Giulia Marro

ImagItaly: representing Italian Culture Abroad

Ethnography of national stereotypes and National Culture. Being Italian living in Ljubljana and in Barcelona, through the Cultural Institutions and Organizations

Studio Kappa

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Indice

This research is a reflection on the Italian identity through the work of organizations promoting Italian culture abroad. It has been observed which stereotypes are emphasized in the interaction of Italians in foreign contexts: in what Italians do, how they establish networks, how they interact with foreigners, how they think and feel about their country. In particular the analysis of the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura* in the cities of Ljubljana and Barcelona had the aim to understand how and why the *luoghi comuni* and stereotypes are reinforced in their activities of spreading and promoting the image of the Italy abroad.

The origin of Italian Institute of Culture during the fascist regime, its comparison with other present organizations abroad which are not linked to the Italian State, led to reflect about the influence of the State in the process of building the Italian nation, which was pushing for a construction of a solid but quite artificial Italian culture. These have been all fundamental elements to understand why Italy today is an overly-stereotypical and mythologized country.

Giulia Marro

"*Se io dirò alcune cose circa questi presenti costumi (tenendomi al generale) colla sincerità e libertà con cui ne potrebbe scrivere uno straniero, non dovrò esserne ripreso dagli italiani, perché non lo potranno imputare a odio o emulazione nazionale, e forse si stimerà che le cose nostre siano più note a un italiano che non sono e non sarebbero a uno straniero*..."

Giacomo Leopardi (1824), *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degli italiani.*

Introduction

"Il caso dell'identità nazionale italiana pone in effetti,
tanto agli altri quanto a noi stessi,
interrogative assai intriganti sulla qualità peculiare
e contraddittoria del nostro modo di vivere il
sentimento di appartenenza ad una realtà nazionale unitaria"
(Tullio-Altan1999:141)

As an Italian student who has lived abroad for four years, my personal encounters with foreign national cultures, ways of living and perceiving the world allowed me to experience firsthand the process of becoming more and more aware of my national and cultural identity. "Becoming who we are and taking full possession of our own historically conditioned cultural identities-something that we must all attempt if we are living responsibly- is, then, of a piece with the practice of anthropology" (Kessler, 1991:63).

It is the same concept sustained by the famous intellectual Hanna Arendt (1989) and Fredrik Barth (1969) that most people have difficulties to *inhabit* their own culture, until the moment that they meet with different cultures. This process of consciousness leads people to confront themselves through the negotiation of difference, with consequences that include openness towards the other, but also an ability to look deeper inside one's own identity.

In this present work, my fundamental intention is to research Italian identity abroad: how it is perceived by local and Italian people in Ljubljana (Slovenia), and in Barcelona (Spain), and how it is presented by the Italian organizations in these places.

My choice to study this issue abroad, and not in Italy, is linked to my study program structure, the joint Master Creole, which gave me the possibility to live and do my research in the two cities of Ljubljana, Slovenia, from March 2011 - December 2011 and Barcelona, Spain, from January 2012. It is also linked to the anthropological base of my research, which favours the use of an "external eye". Therefore I considered it an appropriate solution to observe my national culture abroad, where it has a real and inevitable possibility to confront itself alongside other foreign realities, cultures and traditions. Most of the time this leads us to be aware of our national characteristics which results in, as Barth (1969) explains, a way of exhibiting particular traits of the culture and also the "relation of the external circumstances to which actors must accommodate themselves" (Barth, 1969:12).

Italian culture and lifestyle have always been so fascinating for foreigners, where the bad organization, the

confusion and noise, the loud voices and rubbish on the streets can be considered intriguing and curious. On the other hand there is the fashion and style, *la bella figura,* the famous cuisine, the closeness to the family and to *la mamma.* Other particularities of Italy, which often come up when people discover my origin, include Italian the image of the woman on television, the typical Italian accent when speaking any foreign language, the Vatican and the power of the Church in social life and values, racism towards immigrants and between the north and south of the country, corruption in politics, the famous "La Mafia". Italian corruption is maybe linked to the diseases of the bureaucratic system, its inefficiency, its tendency to ask for favors called *clientelismo* (Agnew, 2011) to do things "under the counter". In fact Italy is also well-known for its disastrous bureaucracy apparatus: in my interviews with foreign tourists travelling in Italy, students on Erasmus, foreign people living for a while in the country and even with Italians, the criticisms of the organizational and the eternal procedures were common.

For example Marco Rogari explains "One recent study suggested that two weeks of every working year are lost to Italians in queues and bureaucratic procedures- as much as 2000 billion lire (around 1 billion euros) is spent annually by Italians just to "certify" their status (car owner, divorced, resident at a particular address, and so on). It's not just expensive, it's exceptionally slow. It's been nicknamed the *lentocrazia,* the "slowcracy" (Rogari M. *Burocrazia Fuorilegge,* 2001, Speriling & Kupfer, Milan, quoted in (Jones, 2003: 19). Hence Italy is often seen as a country full of paradoxes and contradictions. Giacomo Leopardi (1824), one of the most famous Italian intellectuals of the 19th century, wrote in an

essay entitled *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degli italiani* that the attitude toward time spent on the streets, the love for entertainment and the Church were the main occasions for Italian society, and were the basic elements of their way of living, due to the weather of the peninsula and their historic tradition (Leopardi 1824 (ed.1969).

However, the image of a country cannot be reduced to a single identity and to a rigid and exclusive system of values: we can speak of "promotion of image" in order to increase the value of the economic and cultural national reality but it is necessary to keep in mind that a state does not operate as a company, and therefore the mechanisms of building a consensus and managing an image cannot be the same as those of a company. The risks of such a rigid perspective include the decrease of its communication policy or existing as a simple advertising campaign. In the case of Italy these risks are very real, because the cultural, artistic, aesthetic and gastronomical heritage is often mythologized or stereotyped. There is therefore the danger that the received image of the country is not the real one.

I chose to approach this topic in terms of 'organizational culture' as an aspect of national identity, analyzing the level of capacity for setting-up complex organizational schemes, organizing Italian events - for Italians and for people interested in Italian culture, also paying attention to their ability to adapt to new communication technologies.

In fact one morning whilst contemplating Ljubljanica, the river of the Slovenian capital, an Italian flag attracted my attention. Curious, I went inside and I discovered the presence

of the Italian Institute of Culture (called shortly IIC). I personally did not know anything about these types of institutes, and my first time inside one of them resulted a discovery of a little Italian corner in Ljubljana. I was happy, as my nostalgia for books in my native language had been suddenly fed (at an annual cost of 10 euros). Furthermore as a student of anthropology I started to be interested in the word 'culture' as an epithet, and therefore curious about its role, its function, its public and its activities. "*Here you have a concrete place where you can observe how Italy is perceived and how it presents itself abroad*!" a friend told me who followed all my reflections and doubts of my research topic.

Hence, through the presentation of the Italian Institute of Culture, the analysis of its function and aim abroad and its perception and way of presenting itself, my intent is to analyze, to understand and to confirm how the typical and often stereotyped Italian national is manifested in the cultural activities *for* and *of* Italians abroad. Above all I want to analyze the paradox between, on one hand, the 'pride' of *being Italian,* which is the base of the well-known export *made in Italy* and, on the other hand, the tendency to always auto-criticize Italian culture, practices, realities and character. Through interviews, observations, articles, conversations on social networks, images and videos, I continuously perceived this strong ambivalence.

The problem of national identity, and so of national character, is more and more present in debates and articles in the Italian press, but it is a matter that started in the *Rinascimento*. The important, singular and historical Italian background, in the cultural and political fields, seems to give

some responsibilities which are difficult to manage nowadays, or at least which seem to torment the Italian more than ever.

Tobias Jones, the author of the nice romance *The dark heart of Italy- an incisive portrait of Europe's most beautiful, most disconcerting country,* (2003) perceived this Italian particularity when he emigrated from Great Britain to Italy. In fact he found a country completely different from his expectations, which were drawn by the historical role and acknowledgement of its notable historical and literary past. He wrote:

"[T]here is an obvious, inexplicable inferiority complex about being Italian. The first time I went to browse through a bookshop, a host of indignant titles were on display: *Italy, the country we don't like, the Italian disaster, the abnormal country."* (Jones, 2003: 16)

Here, he is also referring to the famous Italian songs *"Non mi sento Italiano"*("I am not feeling Italian")*,* or "You wanna Be Americano", as proof of it. This aspect could be linked to the short historical past of Italy as a nation, which celebrated in 2011 its first 150 years of unity.

Looking from the position of an ethnographer both inside and outside of the institution and organization, I wanted to discover the real beginning of this "vicious circle": is the so-called "Italian character" like this because the bureaucratic organism is not working, or is it actually the organism that is not working because of the real existence of the Italian character that is allergic to this type of faith in the state and in the institution, preferring contact with the family and acquaintances? Is it one of the numerous motives of the contemporary Italian's -departure abroad, the so called *fuga dei*

cervelli ("brain drain")? With the intention to reply to these questions, the organizational analysis presents examples of these Italian features which are always present in the Italian reality and which I started to collate almost one year ago, taking into account the different characteristics of both cities, Ljubljana and Barcelona, their relation to Italy and Italians, their perceptions and contents through my personal activity and role as ethnographer.

More precisely, in the first chapter I am going to present the main purpose of the thesis and the literature framework, the second chapter gives place to the methodology of investigation and a more profound reason and motivation for this work. The third frames the Cultural Policy in Europe and in particular in Italy, through the tasks of the Italian Institute of Culture and the situation in Barcelona, where there is an interesting relation between the Italian Institute of Culture and other Italian realities not linked to the Italian State control.

A basic topic presented throughout my work is the reference to stereotypes and prejudices, how they are in fact present and solid within the Italian character, and how they are constantly affecting their activities.

1. Basic framework

1.1 Purpose of the thesis

The first and main purpose of this written work is to put in writing my ethnographic research, based on the idea of Jerome Bruner (1986) that a story has to take into account two landscapes simultaneously: the one of action and the one of consciousness. The landscape of action includes the "agent, intention or goal, situation, instrument, something corresponding to "story grammar" (Bruner 1986, 14) while the landscape of consciousness includes what people think, feel, what is beyond their actions. In the same way my intention is not only to describe the work of the main institutions and organizations which deal with Italian culture in Ljubljana and Barcelona, but also, in an anthropological manner, to analyze and understand what lies beyond the promotion of a national culture in our time. In the context of the original sentence, people in charge may welcome a representative from outside of the arts world and legitimatize a particular type of culture which is maybe linked to the historical stereotype and already far removed from the contemporary one. Regarding the case of Italy this is often confirmed, for example in this sentence:

"Le difficoltà italiane si acuiscono anche a cause di una modernizzazione incompiuta, laddove l'incompiutezza è ascrivibile alla concomitanza di fattori politici, economici e culturali, e alla discrasia tra i settori attivi della società e il sistema di potere" (Tullio-Altan, 1992).

