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# Belonging or not belonging? That is the question

A REFLECTION ON IDENTITIES IN THE MAZARA DEL VALLO COMMUNITY:  
BETWEEN THE RED PRAWN WAR AND THE IDYLL OF CROSS-CULTURAL RESONANCE

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# Case Study Aims

- To reflect on the development of the **concept of identities** between a **specific closed and peaceful intercultural context** and the **institutional power structures**
- To try to **explain the processes who led to the misunderstanding** and eventually propose solutions from a multi-perspective point of view
- To show the **backwardness of the *ius sanguinis* over the *ius soli*** law in Italy

# Structure

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# 1. Description

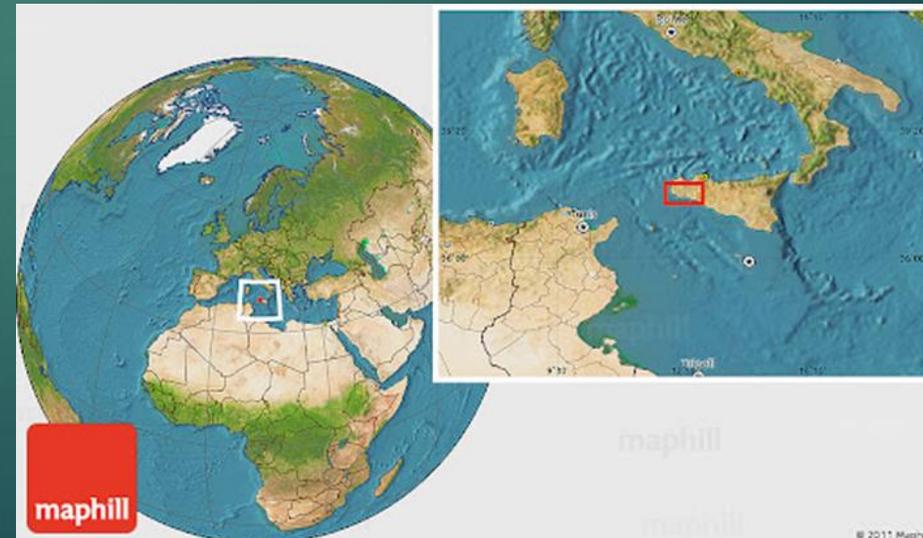
# 1. The Mazara del Vallo Example

## Geographic coordinates:

- Mazara del Vallo, Sicily
  - ≈ 1.095 km from Rome
  - ≈ 233 km from Tunis
- Today, more than 3.000 immigrants from Tunisia; They arrived already in the post war period to work in fishing

## Historical coordinates :

- From the early 80's: Lebanese Coast Guard started to hunt fishing boats from Mazara del Vallo
- 1st September 2019: "Antartide" and "Medinea" seized in Bengasi Harbor



Photosource: Maphill

# 1. The Mazara del Vallo Example

Crew of “Antartide” and “Medinea” imprisoned more than 100 days:

- 8 Italians
- 6 Tunisians
- 2 Indonesians
- 2 Senegalese

They had the possibility to **talk to the families through brief phone call**

# 1. The Insaf Jemmali Case-Study

- **21 years-old** daughter of Farhat Jemmali, one of the fishermen, in **Italy for 18 years**
- - From a **second-generation immigrants' family**, at the Italian's Ministry of Foreign Affairs they negates her to speak to the imprisoned father because **"Tunisian" on the paper**

Photosource: "L'Internazionale" n.1402, year 28, p.37



# 2. Analysis

## 2. How Everything Started

- Insaf Jemmali: “Can I talk to my dad?”
- Italian Government Employee: “You are Tunisian, you need to ask the Tunisian Government to help you”
- Tunisian Government Employee: “We cannot help. That is a matter of bilateral agreements between Italy and Libia”

→ Starting point of Insaf Jemmali’s **identity troubles**

## 2. Formal Problem

**Legge 5 Febbraio 1992, n°91 sulla Cittadinanza** (“Law 5th of February 1992, n°91 on Citizenship”):

- Differs between *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli*
- The citizenship is given **from the parents to the kids** and thus related to **where** the parents are born (*ius sanguinis*)

Birthright Citizenship in Italy is restricted to:

- People who are stateless
- Children of unknown parents
- When foreign parents are unable to pass their nationality to the subject in accordance with the law of their country of origin

**!!!** To acquire the Italian Citizenship is possible for people...

...who have lived uninterruptedly in the Italian Republic until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, but the person has one year time to take the decision, be able to pay 200 euros, lose his/her previous citizenship. The procedures last at least two years!

