

Luciana Taddei
University of Genoa
Corso A. Podestà 2, 16128 Genova, Italy
taddei.luciana@gmail.com

Building a community in virtual spaces to create real practices
The case of Italo-Argentinian

Migrants between global and local

With the term *globalization* we mean the progressive growth of the global relationships in every sphere of the social life. This phenomenon leads to a change of space and time, and of the economic and cultural aspects characterizing the world.

Not every author agree on the newness of the phenomenon. Amartya Sen¹ (2002) and Immanuel Wallerstein² (2000), for example, think that the world has always been characterized by global aspects, while Castells³ (2003), on the contrary, observes how the development of the information technology leads to a social and economic change highly defined in qualitative terms, since it allows a real-time operation of the global processes. As he did, also Appadurai⁴ (2001) underlines the absolute newness of the global relationships, strongly increased in terms of intensity and fluxes of ideas, people, technologies, assets, information and images of the world. This leads to a greater and greater hybridization of cultures, lifestyles, customs and traditions⁵.

Besides, the intensifying of the global relationships, the crossing of time and space limits, the weakening of the role of the Nation States⁶, imply a new reconstruction of the local dimension. As Robertson⁷ (1995) highlights, it has not been possible until today to disregard the strong interconnections between global and local aspects. It is exactly in the field of this polarization that we see the formation of transnational phenomena: elements that take place in a global frame, though remain well-established in their local conditions⁸.

In particular, focusing on the migratory phenomenon, it is clearer and clearer that it does not limit to a movement in space, but it involves every sphere of the existence⁹.

In the era of *glocalization*, a research on migrations cannot exclude a transnational approach that take into consideration the local dimension as well as the global one¹⁰. Migrants do not move from place to place

1 Sen A. K., 2002, *Globalizzazione e libertà*, Mondadori, Milano

2 Wallerstein I., 2000, *Capitalismo storico e civiltà capitalistica*, Asterios

3 Castells M., 2003, *Il potere delle identità*, Università Bocconi Editore, Milano

4 Appadurai A., 2001, *Modernità in polvere*, Meltemi, Roma

5 For a deeper analysis of the concept of cultural hybridization, see Canciani N. G., (a cura di Giglia A.) 2000, *Culture ibride. Strategie per entrare e uscire dalla modernità*, Guerini e associati, Milano

6 Giddens A., 2000, *Il mondo che cambia. Come la globalizzazione ridisegna la nostra vita*, Il Mulino, Bologna

7 Robertson R., 1995, *Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity*, in Featherstone M., Lash S., Robertson R. (eds) *Global Modernity*, pp. 25-44

8 As demonstrated by Heine M. C., 2000, *Virtual Ethnography*, Sage Publications

9 It can be considered a *total social fact*, as proposed by Sayad A., 2008, *L'immigrazione o i paradossi dell'alterità. L'illusione del provvisorio*, Ombre Corte

10 Castles S., Miller M. J., 2012, *L'era delle migrazioni: popoli in movimento nel mondo contemporaneo*, Odoja,

without leaving any traces, they keep having multiple and different interrelations with their country of belonging, so that they build themselves a culture that transcends the state boundaries¹¹.

In that regard, it is necessary to revisit one of the first and most known definitions of culture, the one by E. B. Tylor, that in 1871 defined it as «complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society»¹². Considering culture as the material and immaterial patrimony which characterizes every person who belongs to a community, one can actually run the risk to give the social groups a static nature, favoring the construction of an imagined difference. Instead, cultures are often impure, hybrid and the result of constant historical combinations¹³.

In such a scenario, also the concept of identity changes. Identities, more often built through processes of “imagination”, take the shape of an extreme form of demand of unity for a group or takes possession of a necessary feeling of belonging. In any case, what is important is to understand, as Aime¹⁴ (2001) writes, that even if it does not exist «an essence of identity... we can't but understand a practice of identity». Piselli¹⁵ (1997) underlines that «through the fellow countrymen, one can recover, re-elaborate, rediscover the cultural identity, “re-situating” cultural and symbolic categories in the new context». The belonging is not assumed anymore, but it is chosen.

The growing globalization not only gives stability to local situations, but it allows fluid cultural identities¹⁶ to raise: identities that move in transnational worlds, without any bonds of space and time, even though they are well-established there. Therefore, the transnational identity carves out in the local world – with which a contact is sought – as well as in the global world, that can be more and more easily experienced.

In this scenario, essential is the use of the most interactive means of communication, that ease the development of transnational relationships and contribute to the raising and the strengthening of the so-called imagined identities¹⁷. As a matter of fact, thanks to these instruments, ideas, cultures and lifestyles can be shared even among those people who have never concretely interacted with each other.