Margaret Mead's (1953) idea is that the study and understanding of a national culture does not need obligations of a historical, large statistical or surveying nature, but that "the task is to delineate pattern, the statement is debatable". So she suggests observing behavior beforehand, and then including it in historical, statistical documentation, in order to ascertain the validity of the pattern so formulated (Mandelbaum, 2009:10); this is essentially what I have done in this present research.

Public use of the concept of national culture can be taken into consideration in two different ways, as Xavier Andrade (2002) suggests in his article *"Culture" as stereotype: public uses in Ecuador*. At the ethnographic level, culture as an 'object' is conceived in its different positions of power, while as an adjective, it regards the characters which can unite actors, depending on the use of the concept in different social situations (Andrade, 2002:235).

In the tentative of presenting a national culture, there is the risk of showing stereotyped features. But stereotypes can be simply considered as a catalogue of different features among cultures, which can provide more elements to be aware of each culture. Andrare (2002) calls this process 'typecasting': "when it is presumed to touch elements central to the perceived 'culture' of its targets and therefore of social and emotional importance to them. In this context, stereotypes

serve to produce political affiliations that sustain or contest certain forms of power". (Andrade, 2002: 236). Stereotypes have their historical and social bases (Musek 1997, 21) which then, once they are assigned, they are established and they remain as a label for the group in question.

Quoting Scepanovic words "[I]n each particular society they are re-established in a specific way, since they are incorporated into the inherited social conditions" (Scepanovic 1982:187, quoted in (Hudelja, 1997: 40). Prejudices are correlated with stereotypes and they can actually create an image of someone. For example the importance of Italian food permits automatically to create in the head of people that every Italian knows how perfectly cook pasta, preparing "*Il caffé",* and recognize a good or bad pizza.

Even if it is a generalization of the individual applied to the idea of the social national group which doesn't take into account the singular case, bearing in mind the clear stereotypes of Italian "pizza, mafia, spaghetti e mandolino". So, as stereotypes are present in daily life and in common relationships between humans, they are included in the same way throughout all my present work. Dealing with the method and the way to present a national culture, it is interesting to notice how stereotypes are connecting to *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1991) abroad and how they can influence their actions and sense of awareness.

1.2 Literature framework

This present work is based upon three different and complementary theoretical topics: the concept of national culture abroad, in particular how Italian identity is perceived and presented in the specific cases of Ljubljana and Barcelona; the thematic of organizational culture which helped me in the ethnographic methodology in organizations and in the analysis of the cultural institutions with the aim of representing and spreading the Italian culture abroad, with a reflection about the different level of cultural production, also in the virtual reality of social networks. Finally the issue of stereotypes, which is seen throughout my work, considering both the one linked to national culture, and also the one the *Istituto Italiano di cultura* represents.

Then main guideline for the development of my ideas and the consideration of my fieldwork comes from the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969), and above all his book *Ethnic, groups and boundaries.* In fact his structural – functionalist perspective upset the classical way to conceive ethnicity, which indicates a defined group based on the same linguistic, cultural and geographical criteria (regarding the Italian case the *logos* (language) is a singular matter of its proper Italian national reality, because it is not really useful and common abroad).

Here Barth gives more importance to linguistic and cultural criteria one, which are the more representative and useful for the identification of the member, and he underlines that it is not so important to distinguish carefully the differences, but to recuperate the main frequent features in order to affirm and preserve its cultural particularities, which

are linked to their historical or mythological past. He sustains that identity is a way of categorization of characteristics used by individuals in order to organize exchanges with other different ethnic groups. This is exactly what pushed me to investigate a topic linked to my own national culture after some years spent on exchanges and confrontations in other countries. And at the same time Barth's idea refers to organizations with the aim of spreading Italian culture, as for example the Italian Institute of Culture and other realities, which claim their Italian origin, organizing meetings and cultural activities addressed for Italians or locals interested in it. This feeling of belonging to a national reality such as the Italian one, is presented by Benedict Anderson in his famous book *Imagined community,* whose title explains something important about its contents.

"*Imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even her of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991, 6)

In fact in national realities we deal with collective creation of *imagined* communities, where we feel proximity to certain types of people only because 'national values' are shared. And we can again find this imaginary dimension in the Italian Institute of Culture, which aims to represent and promote Italian culture for local people and for Italian residents in that city.

Another important reference to develop my work has been the Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990), who in *Disjuncture and differences in the global cultural economy* describes the imaginary of the social actor beyond the modern

state borders, observing the contemporary global movements and exchanges. He attests the existence of "tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" (Appadurai, 1990). In fact the power of images, of ways of communication, the rapidity of spreading news and information is changing our paradigm of everyday life and our conception of global and local. He identifies five dimensions in the cultural global economy, which are five fluxes characterized by instability and motion: 1) *ethnoscapes*, 2) *mediascapes*, 3) *technoscapes,* 4) *finanscapes*; 5) *ideoscapes.*

They are respectively the movement of humans, images, technology, money and ideas. In his analysis he is more interested in the way social actors live and manage these kinds of experiences. He chose to use the term *scape,* because they are not fixed or objected situations, but which are influenced by the historical and politic backgrounds of actors and groups, part of the Nation-State, communities and other little entities such as villages or families. He focused his gaze on the role of these social actors in the different fluxes and into their ways of observing the *imagined world*, which is Appadurai's consequence of the actual relationship between global and local.

The topic of identity and nationalism, has also been faced and clarified in *Citizenship and national identity-from colonialism to globalism* by Oommen (1987) and in particular the sections entitled *Citizenship and national identity: the emerging stirring in Western Europe* by Alfonso Alfonsi(1987), and *Nationalism and Citizenship: the crisis of authority and solidarity in Latin America (Brazil)* by P.Reis Elisa (1987). Some reflections about 'identity conscience' are fundamental elements in the national character of a country that has been

studied and theorized by Ruth Benedict (1934) in her master piece *Patterns of Culture* where she sustains that the main sentiment of community for *symbolic communities* is common history, the sentimental link which permits the transmission with memory the identity of the group.

Translating and focusing this argument to the particular Italian case the book *Gli italiani in Europa- profile storico comparatore delle identità nazionali europee,* by Carlo Tullio-Altan (1999), has been a good reference about the historical background of Italy as a European country, seen from an anthropological point of view. This book, written by this Italian anthropologist, can be considered as close to my project, and in fact he justifies his choice saying that:

"Non si può essere certi di conoscere fino in fondo il popolo del quale ognuno ne fa parte per nascita e residenza se la nostra limitata esperienza non ci permette un confronto con altri popoli, diversi per idee e costume. Senza la prospettiva di un "diverso" che si proponga a noi come sfida e alternative possible, resteremmo sigillati nella nostra naturalistica identità etnica, e non avremmo occhi per vederci come siamo, col rischio di cadere in quella forma di paranoia collettiva che è l'etnocentrismo. (Tullio-Altan 1999, 141).

The collection of essays titled *Revisioning Italy: National identity and global culture b*y Beverly Allen and Mary J. Russo, in particular with the article of John Agnew *The myth of backward Italy in Modern Europe* and the one of Antonio Negri *Italy, exile country* gave me the opportunity to have a solid historical reflection of the conditions of Italian culture nowadays, compared to its well known 'mythologized" image

and its past as a young nation. Silvana Patriarca (2010) in *Italian neopatriotism: debating national identity in the 1990s* and *Unmaking the nation? Uses and abuse of Garibaldi in contemporary Italy,* gave me elements to reflect about considering the importance of the past dealing with the construction and modeling of the contemporary Italian character and feeling of national identity. Regarding the Italian past as a country of emigration I read Matteo San Filippo *Emigrazione italiana: il dibattito storiografico nel nuovo millennio*, then Mia Fuller (2007) in *Modernity abroad* who presents Italian colonization intentions and results, focusing more on the Italian style applied in new constructions made up in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Afterwards, regarding the topic of Organizational culture, Fredrik Barth's (2002) article, *Towards a richer description and analysis of cultural phenomena,* had been fundamental in my path of anthropological observation and 'interpretation' of Italian national character in organizations which have the aim of presenting and spreading Italian culture abroad. In fact there he explains how cultural facts are a mirror of how individuals think and conceive the complex world, and furthermore "it is precisely by shifting their gaze from generalizing about culture to giving a reasoned account of people that these anthropologists are able to capture the reality of cultural things.

What they do is to show how cultural images, knowledge, and representations are deployed, and sometimes created, by situated persons with purposes, acting in complex life situations" (Barth, 2002 p. 32). Similar reflections are made by Christopher Hann in the article *All kulturvolker now?: social anthropological reflections on the German- American tradition,*

where he sustains that the word culture is today used in order to mark the sense of common identity and that it is "particularly interesting to examine cases in which group culture is still *in status nascendi* that is, where an ethnic or national identity is under construction by intellectual elites" (Hann, 2002 p. 265).

I found the same issues, but focused on the example of Italian Institutes of Culture, in the article of Alessandro Carrera (2002), who has been working in these types of institutions. While Migone e Schwarz's (2007) in *Istituti Italiani di cultura e promozione cultural: quale riforma?*, they do an overview of the history of the IIC, its functions, staff, its economic resources, in order to prepare the terrain for critics and new propositions, using for their argumentation a parallel with the *Goethe Institute* and the *Institute Français*. While regarding the general topic of the Institute of Culture, the article written by the Greek professor Gregory Paschadilis (2009) delineates a general European frame of the promotion of national culture, explaining all the processes of growth and innovation.

Eric Wolf 's (1993) ideas in his article *Facing power: old insight, new questions* and Susan Wright (1994) in *Anthropology of organization,* focuses on the importance of understanding organizations in order to understand cultures, because they can control the sources, the elements and "it draws on tactical power to monopolize or share out liens and claims…" (Wolf, 1993: 223).

In order to understand how institutions work and how they contain elements of national identity, I took as a reference the studies made by Sanday (1979), Gregory (1983), Allare and

Firsirotu (2002), Podjed (2004,2011) and Mary Jo Hatch (2006). Organizational culture material led me in my ethnographic fieldwork giving me some advice about my position towards organizations. One of the main guidelines was the book *Inside organization,* which is a collection of essays edited by David Gellner and Eric Hirsch. The aim of their book is essentially to explain how anthropologists today in Britain are studying organizations. They deal with different types of organizations, for example working in health services, capitalist markets, policy and government agencies.

Another masterpiece about the ethnographic technique for this type of study is *Organizational ethnography,* by Daniel Neyland, which is more focused on the effective work and role of the ethnographer, on how "observation and participation aims to engage with questions of how a particular groups operates, what it means to be a member of a particular group and how changes can affect that group" (Neyland 2008: 1). He presents his advise, some useful tasks to find good methods of analysis and some examples of fieldwork experience. The preparation for the ethnographic fieldwork permitted me also to conceive and structure a *multi-sited ethnography* (Marcus, 1995) in different positions toward the organization, being at times inside and outside the observed organizations.