## 2. “It is Impossible not to Communicate”

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### **Insaf Jemmali’s perspective:**

- Derogatory interpretation of the message
- Body language issues → “tactless”
- “Institutional Discrimination”

### **Italian government employee perspective:**

- He/she was doing his/her job
- Has no decisional power

**BUT:**

→ “Restrictive Interpretation” of the given law (means to stay strict to facts)

→ LACK OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE (?)

## 2. How Everything Ended

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... **But:** Looking at the requirements needed to work as an Italian government employee does not seem necessary to proof Intercultural Competence to work for them

→ **Struggle with identities** for people like Insaf Jemmali because:

- Identity concept changed through times → **FLUID**
- It is defined in relation of “to who one is not” (Mahadevan 2017:84) → **Other-related**
- At the end of the day it is **NOT A CHOICE!** → cf. “In-Group Bias”

# 3. Interpretation

# 3. (My) Propositions



Photosource: Onassis.org

Identity is a complicated issue in everyday life.  
To avoid discrimination is relevant to:

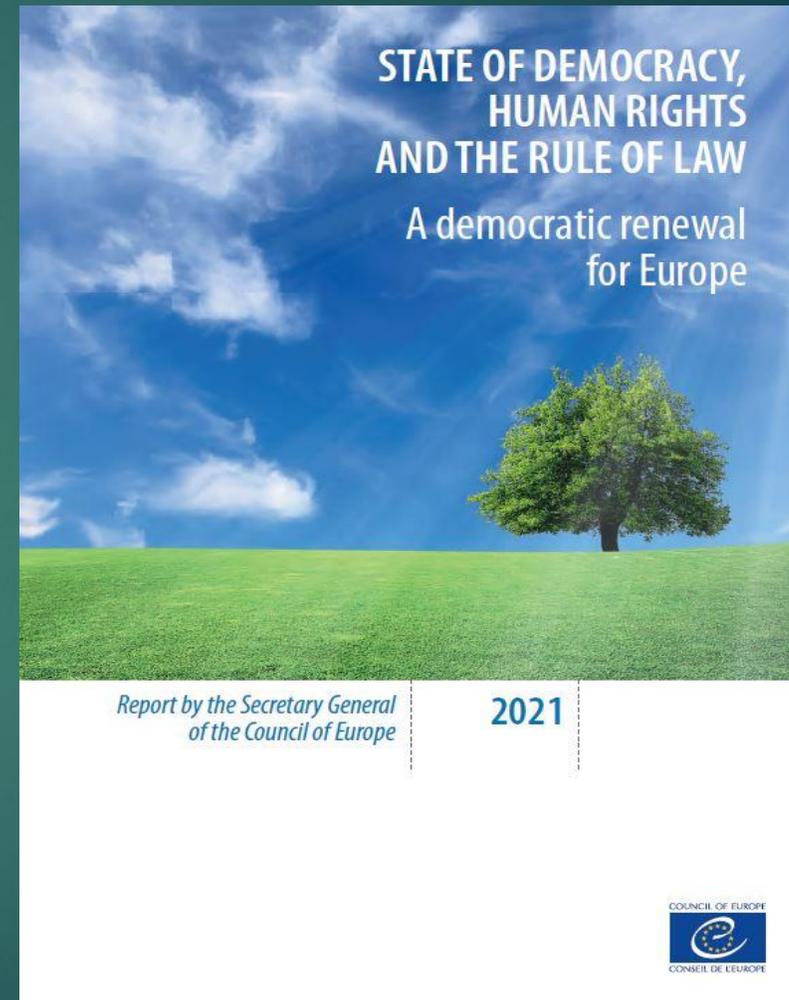
- Make a **change in language** (which is a cultural behaviour, too); Language is connected to values; be the agent, act, change the status quo
- Give value and **construct the *Self* over the norm** in order to “resonate”, avoid to translate nationalism to the self or ask for recognition
- Introduce **Intercultural Competence as key requirements** for jobs who implies direct contact with others than ourselves
- Make a **(r)evolution in Italian political rhetoric** → some rules does not follow the changes of contexts in today's society, and they need alignment with the European suggestions

# 3. The EU Responsibilities

*“The strategic goal of the Council of Europe in the field of anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion is to ensure **genuine equality** and full access to rights and opportunities for all members of society. This can be achieved **through legislation and policies** that address inequality and racism in a systematic manner, by preventing and sanctioning discrimination, xenophobia, hate speech and hate crimes both on specific grounds and where people face multiple discrimination (intersectionality) and by devising strategies for the empowerment of minorities and for the positive management of diversity”. (Council of Europe 2021:117)*

- To reach equality and go beyond diversity **we need legislations and policies**
- EU needs to take a **stricter position about the backwardness of Italy**

