Made in Italy” is printed on the goods, and they are sold more expensively to Global market. Every year, Italian border security seizes such goods, which are already printed as made in Italy before being imported to Italy.

The wave of global influences effects daily lives of people directly while the Italian state not only fails to address problems that brought with it, but also accentuates the process by encouraging foreign investments due to country's desperate need for money inflow. In an environment of harder global economic competition in which Italian producers has become more and more disadvantaged and hit by recent economic crisis, the response of the government to economic crisis of 2011 was austerity measures, which meant more taxes. The increasing burden of taxes left two options for the producers that are already in desperation; either to close, or to move to other countries where tax burden is much lower. At this point, Switzerland's policies for the encouragement of foreign investment became a salvation. According to informant accounts, Swiss authorities provided a tax free period together with less overall tax burden. Moreover, Canton Ticino of Switzerland was close enough to continue living in Italy while having a business there, and people in Canton Ticino were ethnically same as Lombardians and spoke the same language. As a result of that, Mendrisio, the closest city of Switzerland to Lombardy Region, became a destination for most Northern Italian producers.

The consequences of foreign economic influences are as follows. First of all, the unemployment increased however affected mostly Italians who desire for middle class jobs. However, job market for immigrants are less competitive as they are prone to find jobs either in their fellow citizens' shops as in the case of Chinese and Turkish shops; or in positions as workers where qualification is not required. Moreover, with added investment from other countries and increased labor costs, the need for immigrant workforce has rose together with the unemployment rate of Italians. Leghisti interpreted this as follows: "They say we are racists, but it is opposite, we are the real victims of racism." Secondly, the closure of small and big factories brought about the closure of several other factories, which were supplementary to big factories

production. Thirdly, as the country has become more and more a country of consummation rather than production, the desire for government jobs is increased.

The result of the economic transformation of Italy by foreign influences, while the state remained desperate, has been detrimental to state-society relations. As explained by Antonio, 45, a Leghista:

> "In the media, we are represented as bad people who always complain, who does not want to pay taxes….In fact we are the only ones that pay taxes, this is why we complain and others do not. They say that we are racists, no, we are not racists, and we are only trying to protect our territory and values, the wealth that we have created over the years. In fact we are the victims of racism. We are the part of the country that is suffering the most from taxes, from immigration……people had to leave their country, they moved their factories and shops to Switzerland, nobody can earn if they produce here, factories are closing, there is no production anymore……they ask why people do not get married, why they do not make children, isn't it obvious? There is no security, there is no security for future, there is no job, and the life is expensive……
>
> They take our productive power, they buy and leave a lot of people unemployed. ……An the government is happy, because money is coming to the country and their banks will earn form that. What will happen to those poor people who worked in that factory, how should they survive? Should they steal? ……..These are not just factories that you can sell and buy, they are values that the northern

people created by working for years with their hands. And now they sell it, what will remain to us? How are we going to survive?.....

Invasion, invasion, invasion, we are being invaded by everyone. Chinese invade our market and production, European union is acting like and empire and imposing us a lot of things, and there are Muslims and all others. What should we do?

They say that it is free market, globalization etc. etc. But tell me why are we the only one's that are suffering? We did not bring this crisis. We always worked hard, we have produced, and we have always paid our taxes. This is not our crisis. It is not our fault that these immigrants had bad conditions in their home countries. Again it is those bankers that make them poor by colonizing them. But the result is that we have to put up with that.

What does the government do? Nothing, they only protect the interests of bankers, and *confindustria*. They do not care about us. They do not care that the productive power of the north is dying. There is unemployment, and what they do? They increase the tax burden and they allow more immigrants to come. What does that mean? They force people to employ illegal immigrants……

This is why we want independence, we dream of a state that is working for the interests of people not bankers, we want that our people's interests to come first, not immigrants, we can not solve problems of others while we already have a lot of problems….we want to be the boss in our territory.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
Corruption and the Changing League

The year 2011 was a perfect year for a political movement that is built on negative sentiments towards the state and that with a discourse of anti-corruption. It was a year of scandals and crises; Berlusconi and countless issues ranging from tax evasion to sex parties, an unprecedented economic crisis that lead to the change of government by almost literally 'order' of the German Prime minister, several corruption probes included a clandestine network of politicians and criminals very similar to that was uncovered in the early nineties. Which, at first sight, might have been interpreted as a real opportunity for the League to become more and more powerful.

However, the picture was not that clear for the League. Leghisti mostly avoided to talk about corruption in my early interviews. I kept asking about what they think about the then current issues regarding corruption and the economic crisis. Most interviewees avoided giving a direct answer, but Franco's answer was demonstrative of the something deeper which was later confirmed in several party discussions. "We do not have the face to do so, a lot of our leaders are also involved in corruption and we were always with Berlusconi, what can we say? We were in the government when this country came to the verge of bankruptcy."

This image of the party as corrupt was the main dividing line between voters and non-voters of the party at least for Varesini. Luigi, 41, was very interested in my research when he learned of my interest in the League. He is a Varesino and a small entrepreneur. I met him several times and he seemed as if he want to speak about the League. Our interview was postponed due to his tight schedule but every time we met he showed his uneasiness towards the League; occasionally with satire or a direct insult. He used to vote for the League in the beginning and later he decided that they had also became part of the dirty political structure. His attitude

towards politics echoed discourses of the party, there seemed to exist only little difference. Before my asking questions he showed me from his computers some excerpts of a TV show regarding government corruption and some brochures spread around through email and Facebook showing the excessive expenditures of politicians and their cost to the state budged. His point was clear, "Because all politicians are doing politics to "eat", he did not trust in politicians." His views on the general political issues like taxation, clientelism, government spending was parallel with the League. However, when I raised the question that why he does not like the party, he answered:

> "Look, I know this person (Bossi, the leader of the party) very well, did you see his house? You should see his house if you want to know why they do politics. I know this guy and he had almost nothing when started politics. Now you should see his house and his son's car. What do they do? what do they produce? how do they make money? Even an MP salary is not enough for this wealth."

This negative image of the party was voiced again and again both by party members and other Varesini. For most informants who do not vote for the League, other than concerns about anti-immigrant policies, there were few clashes of ideas about politics including federalism. However, the League was not seen fit for these claims.

Albertina, a 55 year old shop owner in Varese was of Sicilian origin that came to the city 22 years ago. She was about to close her shop due to the economic crisis. She was one of the southerners who once voted for the League. She explained why she voted once and why she won't vote again for the League:

> "Look I do not know those things, but I voted for the League because I liked the idea of a federation in which our taxes would remain here and we will have better services…….they have an anti-southern discourse but they are not against people who come here and work honestly like me……..but I will not vote again because you see what they did to the country, like all politicians, they only eat and do nothing."

This discontent with the image of the party as corrupt was also shared by party members. In fact, the revolutionary process by which the party leader was changed was due to the accumulated concerns of the party members over the image and facts of a corrupt party. As explained in one of the meetings after the spring revolution in 2012: " we have been polluted by being in Rome and doing their dirty politics. Our leaders forgot our problems while they thought about the problems of Rome" and other Leghista complemented:

> "if the party were to start now we would take 40% in the elections; our ideology is relevant, the problems that we have protested before in the early nineties are continuing increasingly, we were right and we have been consistent. But our image is polluted now…."

The issue of corruption became more important during the study as a corruption scandal shook the party. This was a confirmation of long told stories about the party being corrupt. Moreover it provided a chance for the opposition to challenge the legendary leader of the party and finally step him down. This change in the leadership and the process by which it was fulfilled was demonstrative of the importance of the corruption in the choice of people in politics.

Moreover, the process was also demonstrative of people's perception of state-society relationships.

Section 8.1: Description of a Crisis of Leadership

My first encounter with the Legisti happened through an appointment with the provincial secretary of the Northern League in Varese. The appointment was in the provincial section, which is a mile away from the city section. The secretary of the League for the Varese province was Maurillio Canton. Canton did not appear as a figure that takes part in the party politics during the study. However, his election as the Provincial secretary was the watershed for the revelation of the dormant power struggle inside the League. After a long wait I was able to speak with him. He was a busy guy and seemed nervous and quickly requested my questions. Although I was not planning to make an interview at that time, after his push for questions, I asked about Padania and identities, he spoke a little bit about several identities he had.

During my long wait, I found the place very strange because the place was built for accommodating a lot of people with a meeting room but there were only a few people: only a secretary and a university student helping her. This was strange because this party, as far as what I had read, was a grassroots movement based on militant activism; however, there were few people coming in and out and the distance between Canton and other people were very high. I had to make another appointment to let him introduce me to other "leghisti". He did not show up. After a few attempts I quit making appointments and decided to go to the Varese city section again. His nervousness and inability to introduce me to other leghisti became meaningful later when I get to know other leghisti. The tense relations between Canton and militants were demonstrative of all the tensions inside the party.

Section 8.1.1: The First Fire: Varese Elections For Provincial Secretary

After the dissolution of the Berlusconi government in 2012, grievances inside the party grew faster. Underrepresentation of different factions inside the party was causing discomfort against a group of people that are close to the leader and therefore have positions inside the party Among others, Marco Reguzzoni, was the person that the opposing coalition gathered around Maroni (the Barbari Sognanti) were the most reactionary. He was also a former militant of the Varese section and militants in Varese did not have good memories of him. Even before the fall of the government, Bossi was trying to force a change in Reguzzoni's position from parliamentary representative of the Northern League. The usual new candidate was Maroni. Bossi was turning a blind eye to these demands. However, in the upcoming fall, he was to face with elections of provincial party secretaries in some very important cities, which, if left to the normal flow events, Bossians were unlikely to win. This would cause the opposition to have greater influence in two key Provinces like Brescia and Varese.

Bossi's tactic was straightforward. Using his "leninistic" (as called by Barbari Sognanti) style of rule, he imposed his own candidate in Brescia and did not allow others to run for candidacy. Although this caused discomfort, Brescia section was not organized enough for a reaction and Bossi's Candidate won without any problem. However, next week was the Varese elections and everybody knew that Varesini would not be that obedient and a crisis was expected.

In the Varese elections, Bossi tried to do the same thing but this time the reaction was not late. A group of Insubrists, which Bossi later defined as ex-fascists, protested this attitude, and later abandoned the congress. Bossi, tried to justify this as he was trying to save the League by not giving an image of the party as fractured. Maroni was also there, sitting without comments,

watched the vanishing “charisma” of Bossi while he was protested and booed by his own militants. The Insubrists’ reaction encouraged also others to react against him.

Although protested, Bossi still held the legal authority, the only candidate ‘Maurillio Canton, was elected with secret vote. However, in the exit, a banner was hung on the walls. “Canton, segretario di nessuno!” (Canton, secretary of no one!) Although who wrote this was unknown, it was not difficult to guess taking into account the tensions around Canton. Relations with the Provincial secretary and the Varese city section continued accordingly. I have never encountered Canton in the Varese section until he resigned in a couple of months upon a request from the delegates of the Northern League in Varese.

Section 8.1.2: The first Challenge: Maroni Night

Leaving Canton, I decided to go to the Varese city section, but again it took me some time to convince myself because of fear and anxiety. Talking with people outside the party nurtured my fears for going to the “core” as it is appropriate to say that. As one professor of Anthropology who is an Italian said “It might be difficult for you to talk to them as you are a Turk and Muslim which is basically, the anti-thesis of the party.” Or as my Landlord’s friend, who is a self defined communist puts it “they are rude, racist, terrible, ignorant and immoral people, I do not like that people from outside like you see them as an image of Italy.” I was also hesitant when I went to see Canton but felt safe as he was a leader and supposedly had a sense of diplomacy. It took me quite a while until I managed to break this psychological barrier and finally went to meet them. In fact it happened spontaneously while I was searching for train tickets to an activity of the party.