Moreover Marcus (1995) suggestions helped me to structure a multi-sited ethnography on a 'double level', because I did my research in two different cities: Ljubljana in Slovenia and Barcelona in Spain. There, observing Italian cultural organizations, dealing with the negotiation and perception of cultural differences, I encountered the concept of Schismogenesis, firstly used in anthropology by Bateson in 1972

in his book *Step towards an Ecology of Mind*. This expression is based on the social behavior of groups of people or individuals in relation to other groups of people or individuals, and it literary means "progressive creation of divisions in the norms of individual behavior resulting from cumulative interactions between individuals." (Bateson, 1987:67). In his analysis he describes progressive differentiation between social groups or individuals, which can be symmetrical, complementary or reciprocal (in this last case the behavior is balanced and there is not schismogenesis). In this way I focused my attention on the historical and contemporary relationship of Italians and these two cities. The differences between Barcelona and Ljubljana, have been faced in the work carried out by Mary Douglas(1987), in the chapter entitled *Smallness of scale discounted,* in the book *How Institution thinks,* and by John Urry(2009) in *Theory, culture and society*. Here she explains how small dimensional societies simplify human relations, solidarity, organization and the development of deeper ideas and thoughts. They are more careful to the components and they are more self-organized. In my personal research this issue helped me to justify in some way the birth of new and independent groups, associations and gatherings in situations with wide and non-homogeneous public in a big reality such as Barcelona.

Then, regarding the topic of cultural production, comparing the different ways of spreading and presenting Italian national culture, my guideline for reflection about the legitimating of producing culture, the different level of 'official-state funded' culture and the 'popular-subsided' one have been Pierre Bourdieu, Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, Bennett, Adorno.

In fact William (1958), one of the first intellectuals of cultural studies, deals with the major tendencies in modern cultural production, in a reflection about the process of legitimate culture. His main idea is that "culture is ordinary" and that it has two main aspects: the first one is shown in everyday life, known meanings and directions, while the second one is the use of observations and meanings. There, the idea of 'National culture' is an arena of thought about the problem of ordinary culture within society where local, national and global meanings circulate and collide (Williams, 1958 (1989).

Pierre Bourdieu (1973, 1983, 1986), with his studies and empirical research of high-culture domain, in his book *The field of Cultural Production* (1983) presents his theory of social stratification, where (Bourdieu, et al., 1986) he sustains that different social capital and economic capital determine class fractions, and influence the level of the cultural capital. This concept of 'cultural capital', firstly articulated by Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron in *Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction* (1973), is so linked to the social possibility of the individual of accumulated knowledge, the way to externalize it (education, capacity of speech, physical appearance, dress, etc..) and finally of extending social relations.

In the way that this type of organization can present and promote itself, the virtual dimension in these last periods took on an important role. My study expanded also in connection between organizations and social network, considering them as complex systems opened to the general public, having as a main function the capacity to build connections, through advertising activities, and mintaining communication with their public (Hovey, 2010, Wijava, Spruit, Scheper, Versendaal, 2001,

Waters, R.D. et al.,2009). My aim is to demonstrate that such research can help understand better new ways of communications, and that contemporary technologies have the power to influence cultural practices (Wilson and Peterson, 2002). They deal also with a sort of *cultivation strategy*, which are defined by J. E. Grunig (2002) as "communication methods that public relations people use to develop new relationships with the public and to deal with the stresses and conflicts that occur in all relationships" (quoted in Hovey, 2010:4).

Finally, dealing with the topic of representation and national image, the strong connection with stereotypes is dealt with perfectly in the article by Xavier Andrade, *"Culture" as stereotype: public uses in Ecuador.* It gave me good points to be aware of; the frequent and inevitable use of stereotypes, and also about their importance and role in the differentiation of culture. Then, a more theoretical base of nature and permeation of stereotypes and prejudices was *Prejudices and Stereotypes in the Social Sciences and Humanities- Didactic Experiences in the Introducing of Novelties in the Ethnological Curricula* by Božidar Jezernik in Rajko Muršič, reagarding cultural diversity in business and how it affects relationships and work in organizations: *Riding the waves of culture,* by Fons Trompenaars (1993), and *Business Etiquette- What to do and what not to do,* by Lynne Brennan (2003).

Regarding in particular Italian identity and its national character, which is the basement for the construction and deconstruction of stereotypes, I surprisingly found a document set up by Giacomo Leopardi in 1824, almost 40 years before the building of Italy as a united nation. There I found an attentive analysis of the Italian way of living and attempt to conceive

everyday life, social relationships, compared to others countries in the Mediterranean area and the north of Europe. He managed to link his reflection to the historical and political background of the country and to other concrete issues, such as the weather, its geographical position and language. While the more contemporary romance of Tobias Jones, *The dark heart of Italy* has been important not only as a literature reference for what I was noticing during my fieldwork, but also because it opened my eyes to some Italian characteristics that I had never thought of before!

I took this presentation as a basic reference for my hypothesis and my intention to test how the Italian national character is built from different perspectives, how it is expressed and captured abroad, above all by institutions and associations with the aim of embodying and promoting Italian national culture in other countries.

2. Italian observing italians

"A fish only discovers its need for water when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. It sustains us. We live and breathe through it"

(Trompenaars, 1993: 21).

I started to notice that when I am with people from different countries, we often speak about the differences in our languages, in the way we eat, cook, organize things, our way of living, and of perceiving relations. We are constantly dealing with our "national culture and provenience", maybe more than when we are living in our home countries. In other words the concept of national *Imagined communities* (Anderson, 1991) is empathized when living abroad for a period, and there is a general perception of understanding more things about our home country and its inhabitants, from listening to people's comments about it, their personal experiences and

impressions. In international meetings, one of the first obvious questions people ask is "where are you from?”.

The national provenience has become so fundamental in interpersonal relationships, and today, with the increase of global flows, and the intensification of international news, videos, photos, and stories from different places, it is common to feel that everything is near and familiar. This is the contemporary phenomena observed by Appadurai (1990) and theorized in the construction of different “landscapes” in which the imaginary context is overlapping the real one.

2.1 Fieldwork choice and anthropology at home

With this present work I realized my wish to do research about the country I was born in, because since I left Italy in order to study abroad, I started to consider “being Italian” as an important tool in my daily life. In particular I started considering the possibility to observe something from outside as a stimulant; in his complexity and particulars - which pushed me to focus into this topic - Edward Said (1979) wrote in his book *Orientalism*:

“The more one is able to leave one’s cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily too, does one asses oneself and alien

cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance" (Edward Said, 1979: 259).

Even though I was living abroad in France and Spain for two years, I only started to be involved and interested in "national group identity and imaginary" when I was living in Ljubljana, in Slovenia. Maybe because the process of *nostalgia* did not start before, and above all because I was curious about other cultural life and local traditions in the places where I had been living. But Ljubljana, even if it is close to Italy, has different elements, starting from the language and the history, which are two important elements in the body of a national culture.

I started, without a precise aim, to register all the comments people made when they discovered my home country. I need to explain that during that time in Italy there still was a sort of "media and public dictatorship" lead by Silvio Berlusconi, the former prime minister, and this aspect was a strong reason for external critics and mockery. The same Italians, as Tobias Jones reports, were judging their country as "a mess", "a nightmare", and, most often, a "brothel". Italy, they said, was a "banana republic" or, since the advent of Berlusconi, a "banana dictatorship" (Jones, 2003: 16). Above all for the Italian living abroad, this is not a secondary element, because, in my research path, I realized it as being one of the main causes of "Italian contemporary migration" and also the main stimulant for the loss of faith in the Italian institution and the need to convene independent associations.

This personal path to my research confirms James Clifford's idea that "the fieldworker, typically, starts from scratch, from a research *experience*, rather than from reading

or transcribing" (Clifford e Marcus, 1986: 117). Ljubljana above all gave me the possibility to deal with people from unfamiliar countries, for example from the Balkan countries, because they cannot participate in the European Erasmus program. They usually cannot do an exchange in other European countries, while in Slovenia they can participate in another program, Cmepius (Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programs).

I started then to realize how considerations, ideas, prejudices and stereotypes about Italians were often quite different from those I was used to listen hearing in France and Spain. This is due also to a different kind of Italian presence, the different historical relationship and proximity to Italy, and above all from the different numbers of Italians living in the two cities (in all of Slovenia there are 800 Italians, while in the city of Barcelona alone the Italian community represents the second biggest foreign community, with 22,909 people registered in January 2012)[1].

In any case, in Slovenia and in Spain, regarding the relationship between the Italian and local population, the stereotypes and the image that has been constructed in the correspondent mind, brings to mind the phenomenon of 'schimogenesis', theorized by Bateson. If there are two groups, for example "different minorities, clans, villages and nations of Europe" (Bateson, 1987:67), showing symmetrical behaviours

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[1] Font: Departament d'Estadística. Ajuntament de Barcelona

or patterns towards each other in a different way than they would in their group, they can create a sort of *vicious cycle.* Here "each group will drive the other into excessive emphasis of the pattern, a process which if not restrained can only lead to more and more extreme rivalry and ultimately to hostility and the breakdown of the whole system" (Bateson,1987:68). While in the case of complementary differentiation, like in cases of different social class, cast, age or sex, the behavior is completely different and there is a progressive condition of submission, which can again tend toward a breakdown. Bateson specified that in 1942, intellectuals were interested above all in the differences between England and America, so he translated his analysis in these two national characters, taking into account German characteristics also.

This concept can be linked to the Italian culture in relation with other ones, and the complementary creation of national characters stereotypes. I can take as an example the belief of Slovenian's discretion and of the Italian openness: in this case it is simple to create a condition in which these two points are considered to be true, and so the behaviour is influenced as a consequence. During my fieldwork I found this notion, when Slovenians told me to pay attention to not ask personal things in the questionnaire, but then at the same time, when I was presenting it to Slovenian students, and had the possibility to speak with another Italian speaker, they started to ask me a lot of personal things. In this case I realized that during our contact I had changed my behaviour towards them, because they were Slovenian, and I suppose they changed their too for the same reasons.

Besides, it is important to perceive that "[N]o action and no ethnic group can be immune against autostereotypes, nor (even

less possible) against heterostereotypes" (Musek 1997, 19), when saying autostereotypes it refers to members of our own group, so in my case Italian ones. Being aware of them, listening to both the "auto definition" of Italians and the comments of foreigners, has been an important element of awareness.