In order to understand and analyze the best way the dynamics in the current age, it is necessary to turn from those concepts that for a long time have defined the migratory reality.

The development of a shared identity is today more and more dynamic and variable, in a society where every element mix up with others, in a mechanism of continuous hybridization. So, the contact among distinct populations can be analyzed no more only for its aspects of difference¹⁸.

The population chosen as object of study is emblematic in this process, since it has shared for centuries migratory movements, political, economic, social and cultural relationships, that allow it to define itself

Bologna

11 Zanfrini L., 2004, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, Laterza, Roma Bari

12 Tylor E. B., 1871, *Primitive culture*, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press

13 Canclini N. G., 2000, *Culture ibride*

14 Aime M., 2004, *Eccessi di culture*, G. Einaudi, Torino

15 Piselli F., 1997, *Il network sociale nell'analisi dei movimenti migratori*, in *Studi Emigrazione*, n. 125, pp. 2-16

16 Glick Schiller N., Bash L., Blanc-Szanton C., 1992, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, New York Academy of Sciences, New York, second reprinting distributed by Johns Hopkins University Press

17 Anderson B., 1996, *Comunità immaginate*, Manifestolibri, Roma

18 Canclini N. G., 2000, *Culture ibride*

hybrid.

The Research Design

Italy has always been an emigration Country and only in the last few decades it has been seen as an immigration Country starting to face all the social-political problems related to that status¹⁹.

One of the nations that have historically had more contacts with the Italian population, is Argentina. Here, already since the second half of XVII century, the first Italians emigrate to escape poverty. The main flux is between 1870 and 1930²⁰, with the following waves always linked to difficult economic and political moments lived in the country of origin²¹.

It is evident that, after two centuries of commercial and migratory interrelations, supported also by the central governments, the Italo-Argentines people present as a crowd with a complex cultural identity in which coexist preserved memories and reconstructions from the beginning aimed at functionally re-adapt their own identity to the historical context experienced.

Emblematic is the increasing of economic-political relationships in the countries. Italy converts from country of escape to country of landing; the Argentina of the crisis of 2001 loses citizens headed to the “old motherland”, ready to give value again to a forgotten citizenship. Subsequently, Argentina regains its financial power and, for the European economic recession, it is seen in our cultural imagery as a possible destination for emigration.

The migratory processes between Italy and Argentina are often supported by the Institutions²²; besides, in Buenos Aires there still are strong mediator institutions, such as family and school, that continue to transmit the existing link between the two Countries. In this complex reality it is possible to identify strong phenomena of linguistic and cultural hybridation.

As underlined, this research starts with the assumption that, given the historical-cultural interrelations between the two Countries, it has raised an Italo-Argentinian hybrid identity which constantly changes.

We think that, especially thanks to the development of the new technologies, the Italo-Argentinian citizens can have developed continuous interactions that allow them to build and re-build their own culture and their own hybrid identity. The *glocalization* seems to allow the raising of a community that creates relationships and interacts in virtual space but operates in real spaces.

The hypothesis is that on virtual spaces, Italo-Argentinian people interact in order to build or reinforce a shared culture and identity, and that such interactions are always linked to real urban spaces where they can be practiced and where such feelings of belonging can strengthen.

We want eventually try to understand whether the use of ICT by this community has helped to promote the self-organization and the participation to local contexts.

The research has been carried out through the development of a ethnography on the web²³, performed

19 For more information see Baggiani B., Longoni L., Solano G. (a cura di), 2011, *Noi e l'altro? Materiali per l'analisi e la comprensione dei fenomeni migratori contemporanei*, Disincanti, Bagnacavallo

20 Rosoli G., 1978, *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana 1876-1976*, Roma, Cser

21 Devoto F. J., 2007, *Storia degli italiani in Argentina*, Donzelli Editore, Roma

22 Bevilacqua P., De Clementi A., Franzina E. (a cura di), 2001, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, Donzelli, Roma

23 Dal Lago A., De Biasi R., 2002, *Un certo sguardo. Introduzione all'etnografia sociale*, Laterza, Roma Bari

following the perspectives of the connective ethnography of Christine Heine²⁴ (2000), which has given the opportunity to observe the interactions among subjects that consider themselves Italo-Argentinian. The purpose was identify the more useful thematic areas to understand what kind of connections exist between their local and virtual realities. It has been possible to study the network as a “field of relations”, following the links that seemed significant through analyzed contexts and, especially, identifying the existing connections between “virtual” and “real”.