Those days were chaotic for the party, the schism between Maroni and Bossi became apparent and there had been a restriction over Maroni about making public speeches. The government had

dropped and a technocrat government was established. The Prime Minister being Monti, who is also a Varesino, the League has chosen not to support new government as this technocratic government was imposed by the European Union (Germany) in order that they support Italy in the face of the current economic crisis. And the new government was demanding sacrifices and more taxes. The League was organizing a public demonstration in Milan in order to protest about the government, but more importantly to show that there is no fracture inside the party. For transportation, the party hired a train and gave it the name: Freccia Verde, meaning green arrow, it is common to describe trains as arrow in Italy (Freccia Rossa etc.) Green representing the League and Padania. Also, Freccia Verde is a comic hero similar to Robin Hood.

I went to Canton's secretary and asked how I could buy a ticket for the train. She gave me the phone number of Aldo, who later became my main informant and friend. I called him and he said I should go to the second office of the party, which was the real core. Situated in the Piazza della Podesta, it is the historical center, where Bossi and Maroni once built the party. The building is an 18th century historical building. Its balcony is the place where Garibaldi made a speech to people during the Austrian war and today it is like a barometer of the party politics, a place where journalists and people first look in order to learn the agenda of the party from banners hung from the balcony.

I went to that building, over "piazza della Podesta" passing through the monument of martyrs. I saw people smoking in the balcony. I went in with great hesitance and a little bit of fear. The party center was on the second floor. It was basically consisted of three rooms in a row. There were about ten people around, and four of them were in the balcony.

I asked for Aldo without introducing myself. Aldo was among the four people smoking in the balcony. I waited for them to come in, they came in immediately as if they wanted to talk to me:

-Hi, who are you? a journalist?

-No I am an anthropologist...

-Laughs (interrupting my introduction, and making me relax)

-You are not a journalist right?

-No, I am an anthropologist and I came here to make a study on the Northern League. Today, I came to a buy a ticket for the Freccia Verde, can I?

-Astonished… hesitations…Of course please come in, but tonight we are organizing an event for Maroni, you should come to this also.

Ok, sure I will.

Section 8.1.3: Apollo Theatre

It appeared later that they were also so nervous that day and they were looking through the balcony with mixed feelings expecting what to happen next. All the day, journalists came in, and seeing me with my backpack they made guesses about who I was. They thought I was a journalist and my unexpected answer "anthropologist" astonished them. That day there was uncertainty because they were organizing a meeting with Maroni. This meeting was planned long before, but Maroni was recently restricted from public speaking and organizing this event meant an open

rebellion to Party Center and Bossi. For the first time, Bossi was challenged and Varese, Bossi's City, the "Stalingrad of the League" the core, had become a center for that challenge.

Bossi is a charismatic leader with all dictator powers; he is famous for expelling a lot of important party members. He is the founder and historical leader, the party and the whole idea about The League and Padania belonged to him. For some, he is seen like a god. For the first time, he was able to speak up about what most northerners could only speak among them. He led them through the years offering them their dreams and mostly achieving things once unthinkable. Most party members including also many Maronians admired Bossi. On the other hand, even for Maronians it was not clear how much Maroni was supported by the militants of the Party. People did not want to bet on the loser and wanted to see who really wins. Therefore, the situation was complicated for the Varese section of the League, Their hearts were with Maroni, and however it was a tough decision to rebel against Bossi.

As this was a covert revolt, Maroni should have shown his power and this should not have been limited to Varese. Several sections of the Maronian side organized coaches to join "Maroni Night". Originally planned to be in a small hall, the venue was changed to the biggest theatre of the city allowing about 1200 to enter and several to wait outside in winter. However making me think that, in a city of 80,000 if you need to organize buses from other cities to fill 1200 seats, this would mean poor militancy (not electoral) support from the city.

Party members have always been afraid of the media because they have always been slammed by it. This is another story, but before Maroni night the press poured in making small interviews with the people who were waiting to enter. The leghisti avoided talking much and only gave messages of unity. These people have a strong sense of threat from outside in terms of the media,

the left, the government and the judiciary. It was as if "wolves were waiting outside to tear them apart if they showed any sign of weakness". This fear had a strong effect the ways in which internal opposition is made in the party.

Then we were able to enter. The participants were representing Varesini with their fancy dresses and bourgeoisie attitudes. The venue, "Teatro Apolleone" was prepared for the event beforehand with all the symbols of the party. On the stage, there was a banner "Seziun Vares' " meaning the Varese Section in the Varese dialect, which is one of the ways in which northern identity is emphasized. On the left wall next to the stage there was a big silhouette of "Alberto Guissano", which historically represents the unification of the north against an imperial power; the German emperor at that time and the Roma (Italian) government now. This silhouette, a middle age warrior with a sword rose in one hand and armor on the other, is also the symbol of the Young Padanians movement, members of which was moving just in front of that wall in a very organized way. Although comparatively very small, "The Movement of Young Padanians" has always been the most energetic and creative part of the party since its inception with their own symbols on flags t-shirts etc. Creating banners, slogans, writing slogans on public walls etc. they constitute the visible part of the party from the outside. Because of that the stereotype of a party supporter for people outside of the party includes being young and male. However, only a fraction of the party can be said to be young. This movement is important for the party for several reasons, which I will talk about later. However, it is now enough and essential to say that during the schism between Maroni and Bossi, they were the biggest supporters of Maroni.

Before the start of the "show", while people found themselves a seat, for a moment everyone turned to the door that opened in the middle of the rows expecting Maroni to enter, until learning

that he would come directly onto the stage. It was a little strange for Maroni as he is always very careful about acting like a militant, keeping the distance very short between him and militants. This provided him among militants with the reputation that he is "one of us", contrary to what Bossi and his "magic circle" (Cerchio Magico) are being criticized for. Magic circle is the name that the opposition had given to a group of people around the leader Bossi, who take advantage of his illness to use his power and control the information flow towards Bossi.

The group MGP, started shouting against "cerchio magico" and most importantly Marco Reguzoni, who is regarded as the person who is responsible for the prohibition of Maroni from making public speeches by the Party. Slogans were favorable for both Bossi and Maroni, showing that their reaction is not against Bossi.

Section 8.1.4: The Show

The "show" started with a movie presentation professionally prepared by Telepadania, the TV channel of the party. The main theme was the intimate friendship of Maroni and Bossi, and the years long joint effort for the party and Padania. In the video Bobo (Maroni) was speaking about Barbari Sognanti. On the other hand Bossi shouts: Padania Libera! The message was clear: There was no rupture in the party; Bobo (Maroni) and Bossi were like brothers.

Than suddenly a surprise for everyone, Bossi and Maroni coming together to the stage, hand in hand, after them is Calderoli; another important figure. A phenomenal moment, people are in tears, even I feel excited and happy: two old friends overcame their enmity? Than a video again, Bobo on stage narrating, how he got to know Bossi saying "he was talking about autonomy and federalism; I thought he was crazy, but he was right, this craziness has changed my life" and emphasizing the visionary aspects of Bossi. Militants went crazy, shouting Bossi! Bossi! Marco

Pinti, Head of the Varese section emphasized, “Our Boss is Umberto Bossi, Period!” This was a triumph for Varese section of the party. Once again Varese took an important part in a historical moment by taking risks; the attendance of Bossi meant a victory or at least salvation from expulsion.

Maroni and his followers were careful not to present this issue as a Maroni-Bossi struggle as Bossi was seen as legendary; for some, even with god- like attributes. However if Bossi did not come, this meeting would inescapably against Bossi and the only options would be either to challenge him, which was unlikely to succeed at that time, or to leave the party. On the other hand Bossi was clever to join in with the event in order to prevent a fracture and separation from the party, which would be detrimental for the movement. As a result of that the issue reduced from a Maroni-Bossi schism to Maroni-Reguzoni issue (a member of the so called magic circle). A group on the left (young Padanians) opened banners against Reguzoni who is also a militant of the Varese section, shouting against him.

The picture on the stage was demonstrative of the winners and losers of the crisis, at least for now. Maroni was sitting in a relaxed way: happy and smiling. On the other hand Bossi seemed tense while legs crossed. Fontana, mayor of Varese, a Maronian, gave messages of unity; emphasizing the desire for a congress (to get rid of Reguzoni) and making the claim that this night is a demonstration of internal democracy in the party.

Then came onto the stage, a EU parliamentary, obviously Bossian, emphasizing the leadership of Bossi and confirming the Leninist style of administration in the Party by saying: “Bossi e’ Bossi, dopo Bossi, tutti sono uguali” several times, which means “Bossi is Bossi, after Bossi all others

are equal." The message was clear, Bossi had a meaning on his own, he meant more than a party leader, and Maroni should know his limits.

Than came another important figure, leader of a gravity center, that is Bergamo: Roberto Calderoli. He is a real survivor. With strong support from the city of Bergamo which is famous for it conservativeness, he managed to remain in a strong position in the party for years. His balanced politics makes him a game changer in many cases by changing the power remaining outside of the power struggle and changing the power balance between rivals by his support. He is clever to always bet for the winner. Until that day it was clear that he supported Bossi, however, it was not clear then as he was not happy with the magic circle either. Moreover his ability to navigate over changing power balances made him somewhat unpredictable. He is likely to be the one who convinced Bossi to join in with Maroni night. He was not popular among Maronians though. His openly racist remarks resulted in the stigmatization of all Legisti as racists; and Maronians were not happy with that because of their more moderate tendencies.

Calderoli started his speech by directing attention from tensions by humor and criticism of the government. Acknowledging his being a racist, he accused the government of being more racist than him, because of the proposed reforms for immigration. A little applause from the audience was followed by a few protests. He finished his speech without talking about the current schism, gave messages of unity and finally reiterated the classical slogan: Secession! Secession!

Finally Maroni took the stage with great applause and slogans: Bobo! Bobo! Happily enjoying the applause for a moment, he started his speech by saying that the party is his home. The greater part of the support came from the "Young Padanians", and Matteo Salvini, ex-member of the Young Padanians and the head of the Milan section: fervent supporter of Maroni.

There was one thing that he was very careful about; not directly opposing Bossi and emphasizing that this night occurred spontaneously; He liked Bossi and did not want a fracture in the party and also know the limits of his power. The discourse was that it was not Bossi who banned him from public speeches but Reguzoni, a member of "the magic circle". He said there are no Maronians vs. Bossians, there are only Legisti, But as confirmed by several informants, everybody knew that it was Bossi who banned Maroni because he saw him as a danger for his "leninist style" rule. Maroni was challenging the faction, which was in fact lead by Bossi: who wants to expel me should go away himself. the audience went crazy: Maroni! Maroni! " it was a covert challenge to Bossi right in front of him.

In the end, still, even for Maroni, the legitimacy discourse is dependent on Bossi. Maroni told a story about his experience with Bossi in which they were writing political messages on public walls and the police came in, and Bossi jumped in Maroni's car with paint spilling all over it. Describing him as crazy again to emphasize his visionary and idealistic personality, which made a dream a social phenomenon. The message was clear "the connection between me and Bossi is powerful and indissoluble."

On the other hand, while legitimizing himself with his relationship with Bossi, he avoided over idealizing Bossi. Bossi looked very old and helpless. He stood up to say a couple of words to the microphone, Maroni disregarded him, Bossi waited for a minute hands in pocket and went back to his chair helplessly. I felt pity for him. Maroni was behaving towards him as if he was a child.

Then Maroni moved to more general issues like secession with reference to Miglio, the theorist of the idea of the Macro-region of the North who was expelled by Bossi. The trick was clear, he

was emphasizing that the founding father of the idea of Padania was not Bossi! But he was doing this in a sympathetic manner without challenging him directly.

The next part of his speech was designed to show that he was fit and ready for future and current issues: such as the economic crisis, the European Union, immigration, crime and the Mafia. Emphasizing the importance of the North for coping with the crisis, he had an anti-imperialistic stance blaming the European Union for being surrendered to Germany and France and defending the interests of banks instead of people.