Regarding this issue a Bulgarian freelance graphic designer, Yanko Tsvetkov, known as an *alphadesigner* [2] made maps of Europe and of the entire world denominating the countries according to the main stereotypes he gathered living abroad, meeting people from different countries, considering himself "nowhere near as narrow-minded as his maps". (Dowling, 2012)

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[2] Official web site: alphadesigner.com

Italy according to posh Italians reminds me of the expression "Italy ends at Rome. Naples, Calabria, Sicily and all the rest are part of Africa", which is from the nineteenth century, spoken by a Grand Tour traveler, and which is still heard today in Italy. It includes the question; what might constitute a nation? (Verdicchio, 192)

This image shows Europe according to Silvio Berlusconi (previous prime minister of Italy), which makes me think to this reflection about Italian national character: "Italians are too cheerful, too interested in running after women (a clear indication that the stereotyped image is that of a male) (Marazzi, 1997: 278), even if this is the case of Berlusconi' (he is actually going to be processed for aid and abet of prostitution) and the terms used (for example *pussy)* in this map can be considered too vulgar maybe and exaggerated for this kind of context.

EUROPE ACCORDING TO THE SWISS
designed by alphadesigns.com

BANKS, EH?

LIKE US, BUT RICHER
LIKE US, BUT BORING
SANTA CLAUS

LEGO
ALCOHOLICS
GUINNESS
CITY
FABERGE EGGS

STEUERLAND
EUROPOOR DU NORD
BEER
CHERNOBYL
CHINA

LEGEND
- Eurozone
- Swiss enlargement areas
- Rest of EU and Europe
- Something else

OUEST SAUVAGE
WORLD
DUMMIES
EUROPOOR DU SUD
JAPAN
KOREA

BEACH
BARCELONIA
THE THIRD WORLD
ALLAH
AFRICA
BANKRUPT HOTELS
MINARETS

MARS
JUPITER
MERCURY

EUROPE ACCORDING TO THE POLES
designed by alphadesigns.com

CANADA

REFRIGERATOR
INVESTORS
VODKA ADDICTS
EASTERN BULLY

GODLESS TRAITORS
TOYS
TOO WINDY

POTATOES
OATS
WESTERN BULLY
POLAND
OUR FORMER COLONIES

BEER
DRUNKS
BIG SAUSAGES

WRINKLED BULLY
COOL DUDES
GYPSIES

PUSSIES
LOW-CLASS HOLIDAYS
CRAZY PEOPLE

LAND OF SAINT CATHOL
KIND OF BORING
GRANDMA'S BEACH

TOMATOES AND BULLS
SUNBED
HOTELS ON STRIKE
MINARETS

Other examples of Europe countries according to Swiss, Polish and French.

The idea of studying ideas, prejudices, stereotypes and people of the same *national community* as me, can be explained by my way of thinking of anthropology: "I prefer to think of anthropology as a general and comparative study of society and culture, including, as Kroeber's words *ourselves, here, now, at home"*. (Hannerz, 1993:5), quoting the words in the introduction of the book of Ulf Hannerz *Cultural complexity*. In anthropology research the question of the subjectivity of the ethnographer is central, and it is the key concept of the postmodernist paradigm, and it makes us face the famous "dilemma of representation" (Salzman, 2001): if everyone can be the object of anthropological studies, who has the authority to describe another's culture? Who actually has the authority

to speak and to explain their own culture? James Clifford explains this question with a forceful quote:

"Ethnography in the service of anthropology once looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-western, or pre-literate, or non-historical, if extended, soon becomes incoherent. Now ethnography encounters others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as other" (Clifford, 1989: 23).

In my research, although I am not studying in my home country, I am dealing with an Italian institution. I am collaborating with Italian people who are working there and who are living abroad like me and it is a good opportunity to analyze the vision of Italy and the Italian, in order to know the stereotypes and the images of Italy and the Italian abroad.

But I have to admit that I became more and more worried about my proximity to my "observed subjects". I started to think "[i]f we read into others our own motives and understandings, how can we understand theirs? But how can anthropologist transcend their own culture? It is in our nature to have a viewpoint and a position in relation to others, and that viewpoint must be influenced by one's natal way of life" (Charrithers, 1992: 3)

This is dealing with the so called "anthropology at home" which is often considered as opposite to "anthropology abroad", even if I sustain that the differences between these two approaches are not as great as they used to be. In fact the subjective experience we install into all of our writing is visible, in both types of researches: "abroad" and "at home". However there is a stronger influence of our own *emic* perspective when we are doing fieldwork at home, which comes into conflict with our ethic

role of an observer- we are at the same time the informant and the writer. The impact this has on the methodology is particularly visible in the final text itself, which incorporates the voice of the author more explicitly than ever before. I think that the biggest difference is that when we are doing fieldwork at home, we can never fully 'observe', while when doing it abroad, we can never fully 'participate', which of course, casts doubts on the whole concept of participant observation.

One of the main reasons is the language used in communication, because it is obviously simpler to interact, to participate and to understand in our own language, without the risk of losing important words and expressions in another one. Anderson (1991) explains how language has a key role in the construction of *imagined* communities:

"There is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests above all in the form of poetry and songs. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance" (Anderson, 1991: 145)

Is it maybe for this reason that the anthropologist *par excellence*, studying "other cultures", is called 'professional stranger'? Sharon Macdonald (1997), writing about the topic of "anthropology at home" quotes Marilyn Strathern, who substained that this is a difficult tool to explain, because it's like to change the main reason of developing of the discipline of anthropology. Why? Because we are part of the same group, we have beliefs, traditions, knowledge and sometimes it could

happen that we can't see them with enough cultural distance (Mcdonald, 1997:161). But she considered also this type of research as 'auto-ethnography' which can have positive properties, "for the very fact of shared concepts means that exploring the semantic constellations and implications of our subjects' knowledge and practice, we simultaneously explore our own. This makes ethnographers of the closely reflective context particularly well placed to turn anthropology to a kind of 'cultural critique'- 'the job of reflecting back on ourselves' (Marcus and Fisher, 1986:111)" (ibidem).

When I started to have this idea in my mind as fieldwork, extending from a personal level to a collective one, I was also spending time observing Italian tourists in Ljubljana and in Barcelona (I went back there several times), especially the way they were walking and speaking in the streets, how they communicated uninhibited with foreigners in Italian, or how they showed an awful English. Noticing this, I realized how shameful it was for me this incapacity for communication of Italians, but at the same time it was also useful, I suppose, in order to understand on a bigger level our relationship with other countries, also on an institutional level, which is the point I am going to discuss throughout the following chapters. Moreover in a recent Italian article in the newspaper *Il Sole 24 ore,* I found this sentence which explains exactly my thoughts:

"Ma non è forse cosi che proprio per prevenire una perdita di identità chi vive all'estero si sente ancora più stimolato ad aggiornarsi, a mantenere viva la propria italianità, adottando addirittura a volte degli atteggiamenti ipercritici verso sé stessi e il proprio paese? In questo senso siamo noi "italians" ad accorgerci che tantissimi italiani che vivono in Italia non hanno la

più pallida idea di chi siamo e come viviamo realmente. Che sia provincialismo? Fermiamoci a questa affermazione per non slittare in una considerazione molto più negativa".[3]

For example there is often the argument of the construction of a "new other Italy, often more updated and creative to the one which stays on the territory hypothesizing misleading and fantasizing identities for the notorious group of Italians abroad" (Chiaberge, 2008) So, having in mind the general topic of my research, I had the necessity of delimiting borders and spaces of fieldwork where to observe the "Italian culture".

I chose then to focus my participant observation *inside* and *outside* (Neyland, 2001) these types of organization, the *Istituti Italiani di Cultura*, which are today collocated in 93 cities around the world. Being official organisms which act on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministero degli Affari Esteri-MAE*), their 'official' main function is "to spread and promote the Italian culture and language abroad ", according to the law 401 of the 22nd of December 1990. They represent (or attempt to represent) the reference for the implementation of the cultural policy of Italy outside the country, and they present themselves as the meeting point of encounter and dialogue for intellectuals, artists and other cultural workers, but also for all citizens, Italian and foreign, who want to establish or maintain relationships with Italy.

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[3] Comment to an article of *Il Sole 24 ore, I fannulloni della cultura italiana all'estero,* by Ricchardo Chiaberge, 14-06-2008

Maybe in order to observe and study this *"italianità"* *(*Santoro, 2003:45), another researcher, would have find another way to study and observe Italian stereotypes, for example following football fans and clubs. In fact personal characteristics of the researcher are important to take into account, as Bernard Russell wrote in his article *Methods belong to all of us,* the main ones are: age, gender, language fluency, objectivity, informant accuracy, informant representativeness (Bernard, 1993:7). I met quite a large number of researchers who were focused on that, and also Tim Parks (2002) for example*,* who wrote *A Season With Verona: Travels Around Italy in Search of Illusion, National Character, and Goals*, with the intention to show the main Italian characteristics, stereotypes, national main features, through soccer games and fights. It is then an issue of viewpoints that influence our behavior and our ways of looking at reality:

"In the life of an individual, viewpoints have many functions. […] People have a need to express those viewpoints which enable them to express notions that reflect their central values, […] they help us to classify new information and experience and to simplify the complexity of the world in which we live (ibidem,98). (Zidov, 1997: 53)

In my research, when collecting different stories, opinions, ideas, suggestions, I made the effort to be objective in what I was observing and studying, however I recognize the power and influence of my personal points of view.

2.2 Methodology: the role of ethnographer

Russell Bernard (1993), giving suggestions to how to write good ethnography, underlines how a good one is often a good story. The base of ethnography *story* is the fieldwork, where the researcher is observing and participating with people who stimulate his curiosity. In this kind of report, the ethnographer is free and he is invited to put down also his personal field notes, his feelings, thoughts, ideas and projects. In my fieldwork notes I always wrote my personal reflections and interpretations in first singular person, trying to catch every detail, observing, listening, recording the entire environment around the people (their performance, characteristics, interactions, appearance, etc.). As I lead my research in Ljubljana and Barcelona, taking part in the work of an organization, observing and trying to define elements of Italian character in the structure of a Cultural Organization abroad, I mostly focus the role of ethnographer into the field of organizational culture, in order to catch all the details and to better figure out the main issues of the 'Italian character'.

But in this kind of study we face the difficulty of defining the concept of culture, as it happens in other circumstances and fields. Kathleen Gregory (1983) sustained that "organizational culture was becoming translated in the study of the informal or "merely" social or symbolic side of corporate life" (Gregory, 1983:359). So the study of a determined organization or a company could be considered as "applied anthropology", including "the study of the work itself, the technology, the formal organization structure, and everyday

language, not only myths, stories, or special jargon" (ibidem). However, Justine Erčulj, dealing with a research conducted in two primary schools in Slovenia based on the symbolic notion of organizational culture, explains that Organizational Culture can be observed from two different points of view: "as something an organization **has**; as something an organization **is**." (Erčulj, 2009:69), where the first one is dealing more with the management aspect of organizational culture, while the second one deals with the anthropological side of research.

Dealing properly with methodology advices, Neyland (2008) organizes his book *Organizational ethnography* in ten chapters, calling them "sensibilities". These ten sensibilities are the main warning points of an anthropologist who wants to start studying an organization, not to be taken as recipes or instructions, but as suggestions and inputs to build one's own method and methodology. The first sensibility is the "ethnographic strategy", facing the first questions at the base of ethnography, for example which group is one going to observe, where, and very specific problems.