The research raises from a deep personal interest: I was born in Uruguay myself from an Italo-Argentinian father, and I moved to Italy at the age of four. My growth has been filled with legendary references to that far culture, which made difficult for me to define my belonging, sometimes placed on this side, sometimes on the other of the ocean. I was taught that my people is the whole Latin America, but my somatic features do not belong to that place. I fed myself with “Italianity”, and once I came into contact with my origins, I found myself to reclaim the property of *fainá* and *torta pasqualina*²⁵, as if their double belonging was not a richness but rather a loss. So, I decided to make it up with my hybrid identity, researching it in the others as in a mirror, aware of being as close to my object of study to understand it, as far enough to describe it.

Surfing the Net

I first came into contact with this field during 2012, when I started looking for Italo-Argentinian people aware of their belonging. The survey starts from keywords on the main search engines, both in Spanish and Italian.

The first thing to notice is the strong presence of institutions accompanying the development of an Italo-Argentine identity: Embassies, Consulates, the Foreign Ministry and, most of all, the Committee of the Italians Abroad, a body created by the Italian Legislation to represent the Italian citizens who live in the different consular districts of the world. The Comites' site is one of the most updated and, in the last news, you can read of a “Curso de cocina italiana lucana”²⁶, to be kept in Buenos Aires. It strikes for the image linked, which shows a ladle and a big wooden fork, two three-colored stripes and the Leaning Tower of Pisa, representative symbol of an *Italianity* in which the difference between a famous international touristic destination and the unknown land of Lucania lose their meaning.

There also are many Regional Associations that refer to places situated in Italy, but that have their headquarters in other, far places, in Argentina. Indeed, the Italian emigration to Argentina has been strongly *regionalized* and groups of migrants often raised around the local communities of belonging²⁷.

The groups were very different. It is enough to say that around the second half of XIX century, thanks to the arrival of television, Italian language was the National language on the whole territory²⁸. Such differences have remained during the time; in fact many are the groups of Argentinians that identify with their own regional group in the first place, rather than with the National one.

24 Heine M. C., 2000, Virtual Ethnography

25 Typical Ligurian dishes

26 “Italian Lucan cooking course”. Lucania is a specific area in the South of Italy

27 Devoto F. J., 2007, Storia degli italiani in Argentina

28 Marazzini C., 2004, Breve storia della lingua italiana, Il Mulino, Bologna

There also are Mutual Assistance Associations²⁹ - which have been fundamental supporting anchors for the migrants arrived in Argentina – and the institutes of culture, which have the aim of teaching Italian language and its culture in order not to lose that bond that still exists between Italy and Argentina.

Surfing the net, it may happen to find yourself on websites of Italian schools in Argentina or universities that promote study exchanges or entire courses of study, structured among institutions belonging to the two different Nations³⁰.

Official institutions, associations and culture institutes are all connected and they reveal at a local level by organizing courses, events and meetings aimed at keeping and reinforcing the Italo-Argentinian identity.

In websites, but especially in blogs of Italians in Argentina or Argentinians in Italy, one can find discussions on politics, current news, economy, enterprises, social and practical problems, how to find a job or move overseas; notice many external links to institutional websites and associations that can support the road towards one of those countries. There also are discussions on tourism, sport, culture, literature, theater, music and cinema. Even here one can find groups that reconsider the regional roots and some others that organize events, prizes and meeting that work as a bridge between the two cultures.

Articles about the Italo-Argentinian topic can be found in many newspapers and online magazine that deal with the Italians abroad: the same topics are treated and the same external links³¹ are highlighted.

The research expanded thanks to the search engine Youtube, which allows you to find film clips related to the topic in object. There can be found many documents about tango, music and literary or artistic events, festivities and anniversaries organized by associations of Italo-Argentinians; even some institutional events are reproduced. Curious is the amateur video in which the passion of an Italo-Argentinian child in making pizza is associated to his being Italian; the story of an old man from Ischia in search of his sister who he has not seen for 61 years; the words of a famous Italo-Argentinian sculptor.

Interesting, for the topic here debated, is the video-interview to Edgardo Salamano on the occasion of the 150th year of Unification of Italy. Edgardo Salamano is an Italo-Argentinian Assessor in Buenos Aires, and he directly faces the theme of identity quoting the following sentence to illustrate his Argentinian roots: «Mexicans come from Aztecas, Peruvian come from Incas and we come from the sheeps». The architect underlines the artistic and cultural bonds between Italy and Argentina which have been able to build a Buenos Aires filled with *Italianity*. Besides, this feeling of unity is for him nourished by the myth of an Italian that, emigrated from his motherland without anything, has grown independently as a hard-working and determined person, symbol of willpower and positivity in the Argentinian society.

