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Identity Representations & Space Relationships: The Case of Sikh Migrants in the North of Italy

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¹ The former acronym of Sociology and Methodology of Social Research program.

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Preface

The first question that people usually ask a PhD student at this stage—or actually at any stage of the PhD studies and the writing of the dissertation, is: ‘why?’ Why here, why now and why this particular ethnic group? This is never simple to answer. I have always been interested in different cultures and I have been involved with the Sikhs previously, studying their ways of being and belonging in a more transnational perspective both in Canada and in England. Nonetheless for the Sikhs in Italy, it all goes back to a few months after I came back from my Master’s research in the Netherlands and England. My mother is still unsure of what I actually study; she only knows that I specialize my fieldwork in Sikh communities and diasporas around the world. Thus, one day she asked me to come see her at home and presents me with a torn-up page of a newspaper and pointed to the very bottom left of the last page. There it was, a tiny article discussing a small Indian Sikh community working in the parmesan cheese industry in Italy. The article, or rather, the two-paragraph mini piece was a short summary from a longer article taken from another newspaper. It tickled my curiosity, so I looked up the original article, which was exactly the same length, but with a complete name of the author. I read the few sentences over and over again, confused as to why the author wrote *only* this. Was it very surprising? Was it very odd, and thus worthy of publishing? Was it all that there was? Since I was just coming back from a long year of study and did not think about researching more for a while, I simply put the small cut piece of the newspaper article into a book on *Sikhs in Europe* by Jacobsen & Myrvold (2011), and left it there, and forgot.

A few months later, when my need for research came trotting back, I decided to start applying for a PhD and most likely on a similar topic related to the integration of immigrant communities in their new societies. While looking for a new and brilliant idea, I opened my most recent book on Sikh studies and the tiny article popped out. It was there, once again triggering my interest, and it made me think about this community differently. The article mentions that the Sikhs were present to take over the sort of work that Italians did not want to do anymore. The Sikh migrants were portrayed as heroes for the Italian cheese industry. It even discussed the new ways the commune helped the Sikhs to feel at home by building them a

brand-new Sikh temple—a gurdwara—and offering them language courses in a very pioneering way for European standards. Something felt very strange about this article. The Italian author was portraying the Italians as not interested in their own landmark, the Sikhs as saviors of the cheese and the Italian government as widely open to migration and even investing into the wellness of those culturally and religiously different migrants. Simply: odd!

Here is my personal translation of the original article so that the audience of this dissertation can get the idea by themselves:

ITALY
THE INDIANS AT THE RESCUE
OF THE *GRANA PADANO*

In Italy, the production of the *grana padano*, one of the jewels of Italian cheese, was saved by the Indians from Punjab. They are 3 000 today working in the farms of the province of Cremona, in the north of the country. This totals 80% of the total agriculture workers in the region. “I have been employing two Indians for five years, said the cheesemonger Giancarlo Ambroggio. I was not finding anyone to replace the workers who left for retirement.”

In fact, the Italian youth prefers the factory work which offers a more flexible schedule. In front of this flow of immigrants, the commune of Pessina Cremonese, where the factories are concentrated, built a Sikh temple and organized language courses. Some Indians have even taken the Italian nationality. F.Z. (Flora Zanichelli)

ITALIE
**LES INDIENS À LA RESCOURSSE
DU GRANA PADANO**

En Italie, la production de *grana padano*, un des fleurons du fromage italien, a été sauvée par les Indiens du Pendjab. Ils sont aujourd'hui 3 000 à travailler dans les fermes de la province de Crémone, dans le nord du pays. C'est 80 % de l'ensemble des ouvriers agricoles de la région. « J'emploie deux Indiens depuis cinq ans, dit le fromager Giancarlo Ambroggio. Je ne trouvais personne pour remplacer mes ouvriers partis à la retraite. »

Les jeunes Italiens préfèrent en effet le travail en usine, qui offre des horaires plus souples. Devant ce flux d'immigrés, la commune de Pessina Cremonese, où sont concentrées les fabriques, a fait construire un temple sikh et organisé des cours de langue. Certains Indiens ont même pris la nationalité italienne. F.Z.

In fact, this very short article published on September 24th, 2012 from the Montreal local newspaper *L'actualité*, hints on some interesting details for someone who has already studied the Sikhs outside of their 'homeland'. It mentions the Sikhs as an immigrant group who had taken over a very important Italian landmark: the parmegiano cheese. They are indeed well-known for having a very good work ethic, but it is rare outside of Punjab that the Sikhs would take on agricultural employment (Leonard 1997). The last statement is also quite striking as it implicitly says that some Indians have taken the Italian nationality, when one may know that this is no easy task. In other words, this eight sentence small article written by an Italian

journalist envoy from the French press around the world, glorifies the Sikhs and presents Italy almost as an ideal place for new migrant groups who would help the Italian economy as the Indians do in the north. There is also a small part of me that was curious to see how glorified and how much the local Italians did to make them feel at 'home'.

My opinion was that it was a rare opportunity to look at a unique community and present how this has been really successful, how this should be applied to other immigrant groups in immigration policies or even implemented with Sikhs in other countries in the world. As for the veracity of the small article, I could not investigate the whole of the article, but I did verify some points, the most striking is about the building. The commune of Pessina Cremonese did not build a temple for the Sikh; it only granted them the right to build a religious temple in a location quite far from the nearest city after the Sikhs bought the lot and paid for the building itself. Language courses were organized but did not stand long since it was rather complicated to teach Italian to youngsters and families living all around the rural land, that and not having time to go to any lessons. All in all, the most striking information of this small article were not true, or not for long, and this only made my interest grow, since other striking facts were uncovered, and are presented in this dissertation thereafter.

Introduction

“Today, more than 60,000 Sikhs live in Italy, the second-largest community in Europe after the UK. They are mainly concentrated in Italy’s northern provinces, where the hot humid climate and flat rural landscape resemble Punjab, the Indian region which most of the Sikhs come from. [...] In 2015, the BBC reported local producers saying that if it were not for the hardworking Sikhs rising at 4am to milk cows twice a day, seven days a week, Italy’s Parmesan production would be at risk.”

Antonsich, 2017

The history of migration has been intrinsic to human social and cultural evolution, and thus could mistakenly seem irrelevant and somewhat redundant. However, for the Sikhs, a religious ethnic group originally from Punjab India, who began to set up a new community in a host country rich with customs and traditions, recognizable behaviors and a well-known religious inclination, less than forty years ago, migration to Italy has defined their social and cultural growth to a new understanding of their identity, their space and their views of their future. Then again, the Sikhs have become a substantial settlement in Italy in the past two decades (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011) and they have been steadily increasing over time since. In fact, the Indian population in Italy is estimated at 121, 036 people (January 2011 figures), which represents an increase of 14.3% with respect to 2010. In the period 1993-2010, Indian nationals residing in Italy grew at an annual average growth rate of 66.3% compared with 35.5% registered by the total foreign resident population (Lum 2012). Indian migration to Italy is indeed a more recent phenomenon, which has grown slowly but constantly since the middle of the 1980s (Bertolani 2012). It currently constitutes the eighth largest foreign community in Italy, measured by those who are registered in the local *anagrafe* or registry offices (Lum, 2015). However, the actual number of Sikhs in Italy is quite difficult to determine since there is no official registration of religious tendencies neither from census or sources of statistics data on immigration in Italy nor from officials in various religious worship sites. The estimated numbers of Sikhs present in Italy goes from 25,000 to 30,000 up to 70,000, although the official numbers will never be clear.