The second "question of knowledge", is presenting the three main approaches to knowledge to apply in fieldwork: realistic, narrative or reflexive ethnography. Then we find "locations and access", with suggestions about multi-sited ethnography and how to access organizations. The fourth sensibility, "field relations" is giving importance to the way one establishes contacts with members of the organizations and questions about trust and collaboration. Which relationship will you be looking for with people? Are you going to work with them? Or will you be an outsider, observing?

The formula "ethnographic time" refers to the questions of how long a good ethnography should be and how much time it is better to spend in the field. Neyland reports Bate's sentence: "[o]rganization anthropologists rarely take a toothbrush with them these days" (Bate 1997:1150, quoted in Neyland, 2008:10), referring to the short time ethnographer usually spends inside the organization, while in the chapter "observing and participating" the reader can find the main points to be observed and to be taken into account studying the work of an organization. "Supplementing" describes the main tools and material which can be used in the fieldwork, such as interviews, cameras and technology and in "writing" there are all the suggestions about the method of taking field notes and transforming them into an ethnographic text, useful material also for the organization itself. The sensibility "ethics" is facing all the important features and rules to keep ethic behaviour as an ethnographer in an organization's environment, and in the last one, "exit", the author presents five different way to leave the organization, depending on the main aim of the ethnographer's study. In my fieldwork experience I considered it of real importance the questions; which role will I play in the organization, how will I structure my research, my study's focus and the aim of the research? I will use this schema to explain my role in the different organizations studied in the two cities.

2.2.1 Study case in Ljubljana

The Republic of Slovenia is situated in the east part of Europe, it has a border with Italy for 235 km, then Austria, and Hungary. It has an area of 20256 km^2 and has 2050289[4] inhabitants. Ljubljana is the capital city, with around 300,000 inhabitants, not counting all the students of the university and the commuters who populate the city during the week. The country has a relatively homogeneous ethnic composition, because approximately 88 percent of inhabitants are of Slovenian ethnicity, while the others come from the countries of the Balkans; Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania, Macedonia.

The Italians in Slovenia are really few, 870 Italians[5] registered in 2011 in a total of 15000 immigrants. One of the employees of the IIC in Slovenia revealed to me that among the new Italians who came to live in Ljubljana, the majority are male, between 30 and 40 years old, having followed their Slovenian partner. This was also the main motivation of all the teachers of Italian in the IIC. In Slovenian territory there is an

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[4] Slovenia, Statistical office of the Republica of. «Prebivalstvo po starosti in spolu, 1. julij 2010 in 1. januar 2011.» *www.stat.si.* 1 Janvier 2011. http://www.stat.si/letopis/2011/04_11/04-04-11.htm (consultato il giorno April 17, 2012).

[5] Slovenia, statistical office of the Republic of «Prebivalstvo po državi državljanstva in spolu.» *www.stat.si.* 1 January 2011. http://www.stat.si/letopis/2011/04_11/04-33-11.htm (consultato il giorno April 17, 2012).

Italian minority, in Koper, Izola and Piran[6], officially recognized by the Memorandum of London and the Treaty of Osimo between Yugoslavia and Italy in 1975. The same agreements recognize also the mirror situation in Italy, where there are Slovenians living as an official minority out of the national state, above all in the cities of Trieste, Gorizia and Udine (Miklic e Ozbot, 2001). This is because the historical political events between Italy and Slovenia are rich with interrelations and events, in particular regarding their borders between the 1880 and 1956. What really happened actually is still in doubt and criticized by both sides, and from 1993 until 2000 the Slovene and the Italian government conducted the research "Slovene-Italian Historical and Cultural Commission", in order to "elucidate problems from the past and the settle mutual relations in the future as genuinely as possible" (Ministery of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, 2000).

The Italian image in Slovenia cannot be very positive, if we refer to the experience and the role of Italy in Slovenia during fascism, and the political consideration of Slovenia by Italy, and the Italian language is not so spread as a foreign language. In my interviews I found really different reasons of the interest in Italian language. For example, the students who live close to the Italian border and who are used to watching Italian television and to speaking with tourists when they go to their family's restaurant ("*because when they come to our*

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[6] Being bilingual cities, their corresponding Italian name are: Capodistria, Isola and Pirano.

country, Italian speak only Italian!" Spela, 24 years old*)*, or the woman who has to deal with Italian merchants for her work, or the 82 year old man who is studying Italian in order to read Italian writers in original language.

"Ha vissuto un po' a Bologna, negli anni '70, e dato che legge molti libri classici italiani, usa nel linguaggio orale delle espessioni molto datate, che la fanno spesso sorridere" (Ratsko, 82 years old).

In Ljubljana there are a lot of Italian classical books because when the fascists tried to "assimilate" the province Ljubljana into their regime, they brought many Italian books with them. This was one of the numerous examples of the process of *"italianizzazione"*, which had also planned the change of surnames into Italian, etc…. Any way the Slovenians have always been strongly in contact with neighboring populations and even with their languages (German, Italian, Croat, Serb, Hungarian), and due to the small number of Slovenian speakers and the small dimension of the country, they have always had the necessity to learn other languages.

In Ljubljana I carried out a participant observation *inside* the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura* (Italian Cultural Institute, which I will refer to as IIC from now on), in order to understand how Italian culture can present itself and how it is perceived from the local population and the Italian one in Slovenia, and to observe which type of public IIC's activities are addressed. They easily accepted my proposition of collaboration for an internship, proposing to me to work for them every evening in the information office. My main tasks regarding the internship consisted of the preparation of advertising material, assistance

in the logistics of events and communications with local and Italian institutions. I was also helping Italian teachers with the examination of language certificates, preparing press releases and maintaining contacts with the local audience in English and Italian. Furthermore, I proposed and managed the preparation of an evaluation questionnaire addressed to students of Italian courses in the Italian Institute in Slovenia, in order to understand how they perceive their relationship with the staff of the Institute, how they are involved in the activities and through which communication channel they found out the existence of these Italian courses.

The results motivated the reflection about methods used for the communication and information between the Slovenian public, and extended also to the social network which led me to start the Facebook page of the Italian Institute of culture in Slovenia, after a deep observation and analysis of all the other IIC accounts present on the Social Network, scattered around the world. The survey among students also gave me the possibility to investigate about their motivation of interest and curiosity towards Italy and its language, and to collect a good number of stereotypes and opinions.

Instead during my remunerated evening work I stayed in the information office and I was responsible for the place during Italian lessons until closure time. I started this collaboration at the beginning of October until the end of December 2011. As I explained I was curious about the role, function and activities of the Iic, considering it as an interesting type of organization to be studied and observed, not only because it is connected to my culture and my mother language, but also because it has a certain level of hierarchy,

interculturalism, an important historical path, and it has also an interesting and curious exclusivity, both for Italian living abroad and for local people interested in Italian culture.

Their presence and role is often discussed and criticized nowadays, and to work every day in the Italian Institute of Culture in Ljubljana let me observe and perceive some problems and difficulties in the way of managing the work, the organization of events and the presence of students in language courses, and above all how Italian national characters and stereotypes manifest themselves in the managing of the organization and in the relation with the Slovene culture and way of carry on the work. As an ethnographic strategy was really effective, because I didn't need to ask and fix formal interviews, except one with the new *addetto culturale* (person in charge of cultural activities), but I did collect a lot of information speaking with people during my presence in the IIC. This so called 'participant observation' is in fact the method *par excellence* of ethnography and gives to the ethnographer, who is studying a determined group of people doing participant observation, the possibility to create a real relationship with them, by obtaining trust and confidentiality.

The ethnographer has to always be aware of his behavior, from the moment in which he establishes contacts with the group in consideration, until the moment he leaves them. In my case is was important to underline the possibility and time I had to create a confidence dimension with the employees of the IIC, the Italian teachers working there, some of the students of Italian courses and also the regular costumers. The IIC was normally organizing at least one event per week, usually a concert, an opening of art or a photo exhibition, or conferences

and movies. Normally in those occasions a buffet was organized and offered by the Institute, and it was a perfect moment for observation and interaction, also with the interesting help of wine, which always manages to unclench human relations. My research can be considered similar to the work of Michael Walker, who during his research was participating in work activities, in order to "learn the language and concepts workers use, and to understand their perspectives.

Experiential learning was combined with observing and listening so that out of the evening note-taking about people's different version of myriad incidents and interactions [...]" (Wright, 1994:11). In the same way the *cigarette break* and the closing time of the Institute (under my responsibility) were great moments of dialogue and sharing comments and curiosities with Italian teachers, who had always a lot of interesting stories and information about Iic life.

So this method gave me the possibility to re-think the role and the definition of the so called *informants,* key role in all ethnographic research.[7]

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[7] I want to precise that this term *informant* was common and more used in the early anthropologist's studies, when the observed communities were considered as primitive and exotic. The researcher usually, once in the fieldwork, needs some help from determined persons, in order to get in contact with the community, to receive the main information (often there was the problem of language also, which the ethnographer couldn't share with all the community, so the informant was often a translator). In that types of researches the informant was considered as the representing of the com-

For example a Jazz concert had been organized during my first day of work in the IIC of Ljubljana. This occasion has been really useful, because I was able to understand how the events were managed. I was feeling exactly inside the meaning of the expression: participant observation: I was there, being part of the team, but in the same time aware of all the characteristics. According to the official guideline of anthropologists, the *Code of Ethics of the America Anthropological Association,* which was approved in June 1998, it is fundamental to take into account that, from an ethical perspective, people need to choose themselves if they want to be part of anthropological research or not. But in this way there is always the risk that people can act differently if they know that they are being observed.

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munity, of the culture and often the dialogue was limited to few people, as Bernard Russell writes dealing with the topic of 'Informant Representativeness" :"even if informants tell us what they know, there remains the question of whether what they know is representative of the population we are studying" (Bernard 1994, 11)

Nowadays the ethnography conditions are different, the anthropologist is trying to consider people he is studying less distant, giving importance to his position in the community and to his natural behavior, because the relation between ethnographer and people is considered an important tool inside the research. To call people involved in ethnographic research as "informant" give them a status of "object" more than person. For this reason I suggest we should try to call these "informants" with other nouns, as for example assistant, companion, interlocutor, friend, colleague, comrade, or using invented name, who is for me the best solution, because it's the better way to "humanize" them and to put them on the same level of the researcher, without giving the impression that we are taking advantage from them.