So far, an essential importance have the social networks. Some of the already mentioned institutions, magazines and associations have a Facebook page: it is actually the social network where the highest number of self-organized Italo-Argentinian groups are detected. This social network allows the users to interact, to share specific links, to upload photos and video and the link to other pages, favoring the contact with a network of individuals connected with each other and with other groups. Many of the profiles checked are of single individuals, specific local realities, stores or political parties. Excluding these kinds of communities

29 For a list see http://www.italiansnet.it/paese_Argentina.html

30 For a list see http://www.feditalia.org.ar/ita/index_info.html

31 See for example <http://www.italianosinamerica.com/site/index.php>.

and considering the updating times and the participation to the different pages observed, the survey addressed towards a specific virtual research that deals with the theme of the Italo-Argentinian life in its whole complexity.

An Active Virtual Community

I started to attend this community only as an Italo-Argentinian/Uruguayan nostalgic, not doing the job of the researcher at first, but just as a curious observer who shyly participates. For this reason, I will prevent to specifically mention the name of the group or of its members, limiting myself to quoting some of the more common expressions.

The community was born in June 2010 with a mission: to be a «punto de encuentro para todos los italoargentinos»³². In particular, what is specified, is that the group wants to gather the Argentinians who currently live in Italy and have the same interests in culture, art, music, photography, cooking and so on. Among the basic information, it is specified that «it has been considered that 25 million of Argentinians have at least an Italian ancestor, that is this is the most numerous ethnic origin»³³.

Besides, it has been reported a brief history of migrations from Italy to Argentina, with even the reasons for the expatriation and the typology of an occupational integration overseas.

Under the date 1st May 2013 3.735 people like the page and 488 actively participate in its construction. These are quite high numbers for a virtual community self-organized on Facebook.

The group is proud of its 62 photographic albums: half of them are made up of pictures of specific cities or places in Italy or in Argentina; the others are about characteristic sport or cultural events, newspapers' articles, national politics, religion, pictures of Italo-Argentinian people that carry themselves the “signs” of their double belonging³⁴. Also through these pictures it emerges the essential importance of the physical places, that strongly contribute to characterize the belongings of the individuals. As a matter of fact, the community members place themselves in real spaces, geographically delimited, included in their imagery for they are experienced in the concrete practices of life, work, tourism, or just lived through the stories and memories that helped the growth of their hybrid identity.

The study of the last two years and a half of activity allowed me to understand which are the most relevant topics for defining an Italo-Argentinian identity. Right next to the typical signs of the Argentinian, it is surprising the devotion to institutions and the pride that comes across for this double belonging. It strongly emerges the need to find again one another and to create a community that does not limit itself to the action on virtual spaces, but able to organize on actual territories.

The analysis developed through two different directions. A first overlook has been taken in a longitudinal vision, that is considering the contents for the temporal position they have. This method has been useful to frame the development of the community in its complexity. A second overlook has been the one which allowed the subdivision into categories, and consequently, a more analytic analysis of the different contents

32 “A match point for all the Italo-Argentinians”

33 Translation from Spanish

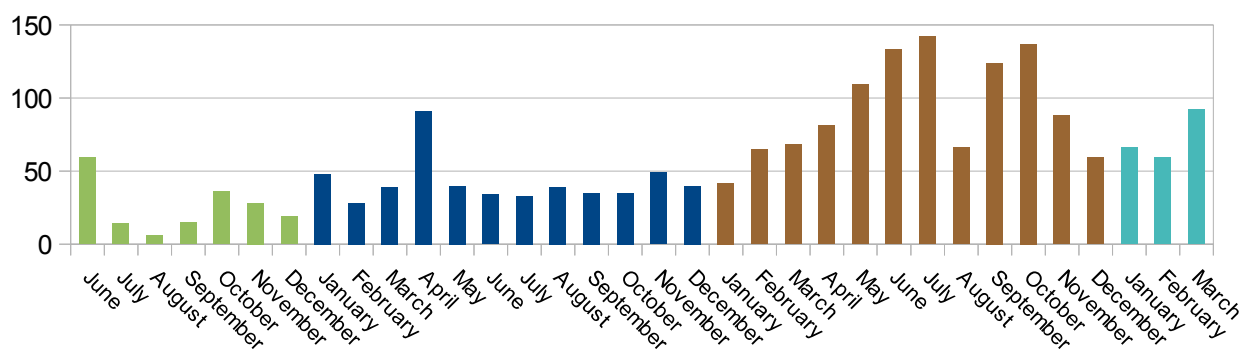
34 The “signs” are the colors of the flag, typical costumes and particular food associated to the Italo-Argentinian imagery.

emerged.