As Thapan affirms “[t]he second largest Asian communities in EU are in Italy with the Indians (145, 164) and Pakistani (90, 185) (2013, 5; cf., EMN 2012), which within ‘Indians’ the Sikhs’ population are unquestionably included since without any numbers attributed to faith or actual origin within India and Pakistan, one cannot isolate the actual population attributed to Sikh Indians from those numbers. With this current trend, in 2012, Italy was then “an established migration destination for Punjabis, [...] and Italy boasts the second largest Indian population in Europe—a fact that is little known in Italy” (Lum 2012,1). This statistic may come as a surprise to most Italians since as mentioned by Lum, they are often not aware of such an extensive Indian presence in their country. The reason for the disbelief towards this situation is the fact that the majority of Italians will not necessarily ‘see’ those Indians because the majority of the Italian population do not reside in the rural lands, where the Indian Sikhs have settled for their employment perspectives.

Despite being the second largest Sikh community in mainland Europe, it has been distinguished by its official ‘invisibility’. It has had a buried presence until more recently. The first wave of Indian migrants had a tendency to be invisible and ‘encapsulated’ in their community, mainly in everyday social and working life (Bertolani 2015, 209). According to Bertolani, the Italian society has qualified the Sikhs’ ‘invisibility’ in their society as a proof that they are good migrants devoted to their work and spiritual life (2015). This may be a stereotype of the rural Sikh community of the north of Italy, but it also has a great deal of reasons for its understanding as such. It is not short of a miracle that Indian migrants, of religious cultural heritage with colorful outfits some who wear turbans when they are baptised, to be understood as ‘invisible’. Their involvement in farm labor, their anchored position in the Italian dairying industries, agro-processing parmesan cheese production, in the agricultural sector, in factories and so on, have made them establish their center of community in the remote rural periphery of the usual populous Italian towns, which makes them quite ‘invisible’ to the greater Italian society. Yet, their community is growing, and the new generation, born or raised and socialized in Italy, is slowly leaving a stronger mark on the Italian society; making their way out of the countryside and understanding their identity differently through their years of living in Italy.

In other words, this community of Sikhs in Italy is a unique example of a modern diaspora. There is a certain risk in examining contemporary Sikh communities and assuming a certain generalization across different diaspora sites and contexts. It is thus problematic to think of Sikhs as constituting a homogenous diaspora and living the same everyday life. In fact, the many diasporas— “each with their own pattern of settlement and level of community development, each negotiating their own space within mainstream ‘host’

community and in managing internal differentiation” (Thandi 2012, 18). In other words, the Italian community of Sikhs cannot be compared to other diasporas in Europe or in the world in its totality. Some elements are similar, and others are contrasting, hence this rural, Mediterranean and young community of Sikhs must be examined on its own, in order to expose the compelling ways the Sikh migrants negotiate their identity rhetorics as well as map out the relationships that they have with the spaces and places around them and surrounding their culture. In fact, the people living in a certain place in the world do “come to feel a part of a place and associate their personal and group identity with the identity of that place” (Seamon, 2014, 17), which definitely brings this notion of belonging to a place and to a group, to another level of sociological understanding.

The endeavour of this dissertation is to research this fairly new Sikh community outside Punjab, India living in a similar rural environment as they were originally living in their homeland. Northern Italy has been compared to California for its Sikh migration ‘rural-to-rural’ which is rather different than other European countries that welcomed Sikh migrants who settled in urban areas (Ferraris 2009, 305; cf. Leonard 1997, Tatla 1999). Many Sikhs have come to Italy as a transit location and throughout the years, the community grew more important as a local development, and defying common migrational trajectories, many remained in Italy permanently, while some intended to establish their ‘home’ in this country as a result of their deep sense of place in Italy. The researched Sikh community mainly from the provinces within the region of Lombardy are characterized by their history of taking available employments as *bergamini* (dairy workers) during a difficult economic situation which led to a certain ethnic entrepreneurship and an environmental sustainability of economic development (Lum: 2012^a, 2012^b, 2015). They earned a good salary which they started to invest in an Italian future for their children. Not all Sikhs in Italy live or work in the north, thus only a part of the diaspora has actually settled a life in the agricultural routine of Italy. However, the researched group intended within this dissertation comes from this particular cluster of the community and the families related to this employment sector, as well as other Sikhs in the nearby areas.

The similarity of the environments ‘rural to rural’ may have sparked some sort of connection for the researched Sikhs who arrived in Italy years ago to work the land. The profound resemblance of the landscape can of course change their perspective about their connection to the land, and thus influence the new and the old generation of Sikh migrants, about the importance of the land and the place where they stand in the world. It may also have created a sort of disconnection through migrant trajectories or placelessness for those that could not put down their roots into a new land. Nonetheless, living away from

the homeland, away from the source and origin of the Sikh culture and religious traditions may in fact affect the way those migrants perceive themselves. Some migrated to Italy as adults, others as adolescents or children, while some were born in Italy, thus the influence of the Sikh culture versus the impact of the Italian culture all around them, may have triggered confusion and challenges about how to understand as well as represent oneself to the others and to yourself.

Therefore, with this situated setting of the Sikh migrants of the rural northern parts of Italy through the notion of belonging to a group and to a place, this leads to the main research question guiding the study and analysis of this dissertation: **How the northern Sikh community perceives their identity representations within their experiences of spaces and the place of Italy in this contemporary context?** In order to give a more comprehensive and logical thread, this main question will be subdivided into two individual questions each attributed to a specific analytical chapter of this thesis:

- A. 'How do the Sikh migrants negotiate the different rhetorics of identity representations in Italy?'
- B. 'How do the Sikh migrants experience and consider their spaces and the place of Italy nowadays?'

These key elements and concepts within the main and sub research questions embark on an ambitious venture to discuss both the topic of identity and of place-belongingness determined by the specific case study of the Sikh community in Italy. Researching and concluding on the identity representations as well as space relationships is the main objective of this dissertation.