Then Bossi took the stage with applause. He wore a very casual dress giving the impression that he did not plan to come but was convinced by someone else and left the house in a rush. What he said was hardly understandable (even for native speakers) as the stroke deteriorated his ability to speak. Bossi seemed reluctant to praise his friend Maroni, and kind of avoided talking about matters and the problems about Maroni. He emphasized common slogans about Padania and critics to government. His speech was interrupted with acclamations requesting an early congress in the party. He responded "Sunday!" referring to more public demonstration planned in Milan against austerity measures and new taxes by the government, obviously hoping to have his followers with him.

The next was the Padanian national anthem, that is "Va Pensiero" by Giuseppe Verdi, describing "jewfish exiles from Egypt singing for their home country" adopted as Padanians singing for Padania. After the anthem, slogans started against Marco Reguzzoni, symbolizing the "Cerchio Magico"; and desire congress while Bossi and Maroni left the auditorium between an army of journalists.

The most striking thing that was obvious from the slogans and the video is the fact that Umberto Bossi was the only source for legitimacy in this party. Everybody knew that Bossi did not like Maroni, and together with orientations of cerchio magico, it was Bossi himself who banned Maroni from public speeches, and this meeting is essentially against Bossi and his Leninist rule over the party. No body could criticize or protest about him. Problems between Bossi and Maroni were not new and not limited to the public speech issue. Moreover, the problem inside the party was not only a Maroni against Bossi issue. There was forming a coalition of discontents, all the people that are not happy with the current situation were coming together and Maroni only became a flag for that. However, Bossi continued to be the only source of legitimacy to the degree that people only covertly could oppose him by attacking people around him. Because of that, the MGP shouted favorably to him, the video represented Maroni with Bossi, emphasizing their years together working for Padania, Maroni in his speech narrated some of his funny experiences from the years of inception.

This event was demonstrative of power structures and factions inside the party, which was instrumental in understanding the upcoming events, which I call the "Padanian Spring". As far as I was able to observe, some factions or powerhouses were playing the political game over Maroni. Although this event created a short euphoria of peace and unity, three days later in a public demonstration in Milan showed that the tensions were still high.

Section 8.1.5: The Confrontation: Milan Demonstration

Taking tickets for the "Freccia Verde" I was able to get on the train early in the morning. I did not know anybody from the party other than some people I encountered while buying tickets. So this day was to be a day of direct observation without much participation. The first encounter was

with people around me in the train, young people were joyful and busy with preparations such as carrying flags etc. The elderly were sitting and chatting, the main topic was the new taxation policies of the new government.

Constituted by a requirement of the European Union, the new government led by an economist (who is also a Varesotto) proposed some austerity measures including new taxes and cuts from pensions. This was unacceptable for most as pensions were not so high and it was ranging from 450 euro to 3000 euro. My landlord Angelica was taking 450 euro per month as her pension while an apartment rent in Milan was around 800 euro. On the other hand, the government's spending on immigrants continued and this was outrageous for the Leghisti. Moreover, a new tax for employees raised the costs of employing workers. This in turn paved the way for the employment of illegal migrants instead of Italians. Immigrants are normally paid much less than Italians and as they are hired unofficially, they do not require a tax burden. This, in turn, resulted in more unemployment for Italians to the degree that, the Legisti who are mostly owners of small entrepreneurships started to hire immigrants although they are against them. A new tax for the first house was another issue as not only because of the tax burden, but also because of the fact that tax for houses was predominantly paid in the North. The South is famous for tax evasion and an increase in taxes is not likely to affect the south. As a result, the leghisti perceived this austerity package as another threat for their wealth and they were to pay for a crisis that was caused by banks. This is the way that the leghisti see the government and named it as "il governo dei banchieri" (government of bankers).

The purpose of the meeting in Milan, which is the capital of the north, was to protest against the austerity plan and more importantly to start the "Lega della Lotta" (fighting lega) again. The

current government was constituted mostly by the left, and was also supported by Berlusconi. In this case, the League was one of few parties that was able make opposition. Bossi's plan was to gain support again by using anti-system rhetoric like they did in the Nineties. However, circumstances were different. First of all, the League was not fit for anti-system rhetoric as is has became part of the corrupt political system, which brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy.

Secondly, not a political but a social opposition was growing in the country by social media which later turned into a political party. Therefore, the field in the opposition was not empty. Moreover this new movement was using similar arguments to the League, ridiculing politics and avoiding racist discourse. Its scope was national as opposed to the League's regionalism. Therefore, the means for politics for the League remained very limited to old slogans like Padania, secession and anti-immigration, which was confusing even for most Legisti. Thirdly and most importantly, The League was divided internally, and the meeting in Milan was to be a demonstration of whether Maroni night brought peace or not.

The train stopped at the Cadorna station. The first meeting point was Piazza Castella and the event included a walk from there to Piazza Duomo, which is the heart of Milan with its cathedral. In Castella square, groups gathered to maintain an order. Here it was possible to see all ideological artifacts of the League, in addition to flags and symbols of the party: people with horn hats or with Scottish traditional clothes and bagpipes were also visible emphasizing the "ethnic distinctiveness" and Celtic roots of the northern people.

The march was organized around groups walking in a row. Those groupings were regional units. Some of them are were Liga Veneta, Saronno Section, Novara section, Varese section, Bergamo

section, Turin section, Milano section. Therefore groups were organized not only regionally, but also each city section constituted a unit. However, one group was an exception to that: the Movimento Giovanni Padani (Young Padanians movement, henceforth MGP). This group was more passionate and active of all. With all the regional MGP units together, they also constituted the biggest group in the square.

For the political messages, the main theme was to counter Mario Monti, then prime minister. He was depicted as a butcher seeing pensioners as meat and extracting steaks(taxes) out of them. Others are showing the north as a chicken laying eggs to the lap of southerners. Parallel with the theme of the demonstration, almost no anti-immigrant slogans were available.

Other than repeating the ”cliché” of seeing secession as the cure for every problem the messages did not include anything new. However, another theme was more important not only for the journalists outside, but also for most Legisti. It was the struggle for leadership between Maroni and Bossi.

For most, especially the elderly, the Northern League meant Umberto Bossi. He was the one who invented the idea, who founded the party and mobilized people. “Lega=Bossi” was one of the slogans that was visible on banners carried by Bossians. On the other hand, Maronians were carrying a picture showing Maroni and Bossi together, legitimizing their position with Bossi again. The tactic was clear, not challenging Bossi directly, instead challenging to his best men saying “Reguzzoni, fuori da i coglioni” (Reguzzoni, assholes out!)

The MGP’s manpower was incomparable to other groups. Led by Salvini, the most known figure of MGP from Milan, they were very organized in ovation and cheering. Their visibility was

disproportionate to their actual number and this was instrumental for intimidating others and reflecting the idea that the base was with Maroni.

In terms of the supposed peace between Maroni and Bossi, Maroni night did not seem to be enough. Bossi disregarded the desires for a congress to elect a new representative to the parliament, and (then the representative was Reguzzoni, a member of cerchio magico). More importantly he did not allow Maroni to talk during the meeting, which gave the signals that an agreement was not reached. Later that day Maroni expressed his unhappiness at not being able to talk, strengthening his position as victim to gain further sympathy.

Obviously peace was not brought about, and Maroni consolidated his position. However, Bossi's move on the Maroni night soothed the tensions and if Maroni was to challenge, it was clear that something bigger had to happen.

Section 8.2: The Perfect Storm: Corruption Scandals

The opposition needed to delegitimize Bossi's rule without totally delegitimizing himself, which would be detrimental for the movement. The arrival of the external impact was not late. The tool was something classical for Italy: a judiciary investigation of corruption followed by a media campaign, although the crime at stake could be seen as something trivial for the Italian context and most leghisti would travel no problem with Bossi's using of party money for himself.

During the years in government, only the fact that the Northern League had been with Berlusconi was enough to deteriorate the party's image as an anti-corruption and anti-state party. Moreover, the Northern League's name was involved in several corruption scandals. Starting from Enimont scandals in 1994, which were part of the operation "Clean Hands"; to the bankruptcy of "Banca

Credito Nord". Moreover, the administration of the electoral reimbursements given to the parties also caused outrage when it was revealed that the money was invested in Tanzania where interest rates are higher, and some other investments are made by buying diamonds, instead of sending money to sections of the party for militancy. In all those scandals, the image of Bossi was protected by sacrificing some administrators of the party and saying that those people were the only ones that are culpable and Bossi had no knowledge of it (Which was practically impossible, or it was confirming the cerchio magico argument)

The party was hit again with a scandal in early April 2012. The allegation was that, party money was used for the renovation of Bossi's house and to buy a car and a university diploma for his son Renzo (a most disliked figure for most Maronians), from some university in Switzerland. Allegations went beyond that, and it was revealed that the party accountant was allegedly tied to the mafia in order to launder mafia money.

Bossi again defended himself by saying that he did not know anything. The allegations could have been regarded as mild and few leghisti would oppose to the idea of renovating Bossi's house with party money if done openly, or if the party administration allocated a sizeable salary to Bossi. However, it was not covered up or disregarded. This was partly due to the unlikeliness of Bossi's "insaputa" (not knowing), and partly because, the investigation happened during a critical period in terms of the power structure inside the party. Tensions were high and sides were taken. The opposition, Barbari Sognanti, coalition was awaiting something like that to challenge Bossi. This was a perfect opportunity for the opposition, as they did not have to oppose Bossi directly. It was the cerchio magico and his family was to be blamed, but in any case Bossi was to be damaged. The rivals were quick to challenge, again without challenging Bossi directly,

however forcing him to resign by requesting “pulizia” (cleaning). The discourse was that Bossi did not know anything. This attribute was making him innocent but at the same time unfit for leadership as he was unable to control or choose his men, due to his sickness and age. Again, the opposition’s kindness of not blaming Bossi could also be interpreted as a call for an agreement to Bossi: a resign in exchange for his honor.

On the other hand an enormous media campaign was started against the once legendary leader. “A sua insaputa” (without his knowledge) became a top twitter trend and media motto in Italy; teasing and mocking him. Two days later, at the 20th anniversary of the first electoral victory of the League in 1992, Bossi declared his resignation and a temporary leadership was constituted with three leaders: Maroni, Zaia and Manuela del Lago.

Maroni, being treated as an apostate for the previous months had distanced himself enough from the established leadership ,which was under attack. Therefore, he seemed to be the only person among the leaders of the party to be able to play “a mia insaputa” (without my knowledge) game. However, he was very cautious for not blaming Bossi directly. On the other hand, right after the revelation he did not hesitate to call for leaning inside the party. There were names that are blamed however everybody knew that Bossi was also implied.

Maroni’s position caused anger among Bossians. Taking into account his history and position inside the party and his very recent tenure as Ministry of the interior who ruled over law enforcement agencies; they did not believe the story that Maroni did not know anything. They accused him of betraying Bossi and the party. They made analogies about his position to Martelli: a politician from the center left who is famous for betraying the then prime minister Craxi while Craxi’s was his best man. Moreover, in line with Bossi’s position as a “sacred man” for some;

analogies went into religious terms to name Maroni as Judas, who kissed Jesus to identify him to his enemies. As a sign of betrayal, Judas' kiss argument became popular in the media, who were pushing against the Northern League at that time. Beyond all of these, the kiss of Judas argument became more interesting when Maroni kissed Bossi all of a sudden in a meeting organized for "cleaning inside the party." Maroni was joyful, and Bossi looked around astonished.