The course of the activity in the community highlights its progressive growth both in terms of contents and new subscriptions.

Number of posts inserted in month of entry

since June 2010 to March 2013



The group has been founded by a woman born in Argentina who has been living in Venice for twenty years. The first two posts shows images of Buenos Aires and Venice, while in the third she introduces herself to the group, drawing attention on the importance of creating a match point for Italo-Argentinian people and immediately referring to the signs that identify her as Argentine: *asado*, *mate* and *dulce de leche*.

Analyzing the contents of the posts on the page and of the first members subscribed, one can notice, in this first phase of activity, their desire to show themselves to others. Of 177 posts in 2010, approximately 28% are related to the lives of the members and are concentrated in the month of June - the first month of activity. It is basically declared the place of origin and the current place of residence, sometimes people living in the same area ask for a real meeting. Therefore, this virtual space, started to look since the beginning like a place where it is possible to strike up friendships to be actualized in defined urban spaces.

Since the beginning of 2011, the administrator of the virtual community has started to push the members to be more active in the development of the group, considering it as something that they owned: «...Les invito a todos los que quieran compartir fotos video y notas, lo pueden hacer directamente en el muro...»³⁵.

In January it is recorded a little more participation, but the attention decreases immediately and the administrator decides to find a new *admin* to collaborate with. So, the month of April sees a peak of activity and the language changes, enriched with tender terms and direct and personal sentences. The new administration aims at putting on the surface the feeling of belonging that characterizes the Italo-Argentinian community and does that by stimulating the emotional side of the members. Constant is the comparison with a community that is always present, interested into the dynamics of the others' lives, making one feel close by saying "Good morning" or "Good night" and sharing Sundays and lazy moments by referring to its characteristic signs: sharing virtual *mate* and *asado*, with such a joy that it feels like actually being at home, in the garden.

35 «...I invite everyone who wants to share picture, videos and comments, you can do it directly on the wall of the page».

The members do not receive the label of *gente linda*, *compatriotas* or *compaesanos*³⁶, but they are called *familia* over and over again, that big Italo-Argentinian family that shows the need – especially in Italy – to reconstruct its everyday customs and tries to do that through the web.

The idyll does not last long, and already on 26th June the administrator is ready to incite the members of the group with her empathic ability which distinguishes her. «HOLA!!!! buenos días buenas tardes buenas noches! como va la vida? estoy viendo que somos ya mas de 1700 y eso me alegra pero mucho, mas me alegraria un poquito de participacion que opinen debatan hagan chistes suban videos y sobre todo que comenten,un Abrazo!!!!!!»³⁷.

So, during 2011, on 511 posts, more than 30% are related to sharing everyday life's aspects. It is during this year that the community has reinforced and the sense of belonging has consolidated, a mechanism through which the group can acquire a more and more significant numerical consistence.

2012 turns out to be the most significant year, both in terms of number of posts and topics touched. Twice the posts more than the previous year are recorded (1114) and most of them show contents related to sharing everyday life, with constant symbolic references to Italo-Argentinian lifestyle, in addition to contents which are directly related to the expression of the strong relationship lasting between Italy and Argentina. There are many articles on institutional events aimed at reinforcing these bonds, but there also are many stories about single individuals, representative in their own way of the researched Italo-Argentinian aspects.

In the last months of the year, the participation is lower, but already in March 2013 it can be noticed a new wave of comments, determined in the majority of cases, by the election of Pope Francesco, Italo-Argentinian himself, and a new symbol for the community. The new Pope does not only represent the belonging in terms of territory and origins, but he is also the main representative of Catholic religion, that is a combination of faiths and values that characterize both the Italian and Argentinian community, a mutual culture they can share.

During this ethnography, as long as I had to face the various contents expressed by the members of the community, 5 main categories emerged. They were divided, in some cases, in subcategories:

- art: it includes all the expressive forms on the page;
- society: it includes numerous subcategories, that is politics, economy, sport, religion, in addition to other news related to relevant issues at a social level and current news;
- pictures: photos, videos, links to articles that demonstrate the existence of real places, divided into the subcategories Argentina and Italy;
- sharing: category divided into personal posts and posts useful to express the emotional closeness to other people and to the Nation one belongs to;
- Italo-Argentinian lifestyle: it includes all the contents in which the theme of an experienced Italo-

36 “beautiful people, compatriots, countrymen”. The reference to the country expressed in the term “compaesano” (“countryman”) is clearly a heritage of the Italian emigration: indeed, the Italians arrived in Argentina identified with the local community, rather than with the Nation itself.