To analytically investigate and interpret the data towards answering the research questions, a complete Theoretical Framework (*Chapter 1*) will be used including the overarching theories of Antonsich's five factors of the search for belonging and the dual typology from Colombo and Rebughini's generational experience of children of immigrants. Further concepts and analytical tools will also be used in order to further expose the researched data in a constructionist and dynamic approach. As for Methodology (*Chapter 2*), the standpoint of the research process includes ethnographical techniques as well as varied types of interviews in order to gather primary data from the researched community of Sikhs in Italy. As for the analytical chapters of this dissertation, both topics of identity negotiation and spatial understanding are decidedly often very interconnected and intertwined. Nevertheless, to appreciate each subject separately, they have been divided in two distinct analyses which at times have reconciled in short but compelling

instances for the purpose of presenting the bigger picture of the situation and context of the Sikh community in Italy.

Hence, within the opening analytical chapter of Identity Representations (*Chapter 3*), in order to address the question related to the negotiation of the identity representation, the process was to isolate each possible rhetoric of representation as Being Indian (3.1.), represented against common other groups through inclusions and exclusions from mainly Italians and then from other religious migrant communities. Then assuming the possibility of Being Italian (3.2.), by ways of adaptations and the possibility of becoming and feeling as an Italian. Finally, in this chapter, the third possibility of rhetoric refers to a more elaborate choice of Being Hybrid (3.3.) through inclusions and/or exclusions from two different cultures as well as pivoting from one rhetoric to another. All in all, this chapter identifies the three observed rhetorics of identity representation as well as the numerous challenges and struggles which this research Sikh community goes through daily in order to be who they want to be.

The subsequent and last analytical chapter of Space Relationships (*Chapter 4*) is divided in two major parts so as to engage with the question related to the perception and consideration of the relationships with spaces and place. The first half examines notions related to the two major spaces for this researched community, India and Italy. Spaces of India: Historical and Traditional (4.1.) aims at highlighting the dual views of first from the more nostalgic perspective of India and then to the current views from the new generation of Sikhs. Then Spaces of Italy: Location and Everyday Life (4.2) discusses both the migrational trajectory of those Indian migrants as well as the day-to-day lifestyle in the Italian spaces. As for the second half of the chapter, a dynamic and logical perspective of space becoming place brings the analysis towards Creating a Sense of Place (4.3.) for the Sikhs in Italy, including at first, those who are truly disconnected before defining the actual notion of being connected to Italy as a place through place-making. Finally, as a last possibility when a sense of place has been achieved, there is the Establishing One's Home (4.4.), likelihood through relational ties from the family and the community, resulting in a thinkable rootedness in the Italian landscape.

To conclude this analysis, the Concluding Remarks are offered at the end of this analytical process through which, results and conclusions of the main research question have been uncovered. By means of the analytical chapters, the understanding of the negotiation of rhetorics of identity and the relationships towards spaces and place either Italy or India, thus, the data and denouement have been summed into a valid and significant outcome. Hence, as you read along, expectantly you will be able to embark in this

venture of discovering the life of Sikh migrants from the rural north of Italy and better understand their associations to a way of being and of belonging.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

This dissertation embarks on the aspiring endeavour to map out the ways in which the rural migrant Sikh community negotiates their identity representation and how they interact and experience the space relationships mainly with Italy but also connectively to India. This work explores the specificity of the northern population of Sikhs in Italy in a compelling structure. It explores the sociological change of the migrant Sikh reality under study, taking into account the novel perspective on identity rhetoric and affiliation to attachment or disconnection from the land of their host Italian country. This research is situated within the constructionist tradition, and therefore does not aim to generalize, but rather to interpret and contextualize the experiences of the people concerned (Creswell & Miller 2000). Thus, the structure or the research design of this thesis is based on the purpose of exposing the complexity of the phenomena under study and contextualizing it in order to render a possible enlightenment of the circumstances, sensitive to place and situation towards reality (Ibid. 125-126). The thesis therefore begins by considering the various ways the research design explores the people's *perceptions* of their own culture and their actions (Eriksen 2002), and how it could improve the contextualization of the data.

The Sikh population residing in the Po Valley, an economically developed agricultural northern countryside of Italy, is a community which is comprised of Sikhs, either migrants or children of migrants, mostly coming from Punjab in India. A 'community' can be formed around geography, race, class, religion, gender, profession, beliefs, traditions, rituals, shared experiences, or ideals (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 54). Despite the fact that 'community' holds many different meanings which may sometimes overlap, in this case it is essentially related to a group of people sharing common values (Barnard 2000, 194) related to their geographical homeland of Punjab and of course the religion of Sikhism. Social scientists have always tried to understand 'community' by seeking to capture members' experience of it, but "[r]ather than describing analytically the form of the structure from an external vantage point, we are attempting to penetrate the structure, to look *outwards* from its core" (Cohen 2013, 20).

The term ‘community’ when imported into the discourse of social science, however, causes immense difficulty” (Ibid., 11). This is why the use of the term has been utilized only through the perspectives of the respondents themselves, as in an *outward* viewpoint as showcased in this excerpt.

“I just live in Cremona, I was born in Cremona, but for me the community is important, also for my parents. But also for me! Because this is something in which I can identify *myself*, because I am part of this community, and I think this is one of the best thing to know that, yes, I am part of this community, I am that person, it is important for me.”

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents. Respondent’s emphasis)

Community is seen as an identifier, as a common entity, shared cultural experiences and similarity in life. This particular quote will be once more analysed in the dissertation but at this point the matter at hand is to precise the fact that even if ‘community’ is a slippery term related to the culture of the Sikh respondents in the north of Italy, it has been used in discussing a broader picture, a group of people connecting through beliefs, traditions, rituals, shared experience of migration to this very precise part of rural Italy and through race or ethnicity. As Cohen emphasized, without formulating yet another definition of the term, it is important to set boundaries for the term, it implies “two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups” (2013, 11-12).

The Sikhs are thus an ethno-religious community, bound by their religion, as being Sikh from the Sikhism faith and by a correspondent ethnicity related to the culture, traditions and shared experience from their traditional homeland. In fact, “ethnicity is related to a person’s situation and gives rise to level upon level of identification” (Vertovec 2000, 122). Similarly to ‘community’, ethnicity can be defined in countless clarifications, and is also a slippery term. However, people of a same ethnicity are often understood to have shared traits such as shared religion, language and/or customs and thus a common culture and ethnicity is created in opposition to the other (Eriksen 2002), distinguishing the Sikh respondents from the other group, the dominant ethnic group (Yuval-Davis 2006) or the local Italian society of the north. Wary of the sociological reductionism involved with using terms such as community, ethnicity, society, culture, and so on, it is important to see ‘community’ as well as ‘ethnicity’ in a more analytical tool, devised and used by academics (Banks 1996, 6), utilized henceforth to characterize the studied group, the Sikhs, this “increasingly diffuse ethno-religious community” (Bramadat & Seljak 2009, 64) encountered and researched in the northern provinces of Italy.