Section 8.2.1: Echoes of Scandals in the Varese Section

After the eruption of the corruption scandals until the resignation of Bossi it was a liminal period for the Varese section. People kind of avoided talking about the issue, the only concrete reaction came from Marco Pinti, the "secretary of citizens" that, it is time to make cleaning. The perception of the operations of magistrates was clear. The relationships with the judiciary were tense since the incident of "Camicie Verdi". Because of the fact that most magistrates were involved in the politics from the left upon their retirement, the judiciary was widely seen by "leghisti" as a tool of communists to design politics. In any case, they were seeing themselves under an orchestrated attack from the judiciary and the media, as this attack was not only against Bossi but also against the already deteriorated image of the party. Moreover it would definitely have the effect of strengthening the center left and the newly founded political movement "Movimento 5 Stelle" (five star movement) which have similar arguments with the Northern League of the early nineties and defined by its members as "come la lega una volta" like the League as it was before.

As a result, opinion polls dated 15 March 2012 and 27 April 2012 showed that in the North, The Northern League's votes dropped by %5 while M55 increased %2 and PDL increased %1 and the center left became the leading party.

The conspiracy argument was bought by the people with a stance in the middle. However, supporters of Maroni were not interested in the meaning of that. They just took the opportunity and called that because of the involvement of social media, primarily Facebook, no discussion was internal anymore. Therefore they should make an open discussion.

Section 8.2.2: Resignation of Bossi

Bossi resigned two days later as a result of a strong media campaign and internal calls for "cleaning." It was a point of uncertainty for the party. Although most Varesini were against Bossi, his resignation was likely to cause fractures. Some Venetians had already declared that they would not accept another Lombardian as a leader. And the biggest threat was that the party would remain under the 4% threshold, which means no government benefits and closure of most sections.

I could not help thinking of the chain of events during the one year period which were invariably in favor of Maroni and to conspiracy theories aired by the website Velina Verde. On the day of the resignation of Bossi, I first gathered all national and local newspapers and went to the party building. The Legisti were confused and in expectance of something to happen. They were not as nervous as I expected but definitely affected by uncertainty. While we drank coffee and looked around from the historical balcony, there were a lot of people wandering around, which Arianna guessed to be journalists. In fact, journalists flooded in one after another. The views of the stronghold of the League and "Barbari Sognanti" were important. They were video recording the inside the section. The Legisti of the Maronian side expressed their sorrow for Bossi as a person but they were happy for the end of Leninism inside the party. However, they were nervous as they did not see Maroni as a charismatic leader like Bossi and they were suspicious about his

ability to lead the party without fragmenting it or moving it to desired objectives. With the help of this event I was able to see for the first time that support for Maroni was mostly because of the need for an alternative to an existing autocratic rule inside the party.

After lunch, we went back to the party building, learning that Bossi expressed his regret for making his sons enter into politics. Moreover some people which I regarded as people in the middle all the time expressed their unhappiness with the situation, challenging to the Maronians. Although he was not a Bossian, I think he felt threatened by the decisive victory of the Maronians, although he was a very powerful and important figure in the Varese section. However, the Maronians' reaction was demonstrative of their power. They did not seem much shaken and invited him to talk about this openly, in front of everybody else.

Journalists kept flooding in, interviewing with the secretary. While we looked through the windows, we saw Aldo, a person from Cerchio Magico (I learned at that time) wandering around but he could not come in. One of the members invited him in, he came, with timidity, chose not to sit. It was obvious that he wanted to talk and relax. I do not know what he thought of me (we did not know each other as did not come to weekly meetings). He started to talk to me narrating that this kind of corruption was normal in Italy, happening in all of the parties, and that the Italian political system was corrupt. Later, a journalist (explained himself as of Sicilian origin) wanted of make an interview with Aldo, pushing the allegations of corruption; Aldo rejected, saying that he dis not believe. The interview turned into a discussion, a critic of the League by southern journalists. A second journalist joined in the discussion and criticized the League's policy against immigration. Aldo concluded: "Bossi will always remain as a symbol, however the party is powerful enough to choose a new leader."

It was hard for senior members of the party to accept this. They knew Bossi as a person and they saw his sons growing. They occasionally expressed their feelings that they would prefer the death of Bossi instead of his humiliation this way.

An open Maronian and MGP member, secretary Marco Pinti told in one of his interviews to a journalist, “It is an ordinary day for us. We are here, we keep doing our business. This is a new start for us. It is time to do the cleaning. Corrupt people should be more afraid of militants than magistrates!.” The message was clear, the storm was approaching to clear “cerchio magico” from the party.

At night, during the “prime time,” TV’s were full of discussions about the party; declaring the end of the legend. They were so well prepared that discussion programs were tuned into shows teasing The League, Bossi and the party discourse with songs composed specifically for that; and sketches making fun of Bossi. Some leaders of the League were also attended in the discussion programs. However, they were listened with a smile in the faces and sometimes interrupted with laughs

Section 8.2.3: MGP Provincial Meeting

Two days after the resignation of Bossi, Varese section hosted a meeting of the MGP. The main theme was the corruption scandal and the resignation of Bossi. Easily visible reaction was happiness and excitement about the resignation. Meeting started with a small speech by the MGP provincial leader. The main emphasis was militancy: he explained that the real carriers of ideology were the militants. Bossi’s idealized position was because of his being a leader and founder. The running /challenging ideology of the MGP was the idea that the real League was constituted by militants, who make sacrifices and work for the ideals. Although they are

reactionary and angry for Bossi, his position as a symbol was important also for the MGP. They would prefer a heroic death instead of a take over by corruption. The desire was to shift from a rule over the party through charismatic authority to a legitimacy based on popular support (by which Bossi consolidated his position as a leader through being the voice of the voiceless)

Then an open discussion started between MGP members the numbers of which were around thirty. This was a unique moment as it provided people to speak freely in euphoria of victory for the first time. "Bossi's spending is not a problem, other problems could have also be solved among us; however today we have Facebook and no discussion can remain internal anymore." Said one of the leaders. By doing so he justified the position of the Barbari Sognanti (which MGP was a part) that "we should see this as an opportunity to make cleaning inside the party. Most people in the meeting did not need to be convinced; they were asking about tactics of war: who should we protest and call for removal!

Meeting continued by some reconsiderations of the past and confessions about their stance: "We knew most of them but we did not dare to speak up!" Obviously, the militants referred here did not include supporters of Cerchio magico. In fact, the real emphasis was for MGP which, more and more I was realizing its position as independent from Maroni: although this group was obviously in the Maronian side of the struggle for Leadership, there was no mention to Maroni at all.

Reconsiderations continued with an evaluation of their experience in Roma and government: 'We have been contaminated in Rome by staying there; thinking everyday about the problems of Italy, they forgot our problems." They tried all people accused for corruption in the party was of southern origin. However they were in recognition that their image was polluted totally by

corruption: “if the party had started today (with a clean image) we could take %40 in the elections. Our ideology is relevant to problems of today which continues increasingly. Time showed that we were right in our diagnosis of the problems and we have been consistent on our ideas. However, we have been corrupt and we have lost our credulity.” This confessions were sincere but disregarded the fact that another movement was emerging to represent most values of the early Northern League and was prone to take a lot of votes form the electoral base of the League. This was the Five Star Movement. They avoided talking about this new movement and disdained them by merely saying; “they are sons of the League and they do not offer any identity, they just criticize.” Only in one occasion, in one of “balcony talks” one informant said: “I think the League will be slapped by the Five Star Movement heavily in the next elections.” In the end the Five Star Movement accomplished that by taking 20% of votes and being the third party nationally against crowded coalitions; and the Northern League scored only 4%.

This nostalgia and reference for the early times of the League was being used to criticize current leadership, and more importantly to point out the fact that an aristocrat class was formed around Bossi, which impedes mobility in the party. More than anything else, the MGP`s fight was to overcome this cast-like system and to take part in the party leadership.

The final stage was to humiliate the usual suspect and “evil” Marco Reguzzoni by reading experts from his newly published book about the party; and making fun of his perception of the party, and his positive remarks about people who was involved in the corruption scandal. As this was a meeting organized for the planning of opposition strategies (in fact it was not planning but merely recitation of strategies), the MGP was playing with the symbols again: they were to carry brooms

to make cleaning in the meeting "Orgoglio Padano" (Padanian Pride) which was a organized in Bergamo by Calderoli, and it was a demonstration of Calderoli's taking the right (winning) side.

Section 8.2.4: Orgoglio Padano Meeting

The meeting was in Bergamo, which is located in the east side of Lombardy, two hours from Varese. The party organized coaches for people who wanted to join. The demand was high and I could hardly find a seat for myself. This time I had to sit close to people I did not know and these were not fervent Maronians. They were not happy with the current situation. They saw the deteriorating image of the party, and that all those crises and scandals were decreasing the support. They did not care who was to become the leader. On the one side there was Bossi, the legendary leader. On the other side there was Maroni, which they knew very well personally. Although he was the only viable alternative, people around me voiced their concerns about rumors disseminated through social media that Maroni was involved in a conspiracy against Bossi: "he was the ministry of interior until recently; so it is impossible that he did not know those misconducts. A couple of months ago Bossi warned about some people that are trying to do conspiracy in Varese; and do you know Velina Verde? ….. Whatever it was written is being realized now…… so, what will happen? Bossi resigned and we do not know if he will run for candidacy again; it is very dark for the party these days."

The meeting was to take place in Bergamo; and was most likely to become a demonstration of power for Barbari Sognanti. The place was big enough to accommodate thousands. It did not have any seats and it was a flat ground; therefore everybody had to stand and elevated stage was hardly visible to the audience. The purpose of the event was to show others that the Leghisti were still powerful and that they were united. However the picture was not so simple. People carried

symbols of the party all over: hats, ties, handkerchiefs, flags etc. In addition, banners that blame the actors of the misconduct was all over. The Barbari Sognanti coalition (in fact mostly MGP members) were carrying brooms ornamented with “sole delle alpi” (Alpine sun), which is basically a six petaled flower in a circle; green on a white base. These brooms represented the desire for “the cleaning ”, when the journalists asked about the reason of this “Orgoglio Padano night, militants from Varese responded: “we are going to make the cleaning” the cleaning represented a quittance of all leghisti from the misconduct of some. The message was; “wrong doers can exist in any party but we do not turn a blind eye on them; and we will punish them” this way they tried to alienate the wrong doers from the party and to protect their image.

Groups were formed among audience. On the right the was the MGP with their brooms. Salvini was among them. They shouted again, against the usual suspect: Reguzoni and people that are involved in the corruption scandals. On the other side, there were other groups, which I could not recognize because their lack of any distinctive symbols. However, they seemed more angry with the situation to the degree that they did not allow some journalist in by saying that they were communists and were plotting against the League. A small quarrel between a journalist and leghisti was alleviated quickly upon the exit of the journalist from the hall.

When Maroni, Bossi and Calderoli arrived, they were welcomed with a sound applause. Bossi made some confessions and Calderoli gave messages of unity. When Maroni appeared to speak, a strong support was confirmed by applauses. However this support was not unconditional: some groups on the left of the stage even booed his some strong remarks against wrongdoers. He continued though, without hesitating and enjoying MGP`s strong support. After the speeches the night finished with Maroni`s show: posturing with a broom, making “the cleaning” although he

tried to be sympathetic to Bossi; everybody knew that it was Bossi who he was sweeping. The final moment was a kiss of Maroni from the cheek of Bossi, long enough to allow journalists to take enough photos. Considering the recent discussions on whether he was Judas of the party who denounced Bossi. This was interpreted a bold move to show his involvement in the scandal.

Section 8.2.5: Reconquistare La Verginita! (The re-conquest of virginity)

The period between the Orgoglio Padano night and the congress was a period of uncertainty; but, at the same time an opportunity for a reconsideration of the past, and thinking about the future strategies. First of all, they needed to recover from the crisis and get rid of the stigma of being corrupt. At least they should have convinced themselves. First strategy was to alienate from it. The perpetrators of the misconduct were of the south origin. This provided an opportunity to blame the "mafiosita" of the south for the misconducts. They went so far as to racist remarks, which caused long discussions in the social media. Those corrupt people were not northern and entered into party recently therefore real leghisti were innocent.