Therefore, also in order to gain confidence and for people to feel free to ask questions and to understand things around me, I explained during that event, my thesis project to Sara, one of the employees of the IIC. She reacted enthusiastically, explaining to me that anthropology could have interesting links on this topic. She showed me the work of another Italian girl who did the internship in IIC and who wrote a thesis about it, focusing on the organization of events and communication. She went immediately to the library and she gave me two example of thesis, by Maria Pilar Rainoldi and the one of Tiziana Vox, about the Iic. In my fieldwork diary that day I wrote:

"Sono stata molto sollevata di averle svelato questa mia intenzione fin da subito, un po' come se abbia messo da parte ogni dubbio ed esitazione ad aprirmi e a fare domande. Dato che è solo il mio primo giorno, mi sono resa conto di aver fatto molte domande a tutti, e sarebbe stato difficile e inutile probabilmente aspettare a spiegare il perché del mio interesse. Essere presente alla serata, e soprattutto al buffet, come accoglienza e responsabile della vendita dei cd, mi ha permesso di ascoltare moti discorsi tra gli ospiti, osservare il loro movimento e le loro azioni. Lavorare li mi permette anche di essere presente alle visite di gente che curiosa entra, interessante vedere come vengono accolti e come viene presentato".

I also told the Italian teachers about participant observation (after some vacillation, conscious that it would determinate a different openness towards me) and I asked to participate in their class, because it would be interesting to observe people interested in Italian language and culture, why they are interested and what ideas they have about it, and to know how they are presenting it to them (same discourse on an

inferior level than the one with the Iic and their perception and presentation). They were a little bit skeptical about my proposition, above all because they were afraid about students' reactions with an 'external' presence, so I only attended to few classes, as a 'native guinea pig'. It was quite difficult to create contact with students of Italian courses and also for this reason I proposed to them the questionnaire in my last month there.

As soon as I finished my collaboration in Ljubljana, in February 2012 I started an internship with an Italian organization in Barcelona, *La Casa degli Italiani*, which is not linked to the Italian State coordination. My intention was to then compare my ethnographical experience in the IIC of Ljubljana from *inside*, with the external observation of the IIC in Barcelona, and internal view as a staff member in *La Casa degli Italiani*. This research method can be defined with an expression coined by Marcus (1995) *multi-sited ethnography,* which "is not simply something that helps us to add perspectives… but instead it forces us to change perspective" (Hovland, 2005:1, quoted by Neiland, 2008:69). In fact Neyland (2008), in his book O*rganizational ethnography,* explains that this expression can have two different meanings: when the researcher is doing his fieldwork in two places, and also the different position of the ethnographer towards the studied object. So I can definitely say that my research is a multi-sited kind of ethnography, on both levels, because it took place in different geographical places, and, at the same time, my position toward the IIC changed from *inside* to *outside*.

2.2.2 Study case in Barcelona

I was really curious to observe and compare the structure, organization, motivation of the IIC in Slovenia with the one of Barcelona, taking into account the differences of the number of Italians, which in 2012 in Barcelona were confirmed as the second biggest foreign community in the city. But not all are Italian from Italy. In fact for example in the data of the *Ajuntament de Barcelona*, in 2011 the Italians officially inscribed to Aire (*Anagrafe Italiani Residenti all'estero*) were 22.304, but 50,7% were from countries such as Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela, and the rest, 13.270, from Italian territory. The Italian population is constituted by young people of an average of 32 years old, where 3 of 4 are still not 40 years old. The 52,9% are men and 47,1 women[8]. In these last 10 years the Italian population in Barcelona increased by 700%. In particular this astonishing data includes the 14.000 Italian registered in Barcelona in 2001, and the 40.000 registered in 2006, and the first position in foreign communities registered of Barcelona registered in 2009 (Cucchiarato s.d., 23). Their motivations are different and various, and speaking with people and meeting different Italians I found out different personal stories.

Briefly, the majority of Italians, above all young people, come here because they were tired of life in Italy, they complain about their country, the difficulty of finding a job

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[8] Analyse of foreign population resident in Barcelona by the *Ajuntament de Barcelona,* www.bcn.es/estadistica

without having a contact and without knowing the *right people*. But it's interesting how they contact the Italian groups which exist in Facebook, or blogs, of Italians living in Barcelona, in order to ask them information, about apartments, jobs, activities... and once here they continue this collaboration with Italians living here. They build a kind of "little community", and beyond the historical Italian Institute of Culture and the *Casa degli Italiani*, there are several associations, all born mainly on the internet (blogs, radio, web tv, facebook page, facebook accounts, youtube channels). The main difference is the role of the IIC for the Italian community. As one Italian teacher of the IIC told me one day, the Italian Institute of Culture in Ljubljana was still a symbolic meeting place for all the Italians living in the city. She explained to me that the only reason was because it was "*the only possible place for Italians with representative function".* And when I started my fieldwork in Barcelona I understood the importance of her sentence: in Barcelona it does not have that function at all, at least in the opinion of all the Italians I interviewed.

Therefore inside this comparative observation, it has been important to deal with the high number of Italian organization, associations, bars, shops, restaurants which are the real meeting point of Italian people, and which represent the reference place for this important Italian community. As an ethnographer, looking for the representation of Italian culture abroad today, in Barcelona I faced the danger which Fredrik Barth warned against as a consequence of the present conceptualization of culture: "the danger of being exposed to a 'blooming, buzzing confusion' of different events, a real chaos

of actions and utterances and constellations of circumstances" (Barth 2002, 27).

With regard to my fieldwork, when I was still in Ljubljana I proposed to the Italian Institute of Culture a collaboration in order to repeat an experience of ethnography *inside* organization, but they denied my proposition. So, after this 'fieldwork serendipity'[9], in order to continue my research on the wale of studying the perception on Italians and Italy in Barcelona, I felt obliged to look around and start to get in touch with all those kind of realities, as Russell Bernard suggests in this sentence:

"The ideal instrument for social science is an unobtrusive, omniscient observer who describes without omission or distortion all the environmental conditions of a particular field site, all the behavior of the people there, and all their utterances" (Bernard, 1986: 388).

Surfing the net I found the web page of an Italian organization in Barcelona, *La Casa degli Italiani*, which is localised exactly in front of the Iic and which has a rich past,

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[9]'Serendipity' is the possibility of something to happen without any expectation, and it lets us going in different streets and toward different objectives, being reason for the anthropologist to change his mind once he is in the fieldwork. Paul Stoller, in his article *Back to the ethnographic future,* explains this phenomena when he tells us about his personal fieldwork in Nigeria, admitting that when he started he never imagined to find himself doing surveys and interviews to Nigerian immigrant in the city of New York (Stoller 1999, 703).

even longer than the Iic one. Therefore I started an internship in this private association which is not directly linked to the Italian State coordination, but which has some arrangements and deals due to their relation with the Public Italian School in Barcelona (the Italian State pays the rent of the place owned by *La casa degli italiani*). My fieldwork methodology consisted of internet research of association websites and blogs, one official interview to Iic member and three others to the members of virtual and physical organizations in Barcelona.

The fact of being part of the staff of *La casa degli Italiani* gave me the possibility to build a picture of all these Italian realities in Barcelona and also to be in touch with some of them. My approach towards these realities tried to be more of a participative than external observer and researcher. The issue of being Italian favored me a lot in this, because I was in the position to contact them as a public person interested in their activities, and from these interesting chats I could go deeply to investigate their personal opinions, ideas, inputs and future projects.

My initial project of comparison with the Slovenian realities suddenly started to be more chaotic and more and more widen. I started to be aware of the innumerable Italian realities which operate in Barcelona, and which are, most of the time, reserved to the Italian community, for instance the use of the Italian language. For example in order to have a 'neutral' picture of presentation of *La casa degli Italiani* I worked there every day for two months, helping with the communication and organization of events. I could listen and see in first person the tensions, contradictions and collaborations with the Iic, the narrowness towards other new and newer Italian realities.

Then during an event there I met the person in charge of *Italia.es,* a web platform which organize events with famous Italian representatives (in the field of music, theatre, dance, politics, journalism), and, as in a chain reaction, I started to get in touch with the *cultural* part of the Italian community in Barcelona. While I was looking for information about Italian migration to Barcelona, I found some videos made by the group of *Italiani a Barcelona tv* - a web tv managed by young Italian with the aim of showing a corner of their national communities. One of its members, when I explained my research, took me to visit the workspace of the independent '*Radio Contrabanda*' in which every Friday the program '*Zibaldone*' is transmitted, "the Italian program in Italian not only for Italians" (as their slogan explains). I began to be present in their transmission every Friday, observing their preparation, listening to their chats, comments and messages to the Italian community.

Another well-known portal of communication is the blog called 'Spaghetti.bcn', which informs the Italian in Barcelona about the main events of the week or the main news regarding Barcelona, through articles written by volunteers. Regarding the associative reality, I participated in some events organized by 'Altraitalia', a cultural and politic Italian association. They often organize actions and events, conferences and debates about the contemporary situation in Italy, it was born and it is presenting itself today as a platform for all Italian *refugees* in Barcelona who care and are worried about the contemporary Italian political, social, moral and cultural Italian situation, which has been in many cases the crucial motivation of their migration to Spain.

Being interested in their initiatives I met one of the founders who explained to me their main features and I became a member of it, combining the role of ethnographer with that of activist.

Finally the Facebook group called "Italiani a Barcellona" which was founded as the cultural association "Piùtrentanove": it was officially born in January 2012, and they are trying to have some characteristics of all the others which already exist from before. They are also giving the possibility to Italian restaurants, Italian companies and firms in Barcelona, from hairdressers to the psychologists, to be official members of the association. In this way the 'team' is sponsoring them in the web page, can organize activities in their place, and apply a discount to the client with "Piùtrentanove" card.

Above all I'm trying to find out what is the perception of the Iic and *La casa degli italiani*, which are seen and considered by my interlocutors as a little "elitist" and for older Italian immigrants, because in fact Barcelona actually has a long and important history of Italian immigration, since the beginning of 1800. In the work as a trainee in *La casa degli Italiani,* we translated a book from Spanish to Italian about the first taverns and hostels managed by Italians in Barcelona, which are renowned as being the first step for touristic and gastronomic activities in the city of Barcelona.

The list of the main interlocutor in Barcelona (The names were changed):

Name	Age	Profession	Nationality
Andrea	38 years old	Lawyer, member of association 'Altritalia'	Italian
Elena	43 years old	Journalist, blogger	Italian
Giusi	35 years old	Translator	Italian
Lucia	45 years old	Responsible Certification office in Iic	Italian
Ilenia	32 years old	Barman, member of cultural association 'Piutrentanove'	Italian
Marco	32 years old	Phd student	Italian
Marta	23 years old	Student (in UK)	Italian
Matteo	37 years old	Actor, manager cultural association	Italian
Selene	26 years old	Student	Italian

Through multiple and different places theatre of my participant observation, my intention in this work is to show and demonstrate how the typical Italian character, its stereotypes, commonplace, which are coming from not only external critics but also as auto critics from Italians living abroad, are inevitably present in the organization of the work in institutes, associations and organizations carried out by Italians

in Ljubljana and Barcelona. In fact, using the topic of stereotypes and prejudices as central to my work, it is useful to keep in mind what Nena Zidov (1997) writes in her article *Prejudices and stereotypes as a possible interpretative model for ethnology:*

"Prejudices and stereotypes are more or less present on the level of the individual as well as on the level of wider social group, whether we are aware of them or not. In our research we encounter them from the researcher's point of view as well as from the point of view of those whom we research. They are most frequent in environment which are inclined towards the preservation of tradition and they influence the slow processes of accepting the new and unfamiliar[…] We (the researcher) should try to determine which prejudicial and stereotypical notions of the researcher can influence the process and the results of research" (Zidov 1997, 56).