1.1. Circumstance of the northern Sikhs of Italy

Prior to heading into the research design and then the related concepts which will be addressed more precisely by analytical chapter afterwards, there is a need to investigate and discern the circumstances of the ethno-religious community of Sikhs in the north of Italy. A brief literature of the Sikhs' situation in Italy in its essence, and an introduction to the concepts discussed further along in the dissertation will precede henceforward. It offers a sort of lens to engage into the analysis and the notions affecting the researched group, which helps to have an overview of the research and of the data as a whole.

To commence, it is important to state the fact that the northern part of Italy, where the geographic focus of this research is located, has a long tradition of internal racism. Historically in Italy, the focus used to be on internal migrants, from the South to the richer North. Regardless of this situation, the attention is now turned towards external migrants, a social current that finds its political voice in the openly xenophobic political party the Northern League (Lum, 2015). It is not clear if the population's sentiments created the *Lega Norde* (Northern League) or if the political statement of this party created and encouraged nearly racist and xenophobic behaviours throughout the northern population of Italy, but it is simply true that albeit being a party less supported by the Italian population, it still has many supporters. Since it is in the north of Italy that the largest number of immigrants are concentrated and the greater integration of immigrants in the economic social structure is noted, it is also where there is a stronger political rejection of their presence (Calavita 2005).

The population identified themselves with the message shared by this political party, as a common popular speech, a part of the local Italians have expressed that it is safer with tougher immigration laws, and restrictions on the constructions of worship centers. In 2008, the Northern League electoral campaign could be summed up to "ruthlessly exploited fears over the links between illegal immigration, organized crime, and personal security in northern Italy" (Wilson 2009; Cento Bull 2010). Afterwards, this undisputable domestic success was shown in the 2009 March election which rewarded the Northern League for its support towards those new implications, along with reserving certain social rights only for Italians and limiting those of the immigrants. This political formation has achieved major successes since it advocates a somewhat strong speech against immigration in general (Cento Bull 2010; Ambrosini 2013). At the time, this shared feeling of rejection of immigrants in general was voiced by the then head of government, Mr. Berlusconi,

which said: ‘I am against a multi-ethnic society’² (Ambrosini, 2013; Bertolani & Perocco 2013) and this statement did not take long to be cited in many newspapers and studies on the topic of migration in Italy as a possible representation of Italians’ perspectives on immigration. Even if this is not the exact worldview of most Italians the national political scenes after the local election in March 2010, particularly in the regions such as Lombardy, Piedmont, and Veneto, is determining a further embitterment of immigrants, and an enlargement of chauvinist discourses on the supremacy of national identity, the Italian language, and the Catholic religion” (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 156).

The supremacy of national identity as suggested by the Northern League or as some researchers have started to call, the return to ‘Italianness’, is now a crucial and politically infused concept. “Italianness has seldom been defined by phenotypic markers; it has been constructed mainly against other white Europeans, so whiteness has not represented—up to now—as a viable raw material for marking ethnic or racial boundaries. It has been taken for granted” (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 149). The emphasis put unto the primacy of ‘Italianness’ was quite present in the literature (Bertolani & Perocco 2013) and as mentioned earlier it revolves around the simplification of the supremacy of Italianness through national identity, Italian language and Catholic faith (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011), especially since Italianness, according to Frisina, has been a reactive measure versus the presumably dangerous Islamism (2010). It has been reduced to opposition to the alarming outsider, “a threat to the presumably-shared values defended by the Catholic church” (Ibid. 2010, 558). The precariousness of Italianness for children of migrants is challenging as it entails a performance of language, dressing and other practices (Antonsich, 2012), for ‘being Italian’. Besides, with whiteness amongst the phenotypic markers portraying ‘Italianness’ in society, as something taken for granted, one needs to understand that whiteness is the basis of racialized privilege that carries public and private societal benefits (Harris 1993). The status of being white is a valuable asset which embeds a set of assumptions, privileges and benefits that have been affirmed, legitimized and in some places, protected by law (Ibid. 1993, 1713).

Fortunately for the situation of the Italian perspective, “kinship and religion have counted for more than skin colour in defining who belongs to the community and who does not” (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 149). The original markers such as kinship and religion are simply not easily brought together for the Sikh migrants from an ethno-religious community coming from India, which may feel quite far from the Christian faith that is used as a basis suggested for ‘Italianness’. As for kinship, the Sikh community arrived

² Taken from *Corriere della Sera*, the main Italian newspaper, May 10th, 2009.

in Italy a little more than 30 years ago, thus their kinship is either still in India, or even scattered in other Commonwealth countries etc., thus not in Italy. On top of this, the now reformed way to look at Italianness includes phenotypic traits that assume whiteness as being an important part, thus creating privileges based on expectations of influence and authority while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination (Harris 1993, 1715). Even if this statement is probably debatable in the southern part of Italy, it is difficult to argue in the north. In the end, the Sikh migrants in Italy simply do not fit in the context of 'Italianness' from the beginning until the end.

One of the ways the Sikh migrants resist this unhindered exclusion from some of the society's xenophobic perspectives is by using their differences as a 'mirror game' (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011) and this even in a country well known to have failed in the view of multiculturalism (Thapan 2013) There is genuinely the fact of traditional difficulty of Italy to consider itself as a multi-religious country as well as the difficulty to grasp the inherent pluralism of religious minorities settled in its territory (Bertolani 2013, 75). Therefore, the reason for the tactic of using their difference in a positive manner is mainly because the Sikhs enjoy a quite positive public image in the Italian society. They are indeed seen as 'good workers' and 'peaceful individuals' as much as 'saviors' of the Italian cheese production. Those stereotypes, expressed by the local population and institutions are favorable even if they create a simplified image tinted with a paternalistic spirit of superiority, basically directed toward a population that is judged to be at an 'inferior stage of the social evolution' (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 140; Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 98, 111). This low perception provides the Sikh migrants with a few representatives or sympathizers from the Northern League which occasionally appear to think well of them and perceive them [unpleasantly] as peasants (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 141). They then gain more privileges despite the embitterment towards migrants; they remain in the north of Italy.

In fact, these 'good migrants' are not necessarily fighting this stereotype in open discussions with the local Italians, because this paternalistic way of reacting from the Italians has helped the Sikhs to settle and to gain opportunities from the Italian society. In a less than inferior spirit, the Sikhs exploit this perspective that the Italians have about them. It has been demonstrated in various studies on the Sikh community in the north of Italy but mainly from Bertolani and Perocco, which sees the Indian Sikhs' use of those stereotypical presentation of being Indian towards the local society as a kind of 'mirror game'. According to the parading of their exaggerated folk aspects of their life such as the spices, colorful clothes, turbans, music, temples, accessories, etc., are being used to satisfy the Italian need for exoticism (2013, 111-112). Similarly, the fact

that the usual spokesperson or leader presented to the Italian local media shows an undisputed understanding and no competition within the community, reinforces the idea of a peaceful, down to earth and cohesive community; the exact idea that Italians generally think of Indians. Thus, the *amritdhar*³ representation of identity with a long beard and turban from a Sikh entering the contemporary public discourse, it becomes another way to conform to the implicit stereotypes that Italians expect. “As a result, therefore, in some respects the Sikhs have somehow actively interiorized the gaze of the other, adhering as much as possible to the context’s expectations [...]” (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 112). Seen most of the time as ‘small steps pragmatism’, as in positive resource for Sikhs, a resource that facilitates the dialogue with the local institutions and population (Ferraris and Sai, 2013; Gallo and Sai, 2013; Gallo 2012; Bertolani 2015, 210). Often the result of this ‘mirror game’, of presenting to the Italians what they want to see of an ‘exotic other’ to the point of almost reducing themselves to personify this ‘inferior good migrant’, it ultimately leads to obtain results in the local receiving territory, that for other migrant groups has been nearly impossible to reach.