37 «HELLO!!!! Good morning, good afternoon, good night! How's life? I see by now we're more than 1700 and this makes me really happy, but I would be even happier if I could see a little participation, and if you could write your opinions, debate, tell some jokes, upload some videos and most of all, if you could write your comments. Big Hug!!!!!!» (Translation by the author)

Argentinian lifestyle.

Obviously, the categories do not exclude one another, but are rather the themes that often blend together: sport clashes give birth to political conflicts, pictures are associated to an emotional closeness and so on. The “Italo-Argentinian lifestyle” category is the one we will focus on, since its contents show the potentiality of local-organization of the virtual communities.

Art, the first category spotted includes TV programs, literature, comics, painting, music and dance. The topics are treated by the Italo-Argentinian community not only in reference to their double identity, but they are useful to define and recognize themselves and, most of all, to show how – even in Italy – it is possible to find places in which one can rediscover his/her Argentinian roots.

Some posts advertize programs, books, shows the members are invited to, in order to create a bridge between the virtual reality lived everyday and the real world, able to actualize the passions declared on the web.

Among these posts, it is strong the role of *tango*, a dance style that represents the Argentinian community and it is often an occasion to make the two realities – Italian and Argentinian – meet. As a matter of fact, even in Italy there are many occasions in which this form of art is expressed, allowing the Italo-Argentinian community to get together and share a mutual passion that represent them both.

The category called *society* includes all the posts related to the topics on which the members of the group compare each other. The political topic is always put into the foreground, in a precarious balance among the critics mainly pointed towards the Governments of the two Countries, and the expressions of patriotism (e.g. the many critics supporting the Falkland Islands, considered unjustly occupied by the British). The members also deal with the topic *economy*, sharing information on the conditions of the two Countries and on the investing industries, especially in Argentina. *Sport* is particularly relevant, maybe because it is expression of a passion that is common both for Italian and Argentine people. We must mention that, during the period of research, there was the European Football Championship and the Dakar Rally. The subcategory related to religion has acquired importance only during the last month of research, which records a boom of posts in support of the new Pope Francesco. Important is the debate among the members of the community on social topics related to particular approaches in Argentina, or on specific Italian events: people wonder about prostitution, sexual identity, morality and other topics emerging in conjunction with real events. The last subcategory is the residual one, about news and gossips, that cannot be inserted in the previous ones.

The *images* uploaded on the virtual community's page show real places in Italy and Argentina. The ones in Rome and Buenos Aires are surely important, but also those in Mendoza and Venice are.

One can also understand why the places are not recalled to memory for being representative of the two Nations, but they are mainly linked to the personal life: in this regard, we find photos of little resorts, and we can notice how the majority of the picture are those of places of life of the most active members of the community.

The category of the *sharing* section has been previously described in the longitudinal analysis. It encloses all those posts through which the members create an emotional interrelation. It is divided into personal posts, those where the members define themselves, ask others to meet up or express merely personal needs; and posts expressing closeness, all those sentences and terms that redefine the other for being member of a a

familia, proud of its national belonging. In addition, the emotional closeness actualizes in the virtual sharing of everyday life, in fact the virtual space become “real”, even if it is only something imagined and not directly experienced.

The last category is the *Italo-Argentinian lifestyle*, that is the one that will be able to show that a virtual community can promote the activation of real practices.

Such an extended observation of the community in object, led me to notice many indicators showing how the virtual community contributes to the creation and the maintenance of the Italo-Argentinian identity and promotes an active participation and the self-organization of its members in real contexts.

The indicators considered can be divided in two main groups:

- indicators of institutional collaboration
- indicators of self-organization

The *indicators of institutional collaboration* are all those formalized exchanges between Italy and Argentina that highlight the interrelation between the two Nations. A lot of events organized by both the Italian and Argentine State are posted on the wall of the community, as well as events of committees and local or regional corporations. The meetings are mainly promoted on the page of the community, but they often have a strongly local connotation, that can push the members to participate if they are interested and near the place where the event is taken.

Through the pages, the individuals find themselves discovering the existence of active local bodies in which they can easily integrate, taking part in conferences, meetings and organized events.

We also noticed economic collaborations in specific local dimensions of the two Countries, artistic relationships aimed at keeping the cultural contacts between Italy and Argentina; twinning among schools, universities and places on this or that side of the ocean.

The Argentine Government repeatedly rewards the Italian community on its territory and, often, the Italian institutions homage this land that gave shelter to many of its emigrants. The delivery of prizes, the publishing of essays and the organization of events and conferences useful to reinforce their relationship are constantly advertized, so that they provide a signal of institutional support to the community members trying to rebuild their own identity.