Second strategy was to cleverly turn internal opposition in to a moral struggle. "We are the only party that reacted against corruption honestly; we should re-conquer our virginity by doing the cleaning. " This cleaning included also Bossi. Bossi`s absence meant a lot in terms of party`s strategies to do politics. Bossi had a god-like position; his remarks were automatically turning into slogans of the party by militants.

This also implied a second strategy to legitimize newly founding power relations. In the absence of a god-like figure (Maroni was unlikely to fill is position) it was the militants who were to decide party strategies. Among other factions, the MGP was the most organized one. Therefore

this meant more power for the MGP. This power was crystalized as the Rise of Salvini towards the "National secretary of Lombardia", and then the leader of the party in 2013.

Maroni chose to play the good guy and never blamed Bossi for what happened. He said he would only run as a candidate if Bossi did not. Therefore, Bossi could not blame him as a traitor and Maroni became the new federal secretary in the congress. In the next elections in 2012, League was able to take only %5,27 in the provincial elections. The five star movements became the third party, although it was alone against two block of coalitions in the right and the left. Thanks to its coalition with Berlusconi (even though it was one of the main arguments of Maroni to be against Berlusconi) Maroni became the president of the Lombardy Region. After a short period, he declared his resignation from the secretariat to leave his position to Salvini in the congress of the party; with a victory of %80 to %20 against Bossi.

In day of coronation of Salvini as the Federal secretary, among the invited were representatives of far right movements from France and Austria; which marked a new era of politics for the League.

Section 8.2.6: The Five Star Movement

The five Star Movement was organized against corrupt, ineffective and tragicomic political system. It immediately took my attention because of my interest on reactions against corruption and its obvious similarity with the discourse of the League, at least to that I had read in the books. My first encounter was with one of my Italian teachers who was active in the movement and was attending to some protests etc. He described the League as "they were once good but gradually they also became a part of the system of corruption" and described the movement "Five Stars", "Come la Lega una volta ", "Like the League as it used to be". Lead by a famous comic, Beppe

Grillo, this new movement avoided racist rhetoric and regionalism with a leftist discourse. Among others, a government backed project to build a high speed train line between Italy and France became a major concern and fueled a political movement claims of which was demonstrative of the consequences of corruption over state society relationships in Italy. Alberto introduced the Five Star movement as follows when he learnt about my interest in the League:

"Are you planning to study the League? You know, they are not the League of the beginning years now. They became part of the corrupt system of politics now. I think you should check a new movement that is organized over the Internet. It is not a political party, and all they are doing is to protest against the corrupt system of Italian Politics. …how to say,.. it is like the League as it was before, as it was in the early nineties, when they were a real protest party against all the dirty jobs of the government. …….You should know how corrupt is the political system in Italy. It is not only corrupt in the sense of illegal activities, but you know Berlusconi, as he holds power he made his corrupt businesses and mafia businesses legal by pushing new laws. And there is no real opposition to him. All parties one way or another benefit from this system…..the League has always been with him (Berlusconi), they became the part of the game. ……you know what? The system runs on legal bribery. Do you know how? If you are a political party you are entitled to receive an election reimbursement, which is a lot of money. But if you want to take it you should take as much votes as possible. Therefore they become more and more populist and avoid doing real opposition or real reforms……..There is more to that, if we did not have Internet, we were almost totally deprived of the ability to reach information. Do you know how? Just like political parties, newspapers receive government aid proportionate to their sales. Which means that we Italians are paying two times for a newspaper. One from our taxes, one when we buy the paper. Please tell me how can a newspaper be independent if it is receiving

money from the government?.....However, there is only one newspaper that rejects to take government aid:……. You should read it, it is the only newspaper that you can get real information; and the website of Five Star Movement……

CONCLUSION:

The discussions in the preceding chapters have shown that a number of delegitimizing factors have influenced the state-society relationship for Leghisti in particular, as well as northerners in general. We also have seen that however, these factors have stemed not only from the actions of the Italian state but also from its inabilities and failures in the face of the new developments brought about by globalization. Although the phenomena analyzed in the preceding chapters are for the most part independent of each other they have one thing in common: all have drastically affected the state-society relationships in Italy.

To begin with the most general of them, the historical development that has unfolded in the form of political corruption and illegal state activities has degraded the political system and the state. This degradation was exacerbated by the inefficiency of the state institutions, the services, and the bureaucracy. Another crucially influential factor was the indifference of the state agents the sufferings of the people during the harshly forced integration of the economy with the global economic system and the transfer of the sovereign powers of the Italian state to the European Union. A third factor that has fundamentally affected people's lives is mass migration and immigration, and above all the state failure to address the all of the related issues. The preceding chapters have also looked closely at the ways in which people have reacted as a result of the ongoing delegitimization and vanishing sovereignty. The chapter on passive revolution has revealed the ways in which Leghisti are challenging the dominant version of history, and the national narrative in order to build an alternative legitimacy, a national discourse, and a proposed independent state. And finally, an extended analysis of a crisis of leadership that happened in the course of my fieldwork was provided in the chapter ten, as it was demonstrative of the

perceptions of legitimacy both found on the national level and within the party. In this concluding chapter, I will comment on each of these themes and relate them to the literature. I also will survey the definitions of this movement found in the literature, thereby allowing us to contemplate the issue of racism.

Section 9.1: The Intersection of Crises

Although the various theories of social, political, and economic organization can explain the environment in which a secessionist movement is born, they leaves unanswered the question the timing of the movement of the Northern League. Why has this movement emerged at this specific time? Cento Bull (1996) explains the timing of the movement by pointing to three variables: The economic recession, the end of the Cold War and corruption scandals.

The recession resulted in higher unemployment rates. Public-sector jobs, disproportionately full of southerners, were no longer despised but, to the contrary, highly sought after. The recession also created a sense of loss of identity, because the old model predicated an endless development on the one hand and the ideology of hard-working northerner on the other hand seemed to have fractured. In the meantime the end of the Cold War had rendered the anti-communist alliance meaningless, thus undermining the power of the Christian Democrats. Indeed the eruption of the political and economic scandals such as the *tangentopoli*, the Christian democrats lost their ground. The Northern League, on the other hand, presented the Italian state as a handy scapegoat for the scandals erupting in the very heart of the region even while giving to its adherents a headily new conception of identity that helped to assuage the painful feelings of loss engendered by the economic decline through providing means for people to alienate themselves from discontents of being an Italian.

The emergence of the Northern League occurred at a historical moment when the legitimacy of the Italian state and the political system as a whole were being questioned. Rumors as to illegal activities engaged in by the members of the intelligence agencies were revealed to be true, and there was no longer a Cold War threat to justify them. In addition, the allegation that "the Gladio" was connected to NATO, reduced Italy to a mere "satellite state" in the eyes of many. These revelations can be interpreted as constituting the first impact of the global actor on the sovereignty of the Italian state, but regardless, the new climate characterized by masonic conspiracy theories was deeply imbued with pessimism towards the political system and even democracy itself. So many of my informants, both Leghisti and non-leghisti, made statements to the effect that "democracy is good in terms of basic rights, but it is only a theater and you can never see the real rulers." This pessimism, coupled with the inherent legitimacy problem of the Italian State, paved the way for alternative legitimacy claims, and many saw the Northern League as the heir opponent in that regard. The intense reconsiderations that have been wisely undertaken have diminished the importance of such categories as "the left" and "the right," and a new style of politics has prevailed: populism. The Northern League easily became its champion, through its use of street language and by articulating the feelings of most northern people and then along came Berlusconi.

The deepest of all impacts came later, however; yet another police investigation that resulted in the arrest of several politicians. This new investigation that pointed out a widespread system of corruption and bribery suggested that rival parties collaborating in illegal businesses. Those revelations not only eradicated many northern Italian's already flagging faiths in the entire class of politicians but also unleashed an even more intense pessimism about the political system and ultimately the state itself. Together with a system of corruption, a convergence of the Mafia and

the political class also was revealed. The impact of this final revelation was so great that the effects went beyond a mere change in voting behavior so the state itself now seemed guilty until proven innocent. The producing middle class of the north, so many members of which were already unhappy with their tax burden, started to question the usefulness of the state itself. The feeling was that the state was not only betraying but also exploiting them.

It was not the founder of the Northern League, Umberto Bossi, who invented and utilized the discourse against the state; the feelings were already there, belonged to the people. The charisma of Umberto Bossi emerged through his courageous propensity for saying loudly what most people in the North already were thinking and speaking at home. Like all populist politicians he told the people the things they wanted to hear, and he said them strongly. He became a lightning rod of sorts, channeling the people's anger about taxes, immigration, and corruption. As for his invention of a Padanian Nation and a utopian country called Padania, theis was purely a part of his populist politics but also something more: a preferred refuge from the shames of corruption, a hope for the future. The party was more and more becoming a medium through which people with very differing desires could use to express their discontents with the state. I have dubbed the Leghisti the "Uomini Contro" (Men Against), because the common feature of all those Leghisti of differing backgrounds and often conflicting desires is their passionately contrarian stance toward the Italian State.

The bulk of the issues that affect leghisti's relations with the state basically stems from the turmoil that Italy witnessed in the early nineties. The tension that emerges from the persistence of local identities and Jacobin attempts of nation building is another issue, and it is still constituting an important aspect of Italian political life. The failure of the Italian building process to create a

homogenized population in terms of language and identification caused the political struggle over identities and language to be one of the problems inherent to the nation-building process over the course of its 150 Year Long history. Italy has consistently strived to undermine local identities and vernacular languages, i.e., dialects but due to its poor success in subjugating alternative identifications and ways of knowing, its homogenization remains unfulfilled. This failure not only has allowed for the persistence of local identities and dialects but also the hegemonic struggle over it has negatively affected the state-society relationship. During the years of the Cold War the local identities became a political issue only intermittently, due to political alignment based strictly on ideology, and the perceived threat of a soviet invasion or at least a communist hegemony. However, with the end of the Cold War, the dormant struggle between the local and national rekindled in a period when the legitimacy of the Italian state was under question.

Thanks to its populist style of politics, the Northern League was successful in coalescing several local identity claims into one organizational body. This feat was made possible by the fact that all of the local-identity movements were unified by their feelings of oppression by the Italian state. As for the invented nation of Padania, it differs significantly from most other nationalist discourses, above all because it does not claim congruence between the national and the ethnic units, as the latter including Lombard, Venetian and Piedmonts. Rather, it envisions an environment in which several ethnicities can freely coexist. Thus the Padanian identity is not perceived as cancelling out the various local ethnic identities. One can say, "I am a Lombardian for instance, but at the same time a Padanian." Thus whereas the idea of Padania has not been well received by non-members because it is perceived as some imposition of an invented, historically nonexistent entity in the minds of many members there is no such imposition. They understand that as of now, Padania is a dream and a utopia, a place where all the peoples of the

north can live freely with their own life-styles, untainted by corruption and unmolested by the Italian state. Given this non-ethnic nature of Padanian identity, it is folly to try to envision the borders of the imagined Padania. The borders can always change to include almost any and every person and faction that adopt the northern values and is opposed to the Italian state. Thus one should not be surprised that the supporters of the party include a lot of people of southern origin, and even a few immigrants. As Aldo, my main informant, has memorably put it: "Padania ends where courageous people end."