On the other hand, the question that Bertolani asks herself about this folkloric representation of the Sikh culture is that, despite its brilliant possibilities in order to facilitate this dialogue: “but at what cost?” (2015). She continues by stating that “Sikhism is made acceptable to Italians through a process of ‘ethnicization’ and ‘reduction to folklore’, in order to present it in a familiar and non-threatening way” (Bertolani 2015, 213 *cf.* Sai 2009; Gallo and Sai 2013; Bertolani and Singh 2012). In Colombo and Rebughini’s study (2012), they establish that young adults who decide to invest in their education beyond the compulsory school and aspire to professional white-collar jobs face the difficult context of autochthonous and folkloric negative representations of their different communities. They have the educational capital, but they feel that they are treated on a daily basis as marginals and as only lower status foreigners by their Italian peers (2012, 73). This is the real issue of the saddened folkloric perspective on showcasing the Sikh’s ancestral culture in order to appeal to the local Italians.

What this means in a wider context, is the definite notion that the rhetoric of sameness which the dominant ethnic group might require in order to belong to a group, will not be followed and would clearly prevent any recognition of difference (Yuval-Davis 2006). This view is not entirely true, as the Sikh community in the north does enjoy some sort of recognition, even if in a smaller scale than the Italian

³ Amritdhari: Those Sikhs that have followed the ritual of taking *amrit*, the ritual comparable to a sort of ‘baptism’ or ‘initiation’ since it marks the subject’s entry into the group of the observant Sikhs and thus became the ‘pure’ ones.

country as a whole. In Bertolani's of 2015 on *Young Sikhs in Italy: A Plural Presence for an Intergenerational Dialogue* she uncovers a forthright connection between the Sikhs in general and the Italians. She explains that there is a real historical event that fosters a common memory of those two cultures; in fact, Sikhs did fight during World War II to free the territory they now inhabit, as the partisans did (2015, 224). Indeed "Each year since 2007, a public ceremony, dedicated to the memory of the Sikh soldiers who died serving in the British Army during World War II, takes place during the summer in the Commonwealth War Cemetery of Forlì" (Ibid), a fact that is little known by the Italians in general according to some discussions with some Italian stakeholders and the Sikh respondents themselves.

Thus, this sort of commemoration, even if filled with good intentions, makes for a poor claim of recognition when only a part of the population knows of this particular and striking fact about their two societies. Following the perspective of sameness and the dominant ethnic group, the importance of integration or even assimilation into the new host society, in Italy and even all over Europe for the new generation is more than challenging. First, as Thandi ably asks, 'assimilation into what?' which is a confusing question since a 'full assimilation' will include a full and complete change in the set of values, a new national culture and ideology and the adoption of the dominant religion (e.g. Catholic church in Italy or in Spain) (2012, 22) as described while talking about Italianness, which was explained as nearly impossible. As Thandi (2012) and Yuval-Davis (2006) would agree, this 'full assimilation' will anyhow come directly in conflict with the migrants' own values and religious belief system in relation to their community ethnicity and thus the Sikhs all over Europe would be resistant in taking this status of an assimilated migrant. Assimilation is not a viable option and thus the Sikhs must use varied types of tactics and methods in order to integrate, incorporate, or adapt to the Italian ways and this will be presented in the resulting two analytical chapters.

1.2. Research Design: Overarching Theories

To the extent of analyzing this studied community, the research design will draw upon two overarching leading-edge frameworks to contextualize and position the data. Towards answering the research's main and sub-questions and thus exposing the data collected in a comprehensive and consistent venture, there is a need to have a definite set of tools to guide the analysis. The first framework from the research design is charted from Antonsich's five factors coined from *Searching for belonging—an analytical framework* (2010), an extensive review of literature of belongingness both to a group and to a place. These

factors are the guidelines that strongly influence the route that the analysis is taking in the two analytical chapters, each using, interpreting and maybe even reinforcing their adequate factor, as will be presented hereafter. These factors are crucial frameworks for this study and will then be adapted according to the angle of each analytical chapter. The second framework of the research design is from Colombo and Rebughini's innovative typologies of mundane or parental *culture* and *way of life* from *Children of immigrants in a globalized world: A generational experience* (2012). These designations bring out the complexity of identity formation and representation in increasingly mobile times, as well as exposing the migrants' possible deep connections with a space or place in relation to one's identity and behavior. Those major overall frameworks will be used throughout the dissertation, even if some may be used more particularly in some analysis more than others, yet they are the basis from which other concepts and understandings are drawn.

1.2.1. Antonsich's Five Key Factors

The first significant framework, broken into factors used as a set of tools to chart identity representation and attachment to a space or a place is possibly one of the most compelling and commanding of all. It is taken from Antonsich's analysis and literature review of belongingness which he then translated into five factors used here analytically in order to operationalize the data and thus expose conclusions which could be set into a wider context. In Antonsich's very thorough review, the five factors are mainly oriented toward the search for belonging as an analytical framework. Yet, in his research, Antonsich does clarify the difference between place-belongingness and belonging to a group or in his terminology, as the politics of belonging. The former may be quite precisely related to having a sense of belonging or attachment to a particular geographic location, the latter is somewhat more ambiguous and is also used to present the importance to be part of a group where one feels that he or she belongs, in the same idea of sameness and inclusion within identity which will be presented thereupon. In this case, it is understandable that some of the factors demonstrated in Antonsich's analytical tool may be related to Identity Representations or to the Space Relationships. The five factors in Antonsich's organization are: the auto-biographical factor (1st), the relational factor (2nd), the cultural factor (3rd), the economic factor (4th) and the legal factor (5th) (Antonsich 2010, 646-648). Here is a short presentation and the use of each factor, notions about how and when these factors will be employed, as well as their use towards the analysis and the conclusions of the dissertation.

i. The Auto-Biographical Factor

In Antonsich's view of the first key factor—the auto-biographical factor—it relates to one's past history such as personal experiences, relations, and memories which link an individual to a specific place.