Moreover defending the importance of the anthropological field of study, I sustain that access to the fields of ethnography and to the results of the participant observations should be taken as analysis and improved on by intellectuals of other fields, even if anthropology is still considered as an "exclusive" field of study. In our globalized, technological and interconnected present-day, the voice of the anthropologist still has some difficulties to be heard among the general public. Ethnographic methods are increasingly common in other different studies branches, such as journalistic investigation, contemporary art and evaluation of public policies. One example is the young American artist Jill Magid. In her project and consequent exhibition, called *Evidence Locker* (www.evidencelocker.net), she collected videos from the 242

closed circuit video cameras of the city of Liverpool, building a video as a personal diary and as also a portrait of the city. It is quite evident reading her personal daily words that she managed to receive the video and to create the project from being a beautiful young woman, sometimes even flirting with the policemen. Personal characteristics of the researcher are important and need to be taken in account. Furthermore the artist Jill Magid explained in a conference that even if she told them that she was an artist, they actually did not know exactly what they would expect from contemporary art, and for what and how she would use all that material".

3. Ordinary culture for ordinary people

3.1 Spreading Italian culture: looking for small dimension

In Ljubljana the Iic was a point of reference for the Italian community and Italian culture, but it is important to specify that, firstly the number of Italians living in the city was very limited and, secondly, that it was the only place of official aggregation and the only promoter of Italian artists and works.

While in Barcelona the situation is very different because there is a long and important history of Italian immigration, started at the end of XVIII century, and still alive today. So the high number of Italians living there and the similarity between the two countries on a cultural level are a good combination allowing it to be considered as one of the best destinations to express and export Italian culture and creativity. Moreover in Barcelona is hosting the oldest Italian association still operational: *La casa degli Italiani*. It was founded before the Iic, precisely in 1886 and it is curiously in front of the Iic building, it is considered as a sort of "rival", more than all the other Italian realities in Barcelona,

something I perceived speaking with some employees of the Iic during social events, not in official interviews.

The main difference between Ljubljana and Barcelona, consists on a dimensional level, not only the city but also the Italian presence. In fact in these last ten years, as I have already mentioned, the number of my fellow citizens in the Catalan capital has increased by 700 % and in this process the Italian community developed the need to emerge not only in business affairs but also on a cultural level. This happened for many reasons, as I am going to explain later on, and it created the conditions to exteriorize the Italian characteristic in different ways, contributing to the creation of a real community abroad Italy in one of the favorite destinations of Italian. The big dimension and the multicultural face of Barcelona permitted the development of an interesting Italian cultural world. This preference and power of small dimensions in society can be explained through the words of Mary Douglas (1987), in *How Institutions think,* in the chapter *Smallness of scale discounted:*

"Small-scale societies are different […]. Smallness of scale gives scope to interpersonal effects […]. When the scale of relations is small enough to be personal anything can happen, and rational choice theory recognizes the limits of its domain. Consequently, there seems to be no theoretical problem about altruism when the social organization is very small" (Douglas, 1987: 21).

Regarding this positive quality of little societies, Michael Tylor (1982) considered the social order as a public goal, believing that small communities are a form of society (Douglas,1987: 25).

He analyzed three kinds of communities: firstly, modern communities (or intentional communities), secondly, peasant communities, which have generated a whole cottage industry of scholarship, thirdly, small-scale tribal societies. His conclusion was that a community is by definition small in its interactions, and in its face-to-face relationships. Then there is common participation in its decision, members hold beliefs and values in common and create a network of reciprocal exchanges. Moreover he sustains that "[I]n small – scale communities no "selective incentives" or controls are needed: it is rational to cooperate voluntarily, in a production of the public good of the social order" (Taylor, 1982 :94)

And this was similar to what I noticed during my fieldwork in Ljubljana, which was already a small reality, and in Barcelona which, even though is a big city extremely rich with differences and issues, it pushes people to create small realities, groups, which work as societies.

3.2 Being Italian in Barcelona

Guillem Martinez wrote in his recent book *Barcelona rebelde: Guia historica de una ciudad*

"Barcelona es difícil de narrar como se narra de todo últimamente [...] [P]or ejemplo, no es Cataluña. Y tampoco es

España. En este sentidito Barcelona es la cosa más rara jamás construida por aquí abajo" (Martinez, 2009: 14)

Barcelona's image has been shaped and carefully cared since the Olympic games of 1992 starting from an architectural level, touching the everyday and cultural life, insomuch as Martinez ironically precised that a really important issue is that Barcelona existed before 1992 (Martinez 2009, 13). Cinema gave the image of a crazy and international city through Klapisch's movie *L'Auberge espagnole* (The Spanish Inn), then Woody Allen's *Vicky Crisitina Barcelona* added a romantic side of a place where all types of meetings are possible, and above all as a city where people from all the countries are used to going to in order to take a break from the everyday life or where they can start a new personal road.

Maybe a sort of awareness of this extreme romanticized construction of the image of the city is the cause of the city's recent narration by Iñárritu, who giving the title *Biutiful* to his movie about the suburbs and the marginal groups living in Barcelona, he seems joking and making fun of its repetitive and fake refrain "Barcelona is beautiful". But the capital of Cataluña can still be denominated all over the world as a 'cultural city', which is attracting and also creating the so called 'creative class' studied by the American urban intellectual Richard Florida. He sustains that economic development happens where there is more tolerance, diversity and openness, and he considers the creative class as a reaction to the limits of an organizational era, where creativity improve the economic level and contribute to the formation of a new social frame (Florida, 2002:99). Even the urbanist Jane Jacobs sustains that the dynamic character of cities is alimented by an open social

condition, dynamism where there is acceptance of confrontation and diversity, regarding personal interests, professionalism and life styles (Tinagli, 2008: 153).

Nowadays Barcelona has this reputation of a 'global city', a mixture of cultures which co-habit in a relaxed and easygoing way, and surely this aspect contributes to give charm and appeal. One interlocutor, Giusi, who has being living in Barcelona since 2000, considers Barcelona as a "stratified city" where it is complex and difficult to enter in relation with the Catalan culture. This is also a reason why the Italian cultural environment, as it will be presented in the following part of the chapter, has some problems fitting in with the Catalan one and tends to create a world far-between. It is frequent to meet this type of opinion, and for example Matteo told me:

"È come se gli Italiani si fossero costruiti la loro acropolis a Sarrià (a neighborhood in the suburbs of Barcelona): *esiste, però è decentralizzata e un po' isolata"* (Matteo, 37 years old).

Therefore this so called 'cultural city' can easily assume the parameters of the "postmodern city" - the "city of cultural consumption" where cultural economy conceptualizes the space shaped by consumerism and its culture (Zukin, 1995). These are all aspects which push Italians and young people today from all over the world to come here to study or to 'restart a new life' as this graphic can show:

RESIDENTES EXTRANJEROS
EMPADRONADOS
EN BARCELONA

284.632

230.942

53.428

2000   2005   2010
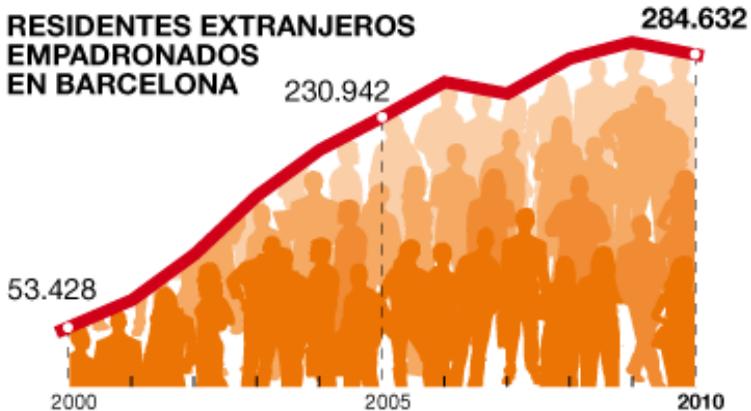
(Griego 2010)

Figura 1. **Evolución histórica de los principales grupos de población extranjera asentada en el distrito de Ciutat Vella y la ciudad de Barcelona entre 1986 y 2011**
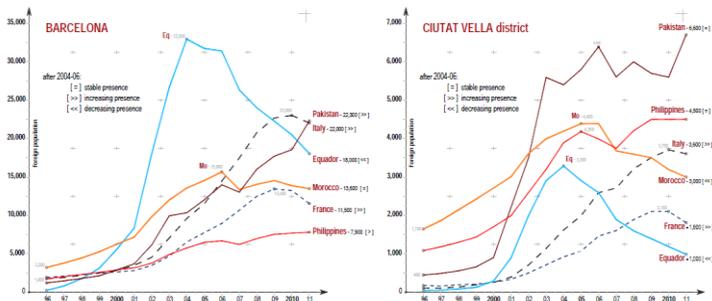
Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de IDESCAT, 2011.

(Tapada-Berteli & Arbaci, 2011)

"Questa città è diventata l'abbeveratoio degli inglesi, la Mecca degli italiani e argentini, svogliati, il pisciatoio d'Europa" (Cucchiarato s.d., 40).

This was the comment of an Italian woman after living ten years in Barcelona. As we mentioned in the first chapter, in 2012 the Italian community is the second biggest one in Barcelona, and they came in waves during the last decade, starting from 1997, then another in 2000, 2005 and 2007. In 2011 the flux is still present, but some of them have started to go back to Italy. "The prevailing image of the country as one of *siesta* and *fiesta*" (Pozzimenti, 2010: 339)*,* is not the only reason of Italian migration, but it plays an important role also to the geographic, cultural, linguistic and gastronomic proximity. The Italian journalist of the Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia,* Claudia Cucchiarato, explains that those who migrate to Spain feel somewhat at home.

Actually in these last twenty years Spain is considered more and more as a sort of 'promised land', for young people with good scholastic backgrounds and high creative potential who leave their cities in order to move to more stimulant places (Florida e Tinagli 2002). Beyond the reasons mentioned before of constructing an idealized image of Barcelona, in 2006, before the big Italian migration boom, the showmen Fabio Volo hosted a program called *Italo-Spagnolo* on Italian television*.* It was the story of the author, who went to Barcelona to live in an apartment in *La Rambla*, the most touristic street in Barcelona, with the aim of describing the city and telling something about the life of the Spanish and Italians living there.