The community itself, even though virtual, is taken into consideration as active reference body also in the real world. As a matter of fact, already in September 2010, the “Red Argentina en Europa” invites the community members to take part in the *Primer encuentro Euromediterráneo de Asociaciones y redes sociales argentinas*, creating this way a bridge between an active community at a virtual level and the rest of the associations and networks operating on the territories.

Among the *indicators of self-organization* there are all the posts by single individuals or groups trying to create social networks active on the territory, or that propose real practices for the support of the Italo-Argentinian community in specific contexts. It has been observed the organization of language courses or courses for the deepening of the Italo-Argentinian migratory dynamics, as well as theater or tango lessons set in particular territories by Italo-Argentinian groups.

The participation to conferences and events promoting the maintenance of the connection between Italy and

Argentina is pushed as well as the support to commercial activities that identify with it.

People prepare for sharing the holidays with their own community: Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter or just a Sunday in any month of the year are the right moments to meet up and rediscover customs, putting back together the virtual community with the referring urban context.

People tell their personal stories in order to create a network mechanism that may help the individuals find their roots. The community therefore, is the link between the experiences of the individuals and the social history of the Italo-Argentinian community in the world. Another of its social functions is that of providing a channel in which it is easy to activate a mechanism of job demand and offer, contributing to the development of the local social-economic fabric.

With the community, particular bodies are linked one another – physical of juridical bodies. They offer a support for organizing a trip or a transfer to one of the two Countries. Other agencies offer administrative support for the management of the operations overseas.

This network is not only made up of individuals, but it leans on coordinators who offer themselves to ease their actions on the territory.

Self-organization and the active participation of people in local contexts is extremely evident for the groups of mutual help, such as the “Italo-Argentinian mothers”, who talk and meet up to create an active supportive network on a geographically defined place. The same thing has been seen in occasion of natural catastrophes or huge social problems in one of the two Countries. The community members share information and news with the purpose of practically help the places subjected to the calamities. The same thing happens for the political participation: every election or referendum is followed by the whole community, which works as direct informer for the citizens involved, pointing out place, time and modalities to go and vote. These are some of the ways that the virtual community use to show its presence in the local context.

Conclusions

The research demonstrates how a strong virtual community - with its member constantly and deeply bond one another – can manage to act in different ways on local situations.

Through this ethnographic survey, we realized how can be useful for some individuals to find a crutch to lean on in order to rebuild their own identity³⁸ and feel of being part of a community that self-constructs, even though it remains in the virtual space.

The transnational dimension of the virtual world allows people in different places to share things, and it is essentially important for those groups that move on different worlds and are aware of their hybrid identity.

As we have seen, the virtual community has not been immediately a support for its members, but only after some time the first connections have raised, useful to build and reinforce the common identity. As we have seen, the members compared themselves with each other on various topics: artistic, social, political, economic, sport, religious and so on, and it has been what allowed them to build and rebuild autonomously their own culture and hybrid identity. The individuals do not only interact on the web, but take part in moments of real interaction, in which it is possible to strengthen their belonging to the Italo-Argentinian

38 Bauman Z., 2001, *Voglia di comunità*

community. The contexts of exchange – formal or informal – actually help the members reinforce that bond promoted by the virtual community.

The tension between these two spaces – online and offline – is handled not only by sharing pictures or stories that contextualize the single belongings, but also through the organization of single people or groups active at a local level. They concretely act on reality when they provide a support, not only to themselves as a group, but also to other population in difficulty; when interrelations aim at promoting virtuous economic mechanisms; when an active political participation is promoted; when there networks of relationships on the territory which will allow to live in a more integrated and harmonious environment.

The information which prevent the active participation promoted by an online community to intensify seems to be the low awareness that the members have of the potentiality of moving huge masses. Creating these strong relationships at a virtual level helps interact on local contexts but in a totally natural way, showing a low awareness of the influence that a good self-organization on the web would have on local dynamics.