In this particular context, childhood memories usually play a key role, for instance “the place where a person was born, and has grown up often remains a central place in the life of that individual” (Antonsich 2010, 8). Thus, this first factor will be used mainly but not exclusively within the Space Relationships analytical chapter. In the case of migrants such as the Sikhs, there have been a few studies touching on the topics of the connections to the historical homeland through religious and political networks, as well as the migration trajectory in relation to leaving the childhood memories in the home in Punjab. While some have moved as adults, some as children, and the actual task to establish a home abroad has been researched high and low⁴.

Even so, in this research, the common assumption that Sikh respondents consider Punjab as their homeland and thus possess this dream of returning since they now live in a diaspora community, will not be taken for granted; it will be researched and analyzed in order to define its existence or not within this research group. Some respondents have presented their life in such a way that life memories of Punjab were striking and thus connected them with sometimes “specific kinds of social relationships cemented by special ties to history and geography” (Vertovec 2000, 142) of India, and some have presented a much more disconnected sentiment to Punjab. Thus, in order to analyze Italy and the Space Relationships that the research group have with their new country, one needs to understand India and its importance for these Sikh migrants. Consequently, the tool of the Auto-Biographical factor will be used in pursuance of observing the deep connection that the Sikhs may entertain with their Punjabi homeland at first, as well as their connections with Italy afterwards. This will be accomplished with or distinctly of the auto-biographical factor, in the aim of having a comparative base despite the obvious place-based analysis of the chapter focusing primarily on Italy.

ii. The Relational Factor

The second key factor in Antonsich’s review is the ‘relational factor’ which refers to the personal and social ties that enrich the life of an individual in a given place. These ties vary from emotionally dense relations with friends and family members or connecting two individuals alike in various ways (Antonsich 2010; Granovetter 1973) to the so-called ‘weak ties’ playing a role in effecting social cohesion since these ties are more likely to relate members of *different* small groups and create relations *between* groups

⁴ See for example: Baumann 1996, Bertolani 2015, Hall 2002, Hirvi 2012, Jacobsen 2011, Jacobsen and Myrvold 2012, Leonard 1997, Levitt 2007 and 2009, Lum 2015, McLeod 1997, Myrvold 2011, Nesbit 1991 and 2005, Singh and Tatra 2006, Thandi 199 and 2012, and so on, to name a few.

(Granovetter 1973). The ‘weak ties’ could be defined as occasional interactions with strangers with whom we come to share public spaces (Antonsich 2010), where more people can be reached, and thus create a ‘sense of community’ by bridging weak ties with more important clusters (Granovetter 1973). In this instance, what is understood is that the dense relations of ‘strong ties’ as much as the possible ‘weak ties’ that a person has with other individuals, may they be family, closer friends or acquaintances from a particular place, do create a sort of connectedness to others and to the group where one is immersed.

In other words, these encounters with various people seen time after time in a shared public space generate some sort of attachment to the people themselves or the people’s group by connecting the members of those different groups and creating cohesion between the groups. Thus, this production of relations and attachment to a person or a group, as a sense of belonging to this group, may render the individuals to behave or perform in a particular way in order to unify themselves with the said group. In this sense, the possible representations of identity of an individual may be operationalized as creating attachment with people in a formal or informal way, in a given place as place performs an important part towards relationship proximity, through various habits that will be analyzed thereupon. In other words, this key factor will be mainly used, but not exclusively within the Identity Representations chapter, and later, will be redirected towards Space Relationships in relation to how a sense of place could be created through the ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ ties as in relationships with occasional interactions as well as in relationships with the family and friends of the respondents.

iii. The Cultural Factor

The third key factor in Antonsich’s review, is the ‘cultural factor’ among which, language is usually considered as the most important angle to take into consideration (Buonofino & Thomson 20017, 17 in Antonsich 2010, 647). “A particular language stands for a particular way of constructing and conveying meaning, a certain way of interpreting and defining situations (Therborn 1991, 182-183 in Ibid), which can also take the form of “tacit codes, signs, and gestures, not actually uttered, yet still understood by those who share the same semiotic universe” (Cohen 1982, 6, 11 in Ibid). This universe with deep and detailed semiotics provides people with the meaning-making that lies beneath the maintenance of cultural systems (Valsiner 2007). While researching a community, the investigation of the cultural landscapes or the larger picture of how a culture functions, the evidences of the language become cultural artifacts (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007) and behaviors which are cultural factors at the microlevel of everyday life. It has been eloquently exposed that learning the language of the host country does not obviously prevent the keeping of

the traditional language, yet it empowers the speaker (Antonsich 2012) as a direct ability towards inclusion as will be described further in the analytical chapter.

Moreover, a “similar feeling can also be generated by other forms of cultural expressions, traditions and habits, related, for instance, to religion (Ameli and Merali 2004 in Ibid), as well as to the materiality of cultural practices like, for instance, food production/consumption” (Duruz 2002; Fenster 2005, 252 in Ibid). In this perspective this key factor may cover a great deal of data and this is why this factor has been used quite extensively in both the Identity Representations and Space Relationships chapters, using the two sides of the same coin. In fact, this factor underlines the importance of the cultural habits of the individual in his or her everyday life which could be easily discernible by outsiders and inferred towards the presentation of an identity. The choice to follow, to adopt or to adapt to cultural factors such as namely language, including codes, signs and gestures, but also traditions, habits, religion, food production and consumptions are all visible manifestations of a person’s identity representation. People with mix or multiple identity representations may be combining or tailoring various elements of the cultural factor. Furthermore, this factor represents the cultural habits within traditions and religion encompassed inside the Sikh religious temples, the gurdwara, as a vital factor for spiritual people to establish themselves on a specific land and this will be investigated in the next chapters.

iv. The Economic Factor

The fourth of Antonsich’s key factor—the economic factor—will be thoroughly addressed to understand migrant trajectory. In fact, the importance of this factor is highlighted through the notion that this factor “contribute[s] to create a safe and stable material condition for the individual and her/his family. [...] This sort of economic embeddedness matters not only from a material perspective, but also in relation to make a person feel that s/he has a stake in the future of the place where s/he lives” (2010: 10) as in feeling safe and rooted in their place. In other words, it is merely related to security, to a sentiment of feeling ‘at ease’ in a new place, and with a perspective towards the future. Most of those Sikh migrants migrated in the hopes of changing their economic situation for themselves and for the future of their family. This is their core motive where they obtain the strength to go on to another country and live in a place where everything is at odds with one’s traditional culture and life. Since the economic factor is often the reason or the cause of a migration (or not), it will most likely be used in contextualizing the dataset within the Space Relationships chapter.

v. The Legal Factor

As for the final key factor—the legal factor—is defined by Antonsich, as “an essential component in producing security, which is regarded by many as a vital dimension of belonging” (2010, 10). This factor will only be briefly employed towards the end of the Space Relationships chapter with the analysis of, for example, citizenship and residence permit or gaining full legal access to a country. It has a much more political connotation within Antonsich’s framework, yet it is not the exact angle chosen for this study. In fact, the topic was not meant to be researched as a whole, however deriving from the field research, the relevance of the legal dimension has been briefly observed and discussed. It is thus necessary to mention that obtaining ‘legal’ status, may indeed bring the essential component of security where a migrant Sikh does not feel vulnerable and legally bound to a host country. Ultimately this uncertainty when the legal factor is inexistent, does not create such a close bond with a country. Therefore, this factor has been regarded and exposed during this research within the Space Relationships chapter to be discussed and analyzed accordingly.