*Photosource: “L’Internazionale” n.1402, year 28, p.37*



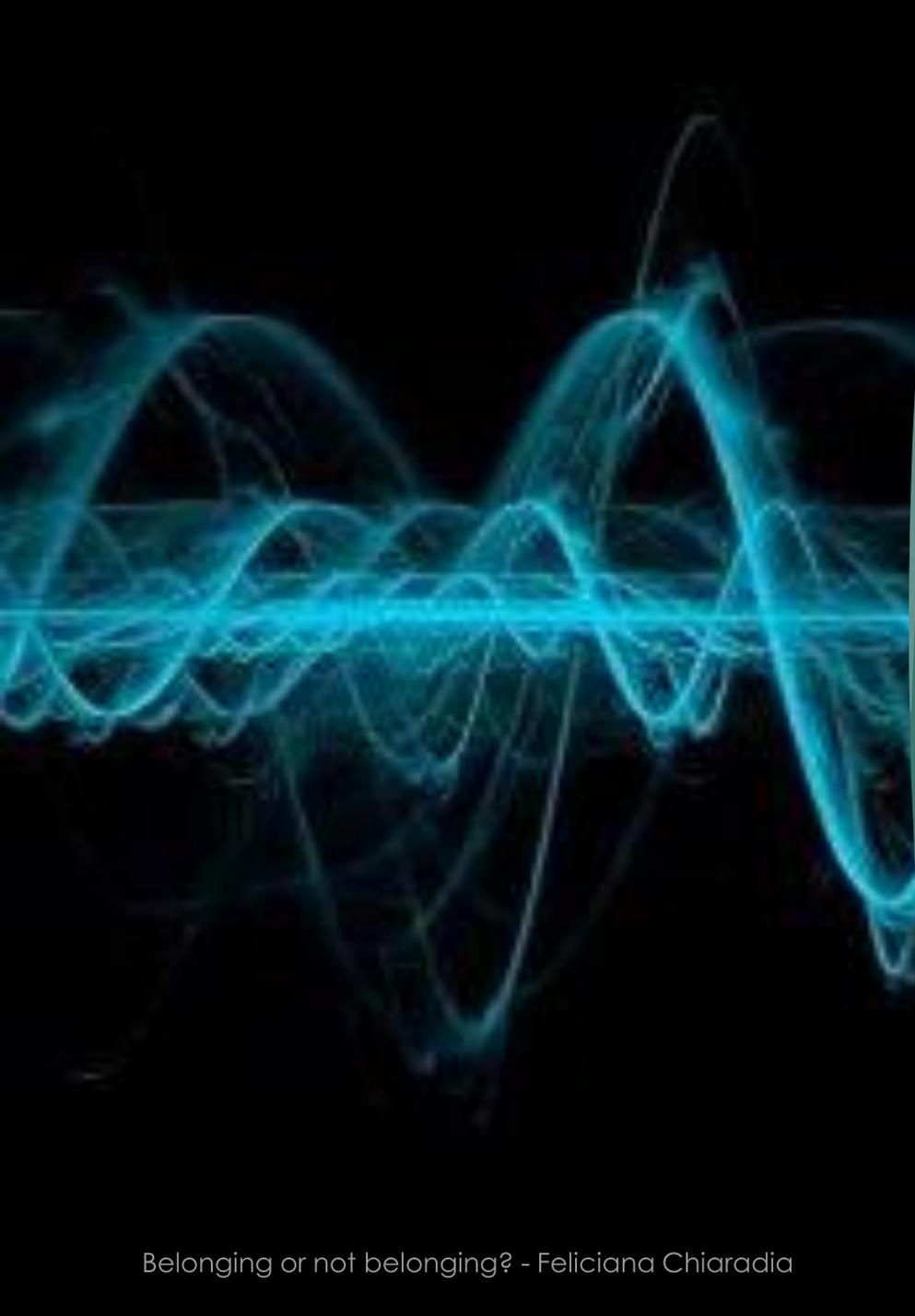
# 4. Conclusion

## 4. Belonging or not belonging?

What is remarkable in the identity process of Insaf Jemmali is the story she tells about where she lives, how she felt welcomed and never approached as “different” **in the town of Mazara del Vallo:**

- The inhabitants of this place have discovered how **“to utilize the benefits of diversity”** (cf. Mahadevan 2017:93)
- They helped Insaf Jemmali to create her own **“third space”**

They succeed in **shifting the nationality to locality** because “culture” is something dynamic, in movement and it is “fluctuating” with time and social innovations (cf. Ting-Toomey 2019:179)



## 4. Belonging or not belonging?

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As the neurosciences are showing us , we can be able to approach ourselves to an original, creative, and modern conception on identity not to fit into a given society, nor to look for roots that are just an illusion but to de-construct ourselves and- with higher reflexivity- discover that **we are not so different from each other.**

*Photosource: Studiosguy.com*

# Thanks for your Attention!

For more questions  
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