The perception of the state agencies is another source of leghisti's unhappiness with the state. In other words, the fact that an inefficient bureaucracy is filled through clientelistic networks leads the middle-class bourgeoisie of the north to take dyspeptic view of state employees, and this has came to be yet another impediment between the state and most leghisti. The northerners in general not only think that the state is exploiting them but also perceive most state activities as unnecessary. In their eyes, state agents are little better than parasites, as they are not directly producing wealth. This attitude has given birth to the pungent term for state employees, "dipendenti publici" (dependents of the public). A regional factor also comes into play here, for until the recent economic crises the northerners have been notably less interested in the government jobs that the southerners. This has meant government offices in the north have been mostly filled largely with people of southern origin. Lacking any primary connections to the state, many northerners could only watch helplessly as the deterioration of state functions such as crime-prevention and education further degraded the image of the state employees together with the state itself. Then too, a glib presumption on their past that the state is comprised of southerners whereas the productive part of the country is in the hands of northerners turned into an easy way to externalize the failures of the Italian state and its corruption. The southerners and

their *mafiosita* were the culprits, instigators of the failures of the Italian state. The Northern League was quick to suggest that, by reverse implication, Padania was the land of the honest, courageous, and hard-working people.

The *de facto* wealth-redistribution that they believe lies at the heart of tax-collection and the distribution of the state benefits has always been a crucial point for the middle-class bourgeoisie of the North, who, at least like to believe that they are not fully alienated from their labor and their money yet. The retributive stereotype of the leghisti that has inevitably emerged with the media depicting him as a person who is extremely mean and does not want to pay taxes. It is true that one of the major concerns of the leghisti is taxation. In the current situation however, it is not taxation *per se* that bothers Leghisti; but rather a system of redistribution that is based on unequal collection of taxes and a disproportionate distribution of state benefits to the south in exchange for its political support. News coverage of the extravagant spending of state agents and politicians never goes down well with any Italian, but the leghisti are particularly inflamed by rumors of the clientelism whereby southern votes are outright bought by politicians. Indeed, the discourse and politics of the Northern League have always reflected this obsession. Slogans such as *Roma Ladrona* (thieving Rome) are redolent of it. Quite simply, the state has come to be seen as the source of all problems and evil, while the project of federalism, and the even more daring one of independence have taken on the allure of panaceas in the eyes of the leghisti.

The development of the suitable environment that spawned the Northern League and to develop over the years was facilitated not just by internal factors and the direct acts and errors of the Italian state. The polity also was put to the test by such external factors as the advent of the European Union, economic transformation of the global system accompanied by periods of

crises, and social problems caused by immigration and migration, and the northerners did not grade it high.

The expansion of the global economic system together with Italy's monetary integration into the European Union affected its economy profoundly. Italian products lost their price-competitiveness owing to the low priced products from countries such as China. After the change from the lire to the euro, Italy labor costs suddenly were on par with those of Germany and France, and in the case of most products, the latter were offering higher quality. The surviving part of the economy was its high end where the products require higher technology such as the design industry, in which Italy remains competitive internationally. Overall, however, Italy had been transformed within the space of a mere thirty years from a producing to a consuming country. This has meant either the vanishing or the transfer of the productive assets of the north, and the trend toward increasing unemployment and decreasing wealth has inevitably undermined northerner's pride and work ethic.

The importance of this economic crisis lies not only in the hardships it has imposed upon people but also in their perception that the state, regardless of whether a right or left-wing party is in power, is complicit with the process, meaning that the politicians have always sided with the bankers and not with the people. The economic crisis in 2011 resulted in the European Union's imposing a government of technicians upon Italy, thereby stripping of its sovereignty in the eyes of most Leghisti. Austerity measures, largely meaning the imposition of more and more taxes, have placed the burden of the crises caused by bankers on the shoulders of the middle class, thereby reducing the productive power of the country. Thus in an ironic turnaround the Northern League, which once had defended the European Union as the likely bringer of better rights and

decentralization in a dreamed-of "Europe of Regions," has become its bitterest opponent seeing it as an imperial power, hell-bent an imposing, as if by divine fact, "the United States of Europe"

The heavy flow of migrants and immigrants is another phenomenon, that has deeply affected the daily lives of local northerners. More specifically, the ill-regulation of this mass movement of people by the state has become a real concern for Leghisti and most northern people. Starting in the early eighties, southern migrants flew to the North in the millions. Moreover, the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 accelerated the flow of immigrants, mostly from North Africa. Given that leghisti believed themselves the victims of that inclination, owing to both job-competition the heavy strain placed on social sequences, and that to a certain extent they genuinely were victimized by those accusations of racism that intimidated and further radicalized them, it is understandable that the Northern League quickly became the anti-immigrant party. Accusations of racism often have been accompanied by other insults such as "narrow-minded" and "ignorant". This view of the leghisti has not only been purveyed through the media, but also several other interviewees who are non-members have described them in this way.

Section 9.2: The issue of Racism

This study's most important contribution lies in its sincere attempt to understand the anti-immigrant feelings, digging down as needed to expose their roots. My identities as a Turk and a Muslim could have caused me to take a biased view of a party that prioritizes anti-Muslim politics. I have felt from the start, however, that so complex a problem deserves a treatment that is both fair and nuanced.

Thus my identity as a Muslim Turk never hindered me from doing extensive fieldwork within that section of the party where its ideas are held most strongly. The initial hesitations of the leghisti, about opening up to me, were overcome when they heard that I was affiliated with an American university. Later, warm friendships developed, and these continue even to this day. In its published materials the party itself proudly proclaims that its members are not homogenous; had this not been true, I could never have gained the access I did. Yes, some leghisti are self-acclaimed racists, but despite the mainstream media's habit of seeking at that extreme element, their numbers are comparatively low. Still, no one can deny ubiquitous presence, throughout the north, of certain fears and prejudices especially, about Muslims. It must continually be kept in mind however that such feelings are by no means exclusive to leghisti. Given so much of the world's recent history, and the fact that those events have been exacerbated by media coverage presenting Muslims as barbaric terrorists who exploit women, one should not be surprised to hear that these feelings pervade not only western world, but even the secular strata of the Islamic world. Owing to that context, the success of my fieldwork inevitably was contingent upon some difficult integration on both sides.

As we discovered in Chapter 8, Globalization and the failing state: immigration, certain sufferings of local people are undeniably caused by the presence of vast numbers of unassimilated immigrants. For the most part, however, it is not the immigrants who are truly culpable. Ultimately, immigration is just one of the visible results of two interrelated invisible phenomena: uneven global development and uneven distribution of wealth. For the most part, both immigrants and local people are merely passive witnesses of those trends, whereas the

Italian state and big companies benefit from the immigration because it provides them with cheap labor. But while the state is involved in the issue of immigration on the legal level of policing and publishing permits, hovering in a shadow-realm that lack any sociological depth and is positioned halfway between nationalist discourse and timid assertions of basic human rights. Little wonder, then, that the problems related to immigration not only cause anti-immigration feelings to rise but also cause people to even further question the usefulness of the state.

The involvement of other institutions such as parties of the left, labor unions, and the church unfortunately reflects little more than their own particular concerns about the immigrant populations, as opposed to a desire to solve the problem in the long run, and while one might think that short –term humanitarian aid provided by the church and legal support by labor unions could only be beneficial in fact it often also serves to agitate the local population, thereby making the situation more complicated. Perhaps the ultimate complication, bordering on the Byzantine and thereby the virtually unbelievable, arises out of the willing adoption of the label "Racist" by local people. I learned thus during the last days of my fieldwork, when the Varese section of the party requested a small discussion of my findings in the field. Although at that point I still was far away from any conclusions, I accepted the invitation seeing in it a valuable opportunity to discuss and thereby review all of my observations in the field. When the topic arose of issue of immigration and the accusations of racism I said that they should not be categorized as racists. The extraordinary and unsuspected answer to my comments was as follows. "Okay, you can say that, you are kind. But actually you can say that, yes, we *are* racists. If requesting regulations for the inflow of immigrants, if desiring a civil life, is racism, then yes, we are racists!" There I was, trying to convince them that I was not trying to be kind merely in order to disguise my real thoughts, and there they were actually inviting me to say that they are racists: an unlikely

conversation between a Muslim Turk and some leghisti. The upshot of that moment immediately was clean to me, however: The label of racism has become a stigma for all leghisti, so they feel they have no choice but to display it as a badge of honor. I can appreciate the twisted logic of their position, but for me the real question is this one: Once the label has been internalized, will the leghisti act accordingly?

The struggle of immigrants to attain greater rights is another issue that is triggering strongly conservative reactions, although it must be stressed that it is not the fight for rights, but it is primarily the method that incites reaction. Backed by human-rights groups, most of which are of the Italian Left, immigrant groups are fighting to gain more rights in legal and political ways. Although those desires can be deemed legitimate, as these people simply are seeking basic human and civil rights, there are some *de facto* conditions that of consideration. Above all, it must be acknowledged that the quest for a legal right to citizenship poses a direct threat to the national ideologies upon which most European states have reared their legitimacy. It would be naive to expect that those rights will be made universally available to all immigrants, but the Europeans themselves must face with the contradiction between a national ideology constructed around an historical narrative having ethnic and even racial connotations and the universalistic ideology of human rights. For among other things, this is a head-on conflict between a secular ideology and local cultures that are deeply imbued with Christian values and outlooks. The chief lesson that can be deduced from it is that when the struggle for rights disregards local priorities and sensitivities and relies solely on universal principles, the local people tend to become tenaciously conservative even about issues that they may otherwise have a progressive outlook. The Cross issue mentioned in Chapter 8 is demonstrative of this contradiction, for the struggle to remove the

cross from classrooms caused many non-practicing and even non-believing people to range themselves against it, simply because it was the Muslims who were for it.

At this point a reconsideration of the definition of the citizenship is called for. Although some immigrants do acquire the legal status of citizenship through their long stay in the country or through marriage, are they then really regarded as: a member of the imagined community of Italians? One of the real owners of that country? A comrade of all Italians? or, much less likely as a westerner? Presumably, none of us is so naïve as to believe that legal and social categories are always congruent, but it has been worth stressing that the resolution of these problems will never be complete unless and until the abyss presently sundering the universalis/legal from the de facto/ local principles has been bridged by the Europeans themselves.

Ironically, they could gain the needed inspiration to do so by looking east, for the end of the Ottoman Empire was accelerated by ethnic tensions and clashes kindled by a code of rights, the Edict of Gulhane (Gulhane Hatti humayunu in Turkish), that was adopted by the Ottoman state as a result of external pressures. Kirli (2006), provides us with a valuable picture of the social life of a Balkan city, Edirne (Adrianapolis) as existed in 1841. Kirli describes and analyses the tensions right after the adoption of the Gulhane Edict in 1939. The edict basically represents the first step the Ottoman Empire took towards a modern understanding of citizenship; abolishing the categories in taxation as Muslims non-Muslims and more on the income and property. Although the tax reform produced a lot of tension in the process of ascertaining incomes and property values, the nominal goal was to fund a bureaucracy more independent of the local authorities as opposed to all the positions then being filled by the central government. As described by Kirli (2006), over a period of tensions kindled by a murder the concern as to the taxation of private

entrepreneurs and farmers altered the state-society relationships. Most notably in retrospect, albeit most surprisingly at the time, the Jacobin imposition of equality upon minorities, led to an upsurge in Muslim/non-Muslim tensions all over the Balkans over the years following the Gulhane edict (p. 63). The analogy may seem a distant one, but Cento Bull (2001) reminds us that like other far-right movements, the Northern League is concerned about the welfare state, which really means taxation of the middle-class entrepreneurs, the party's linchpin. In addition, in both cases we see a trend toward viewing the state agents as part of the problem rather than of the solution.