BIBLIOGRAFIA

- Aime M., 2004, *Eccessi di culture*, G. Einaudi, Torino
- Baggiano B., Longoni L., Solano G. (a cura di), 2011, *Noi e l'altro? : materiali per l'analisi e la comprensione dei fenomeni migratori contemporanei*, Disincanti, Bagnacavallo
- Ambrosini M., 2001, *La fatica di integrarsi : immigrati e lavoro in Italia*, Il Mulino, Bologna
- Ambrosini M., 2011, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, Il Mulino, Bologna
- Anderson B., 1996, *Comunità immaginate*, Manifestolibri, Roma
- Appadurai A., 2001, *Modernità in polvere*, Meltemi, Roma
- Bagnasco A., Barbagli M., Cavalli A., 1997, *Corso di sociologia*, Il Mulino, Bologna
- Bauman Z., 2001, *Voglia di comunità*, Laterza, Roma Bari
- Bevilacqua P., De Clementi A., Franzina E. (a cura di), 2001, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana. Partenze*, Donizelli, Roma
- Bevilacqua P., De Clementi A., Franzina E. (a cura di), 2002, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana. Arrivi*, Donizelli, Roma
- Blengino V., 1990, *Oltre l'oceano: gli immigrati italiani in Argentina (1837-1930)*, Edizioni associate, Roma
- Canclini N. G., (a cura di Giglia A.) 2000, *Culture ibride. Strategie per entrare e uscire dalla modernità*, Guerini e associati, Milano
- Castells M., 2003, *Il potere delle identità*, Università Bocconi Editore, Milano
- Castles S., Miller M. J., 2012, *L'era delle migrazioni: popoli in movimento nel mondo contemporaneo*, Odoya, Bologna
- Dal Lago A., 1999, *Non-persone: l'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, Feltrinelli, Milano
- Dal Lago A., De Biasi R., 2002, *Un certo sguardo. Introduzione all'etnografia sociale*, Laterza, Roma Bari
- Devoto F. J., 2007, *Storia degli italiani in Argentina*, Donzelli Editore, Roma
- Fiorani F., 1992, *I Paesi del Rio del Plata*, Giunti, Firenze
- Giddens A., 2000, *Il mondo che cambia. Come la globalizzazione ridisegna la nostra vita*, Il Mulino, Bologna
- Glick Schiller N., Bash L., Blanc-Szanton C., 1992, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, New York Academy of Sciences, New York, second

reprinting distributed by Johns Hopkins University Press

Golini A., 2003, *La popolazione del pianeta*, Il Mulino, Bologna

Goffman E., 2003, *Stigma. L'identità negata*, Ombre corte

Gordon M. M., 1975, *Toward a general theory of racial and ethnic group relations*, in *Ethnicity. Theory and experience* (a cura di N. Glazer e D.P. Moynihan), Cambridge, Mass., London, pp. 84-110

Granovetter M., 1973, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, pp.1360-1380

Granovetter M., 1995, *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*, 2° ed. con nuova Postfazione, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Granovetter M., Follis M. (introduzione e cura di), 1998, *La forza dei legami deboli e altri saggi*, Liguori editore, Napoli

Incisa di Camerana L., 1998, *L'Argentina, gli italiani, l'Italia: una altro destino*, ISPI, Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, SPAI

Incisa di Camerana L., 2003, *Il Grande esodo*, Corbaccio, Milano

Kymlicka W., 1997, *Le sfide del multiculturalismo*, Il Mulino, Bologna

Marazzini C., 2004, *Breve storia della lingua italiana*, Il Mulino, Bologna

Marcus G. E., 1995, *Ethnography in/of the world System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24, pp.95-117

Massey D.S. , J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino, J.E. Taylor, 1998 *Worlds in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*, Claredon Press, Oxford

Massey D. S., 2003, *La ricerca sulle migrazioni nel XXI secolo*, in *Stranieri in Italia. Assimilati ed esclusi*, a cura di G. Sciortino e A. Colombo, Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 25-49

Hannerz U., 1998, *La complessità culturale*, Il Mulino, Bologna

Hannerz U., 1998, *Transnational Research*, in Bernard H.R., *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, Walnut Creek (ca): Altamira Press, pp. 235-256

Heine M. C., 2000, *Virtual Ethnography*, Sage Publications

Pieretti G., 1985, *Segni di comunità in una società complessa*, in Guidicini P., Martinelli F., Pieretti G. (a cura di), *Città e società urbana in trasformazione*, Angeli, Milano, pp.171-181

Piselli F., 1997, *Il network sociale nell'analisi dei movimenti migratori*, in *Studi Emigrazione*, n. 125, pp. 2-16

Robertson R., 1995, *Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity*, in Featherstone M., Lash

S., Robertson R. (eds) *Global Modernity*, pp. 25-44

Rosoli G., 1978, *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana 1876-1976*, Cser, Roma

Sayad A., 2008, *L'immigrazione o i paradossi dell'alterità. L'illusione del provvisorio*, Ombre Corte

Sen A., 2002, *Globalizzazione e libertà*, Mondadori, Milano

Tylor E. B., 1871, *Primitive culture*, vol. 2, Cambridge University Press

Van den Boomen M., Lammes S., Lehmann A.S., Raessens J., Schäfer M.T., 2009, *Digital Materials*, Amsterdam University Press

Wallerstein I., 2000, *Capitalismo storico e civiltà capitalistica*, Asterios

Zanfrini L., 2004, *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, Laterza, Roma Bari