During my fieldwork I interviewed a researcher who was doing a survey amongst Italians in Barcelona, carried out in collaboration with *Università Bocconi* in Milan, Italy's most important private university of economy. She was interested in discovering the condition of Italians living in Barcelona, mostly regarding their occupation, working status and level of satisfaction. Her survey was reserved to Italians who were *empadronados* (officially registered to the municipality) in Barcelona, and not only to Italians officially registered to Aire (*Anagrafe Italiani Residenti al'Estero,* registry office of Italians living abroad*).* Based on Aire's data, all over the world there are almost 4 million Italians and among them 85.000 are in Spain, which ranks twelfth place (Cucchiarato, 2010). But the journalist Claudia Cucchiarato, in her book about the Italian contemporary migration phenomena *Vivere altrove* ("Living elsewhere"), explains that it is impossible to give reliable cipher of Italian immigrants in Barcelona, because the Aire registration system is an insufficient instrument for cataloging the Italian flux abroad. This opinion has been confirmed by numerous ambassadors, experts of migration phenomena and also by the *Rapporto Italiani nel mondo* which is edited by the *Fondazione Migrantes della Cortes* every year. (Cucchiarato, 2010: 8). Can this fact considered be a perfect example of the lack of faith in Italian Institutions?

The issue is that in these last years the phenomena of Italian young people who migrate abroad looking for work increased and started to be present in foreign press also. For example the Irish Times wrote that in Italy, in 2011, 76 per cent of under 25s feel so blocked and deprived of work opportunities that they see emigration as the only realistic

option and that young Italian "Neets" (Not in Education, Employment or Training) have apparently reached 11.2 per cent as opposed to a European average of 3.4 per cent (Agnew, 2011). Furthermore this article shows a really gloomy perspective of students who finish university facing the terrible world of work, made up of underpaid non-skilled jobs and no remunerated training.

The contemporary "*fuga dei cervelli"*(brain drain) is also addressed by Irene Tinagli, Italian economist and professor in the University of Madrid, in her book *Talenti da svendere* (Talent to undersell). There she does an analysis of conditions for young recently-graduated Italians, underlining their tendency of migration to other countries in order to find a job, but at the same time explaining how they are not used to live in an international context. In fact, according to the Ocse survey of 2008, which explains that the quantity of foreigner students in Italian Universities is at 2%, while in France, Germany it goes up to 10-11% and in Great Britain to 17%, while foreign students in research programs in Italy are 3,2%, in Denmark, Norway, Belgium: 20-30% . The same type of data deals with the number of Italian students in foreign Universities: 1,9%, while French student are 3%, Norwegian 7%, Greek 9% and Irish 10% . Moreover, speaking about the Erasmus experience, the Alma Laurea data base tells us that only 8% of Italian students did it, while the 85% of graduated students in 2008 never participated in this exchange period abroad.[10]

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[10] OCSE 2011: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/2/48631582.pdf

Irene Tinagli, trying to find some explanations for this cultural blockage of students towards foreign experience, explains that Italians do not move either to study, nor to find a job abroad or in a village/city near their own because they are too attached to their family and the territory (cultural element), because of insecurity and also because of a weak command of foreign languages. In fact in Italian universities students are used to having classes in Italian, reading books in Italian and watching movies in Italian (Tinagli 2008).

This image of Italians is in line with a reflection of the British newspaper *The Economist,* which in May 2011, in line with the *Indignados* movement in Spain, published an article titled *Italy slumbers-United in apathy. Why young Italians stay at home,* which compared labor and the social situation of young people in Spain and Italy. It sustains that one basic reason is that Italy, unlike Spain, is a gerontocracy, where the young feel politically stymied (Economist 2011), because of the political system which gives too much centralized power to party bosses, which are quite old and with almost an absolute control. This Italian political characteristic is confirmed also by Eugenio Pizzimenti (2010), who wrote in *From admiration to competition: Italy as seen from Spain*: "Domestic instability in Italy was stressed several times: Italian politics is characterized by the existence of a multitude of political parties often formed around a single individual'. (Pizzimenti 2010). Also Tobias Jones living in Italy noticing this Italian tendency wrote:

"The word for hierarchy in Italian is *gerarchia;* the etymological root is the same (from the Greek *hieros,* implying sacred or divine), but the Italian contains an implicit sense that superiority is based upon age. […] I saw that the country was

not only happily chaotic but also rather "systematized" and rigidly hierarchical. Any approach towards authority had to involve a startling degree of groveling. (Jones, 2003: 9)

However the phenomenon of temporary emigration of Italians looking for a new future and possibilities abroad is reaching quite a significant high. It can give in many cases, among my interlocutors, the possibility to be in touch and face new prospective and cultural realities, which enrich and open life and work horizons. A famous Italian band, the *Subsonica,* confirmed this hypothesis on occasion of their last visit to Barcelona. In fact they explained in a conference with their fans before the concert, that the reason of organizing concerts abroad, in the most important capital cities of Europe, has been a double-shot: it can give the emigrated Italian public or temporary resident abroad the possibility to go to a concert of one of the most famous Italian bands, and in the meanwhile they can receive the energy of those Italians who are living new and different experiences and have in their opinion a *"more active cultural and emotive life".*

Matteo, the Italian artist active in the cultural scene in Barcelona I mentioned in the last chapter, left Italy because of the closed and backward mentality, but he confessed to me that he still has the purpose to go back there one day, in order to change things and improve the cultural environment. But for the moment he thinks that:

"I cambiamenti non si possono realizzare all'interno del ventre della cavia, ma costruire un laboratorio al di fuori" (Matteo, 37 years old).

In this case his well-chosen laboratory is Barcelona, where there are more possibilities for expression, opening, occasions and less bureaucratic and institutional complications. Furthermore he explained to me that this 'Italian laboratory' is full of motivated and valid people also in the artistic and cultural world, who are escaping from Italy because of the need for more freedom. And once they are abroad, they have the inputs of finding alternatives. Also Antonio Negri, the famous Italian philosopher and political activist, sustains a similar idea but translated into a political case of the exile: "Exile is the condition for reproducing creative thinking in Italy"(Negri 1997, 23).

In conclusion to this framework of the contemporary Italian presence in Barcelona, let me quote a testimony of an Italian blogger I met in Barcelona and who has been living in Spain for 10 years as she compares the two situations:

"Triste è guardare al mio paese con occhi disincantati. Da lontano le cose si vedono e comprendono con maggiore obiettività e chiarezza e io purtroppo vedo una nazione che va a rotoli, alla deriva e in cui tutti (…) si perdono in dispute da quattro soldi, rivolte a salvaguardare le proprie convenienze, i propri privilegi, dimenticando i grandi interessi del paese. Vedo una società governata da una gerontocrazia, dove fino a 35 anni ti considerano ancora un 'ragazzo', dove i posti chiave sono detenuti da ultracinquantenni e i politici dei settantenni! Come potremmo andare meglio? Come si può innovare senza rinnovamento generazionale?" (Elena, 43 years old).

On the other hand other temporarily 'exiled' Italians abroad are missing the everyday life and particularities of 'the

boot' (metaphorically speaking - the shape of Italy). For example Marta told me:

"L'Italia? Mi mancano i gelati, le donne sempre truccate dal panettiere che ho sempre ripudiato per essere più decorate di me, mi manca il sole e mi mancano gli uomini stupidi che fischiano alle ragazze per strada. Mi mancano i dettagli inutili. E gli amici, due forse tre, che non dovevo lasciare, ma ora è un po' tardi per accorgersene" (Marta, 23 years old, student in United Kingdom).

Ruggero Romano (1994), author of the book *Paese Italia. Venti secoli d'identità,* sustains that Italians have such a long and profound cultural unity that they can't deny their strong national identity and their pride for it (Ruggero 1994). Anyway, the particular phenomena of Italian migration in Barcelona has a long history, which is often not mentioned in contemporary data, but which has, in my opinion, played a big role in the relationship between Barcelona and Italians. The emblem of it is represented by *La casa degli Italiani*, which is positioned in between the two ways of presenting Italian culture, the institutionalized and the popular one.

Conclusion

As pointed out in the introduction to this work, my intention was to understand how Italy attempts to present itself through organizations with the specific aim of 'spreading and promoting' national culture abroad, and how, at the same time, they tend to confirm the stereotyped and mythologized image of Italy. Using the fieldwork experience *in* organizations I carried as reference, I was also interested in the differences of this cultural promotion found in official institutions financed by the Italian State (such as the Istituto Italiano di Cultura) and other informal entities. Hence, I tried to assembly which stereotypes are emphasized in the interaction of Italians in foreign contexts; what Italians do, how they establish networks, how they interact with foreigners, how they think and feel about their country. The findings of these typical *luoghi comuni* (common places), which are often referred to as *national character,* confirmed my conviction that 'nobody denies the existence of various specific traits in Italian society and history' (Patriarca, 2010).

The reflection of the term 'national culture' takes into account the double meaning of the term culture as common

behavior of everyday life, and as "exported – promoted culture". This process of *typecasting*, as Xavier Andrade (2002) calls it, analyzes culture as being objective and adjective, permitting it to be perceived as a whole. I concluded that these two ways of considering and observing culture can be considered as the two sides of the osmotic process - two levels of concentrations of Italian culture mutually influencing each other: the national character is grouped with the image of Italy, while the stereotypical elements usually associated with Italy are grouped with the behavior of Italians. This is, in a small dimension, what Eric Wolf sustains:

"These realities affect what humans do and what humans do affects the world, and we can come to understand the whys and wherefores of this relationship" (Wolf, 1993:220).

In this way I found out some typical Italian traits, generalizations which emerge and are then reinforced when an organization is promoting the image of its country. For example, the perpetual difficulty of communication caused by the lack of preparation in foreign languages, the strong hierarchy, the tendency to concentrate the decision-making and the representative power in one person's hands. Furthermore there tends to be 'self-centered', ethos, not being open to collaborate with other organizations and bodies. There are also many elements within the institutions we can consider as elitist, for example the importance given to appearance and style, the kind of public they usually have and the level of culture they promote.

I can affirm finally that this process of stereotyping the *Italiano medio* has been determined in large part by the process

of construction of the *italianità,* where there has been great pressure by the state wanting to create a nation, especially with the diffusion of its image abroad. Representative proof has been the widespread and, even exaggerated, celebrations of last year, on the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy, which can be considered as an ulterior insistence of the artificial construction of a solid Italian identity and culture.

To implement a conscious analysis would permit Italians to be more aware of their own culture, of its basic features, its strengths and its flaws. If this process is not fully and profoundly done, it will be difficult to find a way out of the vicious love/hate cycle, which drives more and more young Italians to reluctantly leave their country, to escape precisely from its defects, to then find these defects represented in the country's 'official' institutions abroad.

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Giulia Marro

Potenziamento di processi inclusivi, partecipativi e di engagement

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Crede nel potere dell'emancipazione individuale attraverso la sfera collettiva, nel senso di democrazia e cooperazione. Ha una esperienza multidisciplinare e internazionale, anche nella direzione diretta di interventi nel campo culturale e dell'educazione non formale.

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