At any rate, what we see in Varese is a link between the deterioration of the state-society relationships, through high taxation, and tensions among adjacent communities of locals and immigrants. The dynamic can be seen as attesting to an increased rivalry over the limited resources, as we saw in the chapter 8's analysis of the labor market, which them cast in terms of the state-society relationship means that a push for more rights and advantages for minorities has called forth reactions from the local people. One of the clean lessons of the instance, however, is that more rights for minorities by no means necessarily equates to a better life for them. The continued pressure exerted upon the Ottoman empire by the European powers, to extend full rights to all of its citizens ended up playing an important role in unleashing the following century's ethnic tensions, clashes, and wars that in turn resulted in "the Balkanization of the Balkans" and continued until recently. Thus while ideally we all would like to see the supremacy of a global ideology of human rights which decrees that there shall be no discrimination of any kind and that basic human rights shall be provided to everyone, the harsh fact of the matter is that when states impose that ideology in a *de jure* fashion they are more likely to hurt than to help minorities, and to cause tensions to arouse among local population and various ethnic and

religious groups. Thus, perhaps, instead of asking why xenophobia or racism occur within this or that specific setting, we should ask ourselves why any local majority population even tolerates the intrusion of any alien population with respect to which they have a collective memory of wars and religious hatred?

Here, the aim is not to give an answer or offer a solution. I do propose, however, that within the phenomenon of immigration, both immigrants and recipient population are mere figurants, in the sense of passive players whose strings are being pulled from above. One can only hope that both will become more aware of that fact, thereby forsaking the present pattern of falsely assuming that merely by becoming furious at each other they are solving their problems through political struggle. At the very least we know that labeling people as xenophobic or racist is counterproductive, resulting only in the adoption of that label by the target population and more radicalization. As a result of that, together with other global pressures and discontents, Leghisti and most northern population feel themselves more and more under attack; and this also affects their relationship with the Italian state which not only fails to solve the problems of Leghisti; but also perceived as failing to protect them and their culture from outside powers, in this case from immigrants.

The example of Anders Behring Breivik, who in 2011 invaded the summer camp that a leftist party had organized for immigrants and planted a bomb in front of the parliament building in Norway is demonstrative of the degree to which of the tensions have risen in Europe. The harder immigrants push in legal ways to gain their rights, the more people are pushed into adopting a radicalized stance on immigrants; and the intermittent economic crises have a catalyzing effect. Breivik, in his manifesto that was published on the Internet right after the attack, shared his view

of the current situation in Europe. In essence, the message was that Muslims, were invading the Europe, at the open invitation of the European left. He perceived this as a conspiracy. It is interesting to note the parallelisms between Breivik and Bernardo, one of my informants cited earlier, with respect to the supposed conspiracy of the left to allow Muslim invasion of the Europe. Such patent nonsense of course only makes one wish, immigrants, and Muslims in particular, that much more success in the struggle to gain their rights. To avoid lending even an iota of credence to the manifesto issued by the Breiviks of the world, however, they should strive to be more sensitive to the local communities to to build their movements upon the broadest possible. Radical rhetoric and action will always have a certain glamour, but the best advice here is prosaic and thus easily dismissible as being merely craven: comply with the national and local rules and regulations as required, be they formal and enforced or informal and unenforced. And, while doing so, prioritize building consensus and engaging in dialogue over fighting for rights by legal and political means.

As demonstrated by Lave and Wenger (1991) with respect to the formulation of "legitimate peripheral participation," during the participation of newcomers to a group or society new members change the group and themselves at the same time. And yet to no small extent the problems we are facing today in Europe are basically stems from the fact that neither the immigrants nor the receiving population want to change themselves. Both sides want either to maintain (in the case of the local people) or to substantially change (in the case of the immigrants) the social environment to protect their own way of life.

It is ironic, given all of the contumely that members of the Northern League routinely pour upon the state, that the state is the only player able to break the vicious cycle of claims endlessly

leading to counter-claim. Quite simply, it is the duty of the state to provide both immigrants and local populations the assistance they need to solve these problems. A failure to fulfill that duty makes it likely that the legitimacy of European states will wear off and alternative legitimacy-claims of a more radical type will continue to be advanced. As for the Northern League itself, the Gramscian analysis of it, done in chapter 7 on the passive revolution, demonstrated that although the League lacked adequate means and instruments to successfully challenge Italian legitimacy as a whole on the national level, nonetheless using effective methods to challenge the subjugation of Padania and other alternative forms of knowledge, and by setting itself up as the rival of such ideological state apparatuses as the school system, it gained a partial success. Its passive-revolution approach has at the very least humiliated the Italian state, and created a section of Italian society that is now prone to believe alternative narratives, whether they tell of Padanian Nationalism or weave conspiracy theories. It can not be denied that the League was damaged by its 30-year-long hustle with the government, losing some support, but the fact remains that the party has given birth to some other movements that reject the standart Italian narratives and legitimacy-claims the passive revolution that the party strived to make. In addition to several local independence movements, the rise of the Five-Star movement, whose members have on several occasions defined themselves as being "like the League in the beginning," is demonstrative of the real effects of the passive revolution of the League.

Section 9.3: The Extended Case Analysis

The extended case analysis in chapter 10, Corruption and the Changing League, dealt with the crisis of leadership and corruption scandals that erupted in the beginning of 2012. This was not only a period in which all ideas, desires, and future projections of the party members were

brought into question by two concomitant crises, but also a time transformation of the dominant discourse inside the party effected by a shift of power. It was of phenomenal importance not only because the legendary leader, Umberto Bossi, was forced to step down, but also because for the party itself was being besieged unprecedentedly in the face of issues that which until that time the Leghisti had blamed the Italian state. This challenge caused the members of the party to discuss and reconsider their ideas and even their allegiance to the party. The negotiations of ideas according to situations that characterized this process was demonstrative of the real desires lurking behind official discourses. The first cause of these reconsiderations was a period of leadership that resembled the partitocracy of the Italian political system, defined as Leninist by the opposition element within the party. This was followed by an ambivalent stance in the face of a vote in parliament for the abolition of immunities of some deputies, a vote in response to allegations of their involvements in some conspiracies that resembled the Gladio of the early nineties. The moment was at last ripe to mount an effective opposition against Bossi. Interpreted as "Italianization" by the members of the Varese section who were mostly of the opposition, this chain of events was accompanied by a reconsideration and discussion of all the movement's ideas ranging from Padania to immigration. This time the legitimacy question was at stake on the party level, and the factions inside the party became more and more important. As a result of this Padanian spring as I hereby dub it, not only the cadres of the leadership but also the power structure inside the party was dramatically changed to the benefit of the Young Padanians Organization. The rise of the Young Padanians reached its peak when one of its ex-members, Matteo Salvini, became party leader in 2013, a year and a half after the Padanian Spring. The rise of the Young Padanians and of Salvini would mean the end of the League's entrepreneurial style of politics and this paradigm shift may have profound implications for the future. The invitation

extended to the officials of far-right parties, of Europe such as Wilders of Holland and Le pen of France, to the coronation ceremony of Salvini points all too clearly to the direction of the change. I believe that the intermittent coalitions with Berlusconi's catch-all party, and the entrepreneurial style of politics practiced Umberto Bossi, had kept the party from becoming a sort of a hardline far-right movement we see in other European countries. Indeed, its very existence hindered also the birth of an alternative strong far right movement in Italy. This role of the party was hinted at in the remarks made by Luca, one of my informants cited earlier. We can only hope that whatever else the Padanian spring may portend, it will not cause the Northern League to abonden its ideology of civility and its consistently moderate and nonviolent stance.

Section 9.4: Defining the Northern League

Within the literature on the Northern League, one finds that different scholars, often because focusing on a particular historical moment within the development of the League, have defined it differently. Although a few studies provide us ethnographic details (Biorcio 1997; Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002; Tambini 2001) most of them attempt to define the League in terms of this or that category drawn from the lexicon of political science. It has been defined as: populist (Bull and Rhodes 1997), protest, (Biorcio 1997), racist (Cole 1997), New Right and Ethno-regionalist (Winter, et al. 2006), subcultural (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001a), and Political entrepreneurial (Allum 1996). I believe it is both the richness of its features and its seemingly controversial claims that have made the explanations of its emergence and persistence so varied, and thereby so insufficient to explain all of its aspects. It is the very richness of that now allows us to test the validity of the existing literature and to broaden our understanding of the wide range of western political issues, from nationalism and regionalism to racism and xenophobia.

Section 9.4.1: Northern League as Populist Party

The Northern League often is defined as a populist party (Biorcio 1997; Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001a; Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002; Tambini 2001) Cento Bull 2001 evaluates the claims of populism under four criteria: (1) referring to "the people" as an organic, homogenous, and natural community; (2) advocating small businesses against big businesses; (3) presence of a charismatic leader talking directly to people's emotions; (4) a rhetoric of anti-elitism. I believe populism can most basically be defined as a movement addressed to the emotions of individuals. In most cases, it represents a relatively benign alternative to democratic elitism. It is prone to be

xenophobic however and, when it holds power to promote short-term expensive, and inefficient policies

In the case of the Northern League specifically, populist policies most definitely have been used to capture the support of individuals. As Tambini (2001) reports, members of the Northern League have an emotional attachment to it because they see its leader as being one of them: talking the same language, cursing at the same things; he is the living and speaking embodiment of everything the people on the street have always had to say. Thus as opposed to generating ideology, the movement converts existing grassroots sentiments into legitimacy for itself, then recycles into a few common themes that members consciously identify themselves with. By hanging upon hated economic-redistribution policies, the widespread corruption that triggers anti-government sentiments, and the stereotypes connected with the League's officials cause the people to imagine themselves as being bound to a common vision and thereby a common future and fate. Thus the present study is in no position to disagree with those earlier ones, cited in the previous paragraph, which have concluded that the Northern League is a populist party. This study does insist on pointing to other factors that are every bit as important as the populism.

Section 9.4.2: Northern League as Racist Party

Studies (Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001a; 2001) argue populist policies are prone to be parochial because of the need for addressing the grassroots sentiments. They alsoreport parochial sentiments among Northern Italians that attest to the existence of that north-south divide which is nurtured by some "scientific" accounts of Banefield (1958), Lombroso and Horton (1918); Putnam et al. (1993). These works argued implicitly or explicitly the existence of a relationship between being a southerner and being backward, criminal, and lacking civic cultures respectively.

The study of Angel-Ajani (2002) demonstrates how these "scientific", accounts help to reproduce stereotypes in the present day. Secondly, as an offshoot of the multicultural environment produced by (im)migration and exacerbated by increasing economic competition between the migrants and the northerners. Moreover, as Cento Bull argued,

As explained in the chapter 4, a selective history of Italy, historically the North and the South have perceived each other as distinctly different and those perceptions often have hardened into stereotypes. Even in the 1920s, Gramsci was reporting the existence of these stereotypes and deriding pseudo-scientific explanations such as Lombroso's work. In addition, two studies that appeared in the 1980s, helped to reproduce those stereotypes. The first was The Moral Basis of a Backward Society by political scientist Edward Banfield (1958), which pointed to "amoral familism" as the cause for the South's socio-economic backwardness and lack of civic organization. Another Political scientist Robert Putnam in "Making democracy work; civic traditions in Modern Italy" (1993a), which analyzed the relationship between institutional efficiency and civic traditions. Putnam asserted that, whereas the South lacks civic structures of enlightened collective interest, the north is more efficient and democratic owing to its tradition of communal organization that goes beyond the merely familial.

The "economic miracle" of the 1970s brought a wave of immigration to the North which was relatively well tolerated because the economy continued to grow. The end of the economic boom in the early 1980s and the influence of the global markets intensified the competition for well-paid jobs. The northerners, exulting in private entrepreneurship, mostly remained in the private sector while rather contemptuously leaving the public sector to southerners. And yet during the years of crisis and unemployment, cheap immigrant labor provided posed challenge to the

inhabitants of cities in the North. Meanwhile, the multicultural environment, shanty-towns, and ethnic regional segregation within urban space, were making northerners conscious of and eager to celebrate and maintain their distinctiveness. Such a situation disproved that "melting pot" theory which the Northern League often rejects, while denying that it has unequivocally proved itself even in the United States.