1.2.2. Colombo and Rebughini’s Mundane or Parental *Culture & Way of Life*

The second compelling framework, the dual typologies employed to explore the experiences of rhetoric of identity representations through personal experiences and behaviors. This innovative set of tools will most definitely be useful for the chapter on Identity Representations, but it will also be useful in defining how a trivial space can become a consequential place by acting in them, as in ‘place-making’ (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 15). This second framework has been extracted from a study about children of migrants which focuses on their experiences in a globalized world and how they find a balance in their dualistic life of heritage and incorporation into a new society. This duality has been defined by the terminology of parental or mundane *culture* and their *way of life*.

This typology exposes the distinction between (mundane) *culture* and *way of life* by Colombo and Rebughini (2012). These tools are used to discuss the ambivalence of the contradictory desire to preserve tradition and to fit into the present social context simultaneously, for young people growing up in a globalized, multicultural and changing world (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 84-93). As explained, in the research conducted with children of immigrants in Italy, there are often two ways of thinking when regarding or expressing a sense of belonging in everyday life. The deepest and most embedded habits, described as *culture* (in its mundane meaning), are often associated with ethnicity, nationality and family history. The raw material—roots, values, blood, identity and so on—constitute the inner core and it is where the individuality is created (Ibid. 2012, 85-86). Then there is the *way of life* which is seen as personal taste, style and

preferences as a result of “personal learning and individual experience; it is a process of slow but unavoidable embodying of customs, habits and outlook on life peculiar to the place where the person grew up” (Ibid. 2012, 87). In this binary set of tools, it becomes clear that the usage of those two categories may help in observing the Identity Representations, as well as understanding the Space Relationships in a clearer and more tangible manner.

In fact, by considering parental *culture* such as national belonging, language and religion in an ‘essential’ way of seeing what is understood to be given at birth (Ibid. 2012, 86) as much as the personal tastes, customs and habits that transformed an individual’s *way of life* due to personal experiences lived in another country since childhood, one can observe the difficult balance that needs to be maintained between the migrants’ heritage and the actions that they perform in order to facilitate their incorporation into their new society. By observing the means that they take in order to achieve their state of authenticity while keeping their sense of belonging by facing situations with specifically learned ‘codes’ can create a remarkable and thought-provoking study of the researched group. It is true that authenticity is often seen as merciless in certain ways of theorizing when directed dangerously towards blood and nervous fundamentalism, mystical and primordial essentialism, or forms of divisive separatism (Radhakrishnan 1993, 754) however, others such as Radhakrishnan have claimed that authenticity is not just with identity but with a certain attitude to identity. “In other words, authentic identity is a matter of choice, relevance and a feeling of rightness” (Ibid. 1993, 755). Exploring how the Sikh respondents negotiate cultural and behavior in order to legitimize their presence and this feeling of rightness and thus be allowed to also feel at home in Italy. It aims to connect the wider social, cultural and mundane structures with the microlevel everyday life once again.

1.3. Concepts and Analytical tools: Identity Representations

Considering the main overarching theories which attempt at denoting the significant ways to map out how the Sikh migrant negotiate their identity representation in specific narratives, there are other concepts focusing on the first analytical chapter directly which will be useful in offering a sort of lens into the life and everyday actions of the Sikh migrants and their community. The inclusion versus exclusion lens is used in this study in order to highlight the position of these individuals in their society, in their community, in their locality, in their family and in their future. Hence, the opposite understanding of *inclusion* and *exclusion* is

similar to the concepts of ‘us’ versus ‘them/others’. This binary view is crucial and central to the way in which we achieve a sense of identity and social belonging for every generation of immigrants.

Using the ‘us’ versus ‘them/other’ perspective becomes a valid way to describe identity and to bring forward the comparative standpoints. It outlines the differences of the majority group versus the minority group, which is on its side, singled out by its ‘otherness’. It creates the application of systematic distinctions between the insiders and the outsiders; between the ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Eriksen 2002, 19). The ‘we’ or ‘us’ is created by having some socially constructed elements of exclusivity, so that the ‘other’ or ‘them’ cannot be part of the said group. It is indeed a quite outstanding boundary discourse which separates ‘us’ from ‘them’, and brings identity politics and politics of belonging to its essence (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204 *cf.* Antonsich 2010, 648). This is probably one of the simplest and oldest manners to describe oneself however, even if it helps in understanding the underlying concepts of one’s identity, it can also create discord.

This dual concept developed in interactions and through reciprocal recognition (Melucci 1996, 32) of *inclusion* and *exclusion* mirrors the notion of ‘difference’ as an analytical tool. As mentioned in Colombo’s work on multiculturalism in Italy, “difference constitute a relevant tool for claiming recognition and respect as well as demanding inclusion and participation” (2010, 455) especially for migrants of different generations in a host country. The idea of difference does encompass the dynamic of *inclusion* and *exclusion* by using it as a tool to gain entry into a group or to single out those that cannot be associated with. On the one hand, by analyzing the differences with another group one also sees the similarities or ‘sameness’ with others. On the other hand, othering renders *exclusion* because of differences and, belonging (to a group) assumes *inclusion* because of the possible ‘sameness’ which are mutually constitutive components of identity representations (Gingrich 2004, 4).

As specified in the Circumstances of the northern Sikhs (1.1.) of Italy, Yuval-Davis states that any dominant ethnic group tends to fill the notion of belonging to their group with a rhetoric of sameness. This rhetoric habitually defines the ‘requisites’ for one person to belong, such as having to assimilate the language, the culture, the values, the behavior and the religion of the dominant group, which clearly prevents any recognition of difference (2006, 209). Antonsich responds by illustrating the impossibility of this rhetoric, emphasizing that even if a person desires to assimilate, there might be remaining dimensions such as the place of birth or the phenotypic trait of the skin or the hair color, which would prevent ‘full sameness’ and thus parade this person into the discourses and practices of socio-spatial exclusion (2010, 649). In this view, it is possible for a person to try to ‘assimilate’ or in this case, to adapt to a new *way of life*, despite the fact

that this person may be rejected by the dominant group because of the place of birth or the skin color; the remaining dimensions.