In summary, contention that the Northern League is racist is elaborated by the practices and sentiments of some of its members and supporters, but the party leader himself has admitted making parochial and racist statements simply in order to attract media attention. The League has used that habitus to drum up more support and gain even more media attention. Nonetheless, anyone who has, like this researcher, spent a protracted amount of time in and around the League knows that it is not racist per se; simply using stereotypes and indulging in parochial sentiments in order to first construct a distinctive identity and, second, broadly disseminate its message.

Section 9.4.3: Northern League as Protest Party

Scholars who depict the League as a protest party (Bull and Rhodes 1997; Cento Bull and Gilbert 2001a) thereby imply because it has emerged at certain historical conditions and events, it is likely to fade away into oblivion as the circumstances that called forth its voice of protest change for the better. And yet this argument is itself historical for we now can see that studies done up to the end of 1990s were more prone to explain the movement in that strictly time-relative way.

An important aspect of the League's stance is its ongoing protest against inequalities, corruption, inefficient bureaucracy, redistribution, party patronages, and migration Indeed, the party has been quite successful in constructing an identity by raising these protests and evoking people's negative sentiments: An imagined community of Padanians. The very fact that the party has

persisted with decisive support changed the interpretations made after the 2000s (Huysseune 2006a). But while the Protest party argument does hold a certain amount of water, it is by no means all-explanatory. For one thing, given its more than thirt-year-long history, the League has proven itself to be a real permanent actor on the Italian political stage, and has thereby, ironically, largely outlined its rationale of being the voice of protest against problems such as corruption. Despite the League's intermittent attempts to recapture the heady zest of it early years, the political-protest arena within Italian politics is now dominated by other political movements, most notably the Five Star movement. The fact of the matter is that the Northern League is becoming more and more a movement based on identity and anti-immigrant tendencies, rather than a more amorphous protest movement.

Section 9.4.4: Northern League as New Right/Neo Populist party

Cento Bull (2001) defines the distinctive characteristics of Europe's emergent new-right movements as follows: commitment to representative democracy; rejection of violence; hostility to welfare policies; rejection of the model of the multicultural society; a populist rhetoric; support for a free market and for small businesses. Those are the most commonly noted aspects of the Northern League and thus at first sight, the party seems to fit perfectly into this category. As Cento Bull (2001) has demonstrated, however, the Northern League differs substantially from other new-right movements in Europe in two respects: its advocacy of federalism or secession, and the nature of its constituency.

Unlike other new-right or neo-populist parties who claim autonomy, the Northern League tries to get as much as it can out of the Italian government as a kind of reparation for its unsatisfactory policies. That fact alone makes the League distinct from the new-right parties emerging in other

European countries. The voters of those parties have been described by Cento Bull (2001) as; not so much nationalist as sentimentalist: driven by fear and living in a state of "anomie " because their lives are fragmented and they lack the social networking required to flourish in society. By contrast the electorate of the League was quite rationally conscious, right from its inception, about what they wanted: less bureaucracy, an end to immigration, lower taxes, more equitable redistribution, and greater autonomy. Moreover, the voters or the League for the most part live in communities based on strong ties, face-to-face relationships, and extensive social networking. Their lives are not fragmented by industrialism, they preserve strong communal ties, and there exists a strong Christian subculture.

In spite of the above-mentioned differences between the Northern League and other new-right movements, the new-right argument does help to informs us about resemblances between the case of Italy and that of other European countries. It can never be sufficiently stressed that all of those parties are motivated above all by the rising number of immigrants and the resulting economic problems. Although the voters for the Northern League are mostly of the elite bourgeoisie and have an ideology of civility, and thus are sincerely committed to non violence, pan-European nature of the new-right complaints and desires has had to be noted. Moreover, as demonstrated in chapter 10, on the Padanian Spring of 2012, the power-shift inside the party is likely to end the old entrepreneurial style of politics, paving the way for more rigid policies on the core issues of immigration, crime, and the economy. Thus, the Northern League, once an obstruction blocking the emergence of an Italian new-right movement like the examples in other European countries, is likely to transform itself to a full fledged new-right party in the long run.

Section 9.4.5: Northern League as Ethno-regionalist Party

Decisive characteristics of ethno-regionalism are: a subnational territorial border, an exclusive group identity, and a demand for a reorganization of the existing political structure so as to allow maximal autonomy. According to Cachafeiro (2001), the common characteristics uniting Europe's other ethno-regional parties are those: anti immigration policies, discourse on core/periphery, territorial politics, and the re-emergence of pre-modern allegiances. This type of regional politics is described as "the secession of the affluent" and the most notable examples are Bask, Catalan and Flemish nationalisms. The Scottish example is not cited because this model is predicated on the premise that the poor are so dependent on the state, through networks of patronage, that they are not likely to claim secession, the Scottish example described by Hechter (1975) represents a situation in which those patronage networks are not strong. Sicily's lack of claims to autonomy also fits nicely into this formulation, for the infamous *partitocrazia* and mafia in Sicily provide patronage on a national scale, thereby along with the use of terror as necessary, assuaging class tensions and preventing other civic organizations from emerging. (Schneider and Schneider 2003; Blok 1975; Ginsborg 2003; Gambetta 1993)

What makes the Northern League an utterly distinctive case is its invention of a nation having only the vaguest historical antecedents and the most idealistic of rationales. Prior to the declaration of Padanian independence in 1996, it was hardly possible to encounter even the word "Padanian". Thus wheras the national claims advanced by Basque, Catalan, Flemish and Scottish can be understood as the recrudescence of of pre-modern identities and belongings, Padanian Nationalism is an utter invention occurring at a historical "moment" in time, preconditions and causes being the focus of this research.

Also rather remarkably, and as noted earlier, the idea of Padania is not based on ethnicity. To the contrary, its proponents envision an environment in which the several ethnicities of the north can happily coexist, free from Italian oppression and exploitation. This does not mean that in the real world there are no tensions between the North's various ethnic groups; it does mean that the idea of Padania is chiefly a weapon raised to challenge Italian legitimacy and domination of the North. For most Leghisti, the idea of Padania is indeed a mere political tool; the fact that provincial and ethnic identities are more important to them is evidenced by their own penchant for drawing parallels between the League and the Basque and Catalan movements, thereby revealing the strongly romantic nature of their attachment to the League's identity, and independence.

Section 9.4.6: Northern League as Political Entrepreneur

Diamanti (1996), emphasizing the importance of the League's charismatic leader Umberto Bossi, describes the League as being a political entrepreneur; pragmatically using all possible discourses and resources to evoke the sentiments of the people, thus creating and consolidating a group of supporters. In support of his theory he cites instrumental changes in the League's discourse throughout its history.

Beginning in the early 1980s and up until their unification beneath the umbrella of the Northern League, small, local-level regional parties mounting an ethno-regional rhetoric sought to channel the social unease kindled by economic hardship and Mafia trials. In 1987, thanks to the leadership of Umberto Bossi, these local-level parties pooled their constituencies to become Northern League. Until the eruption of scandals of political corruption this period was marked by the consolidation of the power of the leader through a more general, inclusive, and non-ethnic discourse that made room in the new movement for several ethnic groups including Lombards

and the Venetians. The unifying ideology was based first on a civic culture, and second on an ethos of entrepreneurship and hardworking people, the *Popolo Produttore* (productive people). In that early phase the party strove to achieve federalism and based its discourse on Italy's regionally unequal redistribution of tax revenues. The eruption of corruption scandals in 1990 gave the party an opportunity to challenge the authority and legitimacy of the central Italian government and to claim secession from *Roma Ladrona* (thieving Rome). With the dissolution of the Christian Democratic Party the Northern League inherited Christian Democratic votes in suburban regions and gained substantial success in elections marking the end of the First Republic in Italy.

Although political entrepreneurship argument does not differ substantially from populism, it does gives us insights into the importance of the party, and its leader Bossi, in orchestrating the actions of its supporters. Moreover, it does provide us with the key to the historical development of the party, for, as explained before, the entrepreneurship model of politics has played a role in hindering the party from turning into just one more of the new-right movement that have spread across Europe, and in helping it to obstruct the emergence of such a movement. The recent leadership change is, however, likely to alter this entrepreneurship model.

I do appreciate contributions such as that made by Diamanti (1996) for they move us toward a better and more holistic approach towards the League and all it represents. But while each of the accounts has its explanation for the transformation of the movement through time, with each such explanation being the marker of a different time-period, the League fits into all and none of these definitions at the same time. Hence my refusal to adopt any single definition of it. Finally, the plethora of explanations offered of the party and of the desires of the people voting for it, serves

to substantiate my observation that the party is not the carrier of some sort of rigid ideology. People who vote for or make *militanza* have varying desires and reasons for involving themselves with the League but all use it as a tool to make their voices heard. The most important common ground shared by these people is anti-institutionalism, targeted once strictly at the Italian state but today broadened to also include the global powers.

Section 9.5: Implications for Application and Future Research

The application implications of this research for are twofold. First, together with the rise of the number of the immigrants in Europe, most of the western European ideas of nation, citizenship, and human rights are being challenged. Such a trend can be seen as healthy or at least as invigorating, but the rising anti-immigrant sentiments all over Europe are represented by the significant showings of several far-right movements in election and by the racist violence that now and then erupts. Current policies tend to oscillate wildly between policing and bargaining about rights on the one hand, and populist pandering and accusations of racism on the other. Indeed, in the case of Italy it is possible to speak about an utter lack of policy, if policy means a wisely nuanced approach that is aware of all the sociological ramifications of an issue.

The chief contribution of this study, in chapter 8, (Globalization and the Failing State) has been to insist that stigmatizing people as racists does help nothing but radicalize them and to show that local people harboring anti-immigrant sentiments are not erely narrow-minded racists, but individuals suffering from several discomforts produced globalization, including unlawful and uncontrolled immigration. This study also has suggested that while the de jure imposition of rights onto immigrants does address some immediate needs, it is likely to disrupt civic peace over the long run.

This study's chief recommendation is simple to state even if painfully difficult to achieve without sincere and sociologically informed endeavor: that all politicians and policymakers should seek to create and maintain an environment within which peaceful dialogue can occur. Ideally that environment also will be one in which information-flow

between immigrant and local population and the socialization of immigrants into the receiving population can be maintained. This is especially important when the immigrant population is Muslim. In the case of Muslims, centuries-long prejudices should not be expected to end in a day, and every effort at dialogue should be made with a an unflagging awareness of the fact. Thus these two vital points are, first, that only through dialogue and socialization both of which require quite a long while to take hold, can we overcome fears and prejudices. And second, a culturally conscious approach is needed, since very real, even if invisible, barriers between habits, symbols and ideas stand the immigrant and the receiving populations.

Two desiderata are perhaps even more important on the real-world, even if less so on the ideal, plane. First, immigrants struggling to understand the local ways of life in a city, the "rules" be they formal or informal, enforced or no, are silently crying out for strong guidance. Locals take for granted their own awareness of how to use public spaces, how to differentiate the types of garbage, how and where to park, how to drive, the proper way of behaving when with a woman, and on and on. Such urban lore could be passed on to immigrants with just a modicum of helpful outreach. Conversely, however, stronger enforcement by the state agents so as to reduce the widespread pickpocketing, stalking, and rape crimes widely perceived as being disproportionately committed by immigrants.

Another finding of this study that future researchers may wish to build upon is that illegal state activities and corruption tend to have a delegitimizing effect not only on politicians but also on the state itself. Thus, all acts undertaken with an eye toward continuing of the state such as forcing one's political will through manipulation (strategy of tension),

bribing local sources of power (convergence with the Mafia), and bribing populations (clientelism) may produce a result opposite from the one intended, damaging the image of the state and thereby paving the way for alternate claims of legitimacy. And of course, such intra-state problems are being immeasurably exacerbated by that inter-state phenomenon known as globalization. This is posing a direct threat to the state as we know it today, and political phenomena such as the Northern League came into existence when the modern national stated failed to address the problems created by a highly integrated global economic system, above all, the huge movements of capital and of people too often moving into the same direction that it all too blindly sets in motion

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