When an individual is different from another, when they compare each other, they are either excluded by or exclude themselves from the group. If one is excluded by the other group, it generally means that this individual will act towards being included. As humanly possible, a person will perform future actions in the intent to erase either temporarily or permanently the differences, and thus creating this sameness in their *way of life* and hopefully be included. However, if the person excludes themselves from a group, it means that this person only sees the differences and aims at making it clear that they are not part of this group by emphasizing the variances as much as possible. On the other hand, when a person is the ‘same’ as the group, this person is included as a matter of fact by simple recognition of being part of the group, or in this instance the community. Being part of the group or here the ‘community’ seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference (Cohen 2013, 12) since they are in fact seen as the ‘same’ as the group, but different than another at the same time depending on the starting point. Inclusion is not being understood as assimilation, it is merely a probable adaptation in a specific context, hence assimilation is not analyzed here, neither was it observed in this research.

Adapting in order to be included in a group or adapting to be part of various groups in precise situations also includes the notion of difference as well as *inclusion* and *exclusion*. It implies the idea of becoming someone different so as to be included in some instances and go back to the original stance at some point. Anthias’ critique of the concept of identity claims that it must not assume a static ‘being’ since it “fails to signal the processes involved i.e. the processes of becoming. It is therefore linked to the kind of positivistic framing that ‘being’ potentially hails. Becoming is a process and this opens up the potential for change and transformation as well as the recognition of practice and agency [...]” (2013, 5). It is then through Anthias’ standpoint that the next notion of a different rhetoric, the hybridity narrative, can be examined.

One of the common claims is that “hybridity is in the eye of the beholder, or more precisely in the practice of the beholder” (Freidman 1999, (249-251), which is not completely true (Pieterse 2001, 228), but can bring some sort of value when looking at those that self-identify as hybrids. The term hybrid along with other academic and research-based words such as hyphenated, trans-national, in-between (Bhabha 1994), suspended between two (incompatible) worlds (Colombo and Rebughini 2012), multiplicity of identities (Grossberg 1996), multiple and intersectional identities, *fluid* character of ethnic categorisations (Park 1955 [1921]; Eriksen 2002, 21), ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner 1967), *ethnic anomalies* (Douglas 1966), ‘neither-

nor' or 'both-and' (Eriksen 2002), cultural hybrid (Park 1928) or enmeshed in multiple bonds of belonging, were fashioned to explain this process, mainly of the new generations of immigrants as well as those socialized and living in foreign countries, describing their own views and understanding of their own identity representations. The choice of one word or another may depend upon the researcher, or the different understanding of each word, and in this research, both techniques have been approached, as well as taking into accounts the feedback from the respondents that self-identified as such, in order to define 'Being Hybrid' as the key terminology for this rhetoric.

Originally taken as an analogy from biology, the term entails cultural mixing and the emergence of 'impure', ambiguous identities which reject essentialism and rigid boundaries (Eriksen 2002, 153). It is important to note that nowadays, "hybridity" is used in different ways and constitutes for each writer a way of challenging existing paradigms of 'identity'" (Anthias 2001, 625). The goal is simply to provide a term, an escape from any 'fixed' form of identification or category (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 134), to analyze the life of these migrants as a process, experiencing this 'hybridity' and performing towards it. It is about looking into the migrants' capacity to use both skills of continuity and change, to fit into changing contexts of their rhetoric of representation. Since they, mainly the Sikh youth, have been socialized with the cross-currents of different cultural fields, they then self-consciously select, syncretize and elaborate their identity from more than one heritage (Vertovec 2000, 154). Leading towards a new and extensive view of who they are, included in both the Sikh and the Italian worldviews.

This idea of including both 'incompatible' worlds into a single named process of hybridity or in a clearer way, as 'hyphenated identification'—meaning an identity representation with two terms linked by an hyphen such as "Italian-Sikh"—is all about not giving too much importance to either of the two identifications, it is all about the connected balance or equilibrium of those two cultures in one. The hyphen is often dismissed easily as being a choice of the author; nonetheless the hyphen should be known to have a deeper property. It is a symbol of the struggle of the new generation to blend in with the norms of the culture of the majority while maintaining the traditions of their family. This new perspective could be understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, which highlights unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary 'self' (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, 8). Being Hybrid is not about a complete immersion in only one possibility, but a constant fluctuation of their own self, as well as a deep jump in both 'Italianness' and 'Sikhness' at the same time. "Claiming a hyphenated identity (e.g. Egyptian-Italian [or Sikh migrant]) allows them to claim legitimate inclusion in the majority (they claim to be Italian), while taking pride in their racialized difference that the majority considers cause

for exclusion” (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 132-133). They can thus, according to this logic and theory, claim to be included in both worlds and pride themselves into their own native ethnic community as well.

It is often mentioned that hybridity, multiple identifications, or the representation of it thereof, is contextual and situational. It is true that one may represent oneself or perform in a way that it will bring one type of identity forward more than another, the one of course, which fits best at the moment. As noted by Noble et al., “[t]he ability to adjust to different contexts does not mean a total identification, a complete assimilation, but rather the ability to maintain a constant equilibrium, however unstable and potentially contradictory, between sameness and difference, homologation and distinction” (In Colombo 2010, 459). DuBois’ notion of ‘double consciousness’ goes along in the same direction by theorizing this idea as “creolization, metissage, mestisaje and hybridity” (1993, 2 in Anthias 2001, 626), which highlights the idea of the mix without becoming homogenous in its whole. It may be difficult to see the trend, but it becomes obvious when it is discussed with the young migrants that are not inspired to choose, in some ‘either/or’ models, they want to manage, mediate and keep both sides. They prefer the inclusive logic of ‘both, and’, model (Beck 2006).

For the religious membership, it becomes a binding factor rather than a factor of differentiation and it provides a sort of *paspartout* with which it becomes possible to redefine one’s identity representation within and without the community. It is possible to reassemble the two symbolic universes of reference without this process involving any ‘loss’ of either the parental *culture* or the *way of life* gained in Italy (Bertolani & Perocco 2013). This identification is far more fluid and complex than previously understood in the dichotomy. In today’s multicultural society, to call oneself ‘Sikh (or Indian) *and* Italian’ or as other studies have exposed, it “would be a way of celebrating one’s own difference without feeling excluded, marginalized or segregated” (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 129). It is as if those that either identify with two cultures, are not using differences as an indicator to be from different worlds or cultures. On the contrary, they are using this indicator more in a worldview to designate a specificity that valorizes *inclusion*.

For the notion of being hybrids, the researched Sikh migrants in Italy are not considering themselves as being something new, but simply they are ‘doing’ something new. They manage the multiplicity and mobility along with developing specific abilities to successfully navigate different contexts while being considered ‘insiders’ in both their Italian society and Sikh community. They are definitely not suspended between two incompatible worlds; they are surely part of both. And by being ‘insiders’ they claim the possibility to fit into more than one box or category, they want to move from one to the other while remaining

fully part of both (Vasquez 2010, 47, Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 134, 157). In contemporary life, a migrant, born or socialized on a foreign land, may feel embedded in two cultures and thus may feel attached to both of them despite obvious *inclusion* or direct *exclusion* from both groups. It is understood that an excessive attachment to only one sole group, to only one language or one code of conduct/*way of life*, is disproportionately rigid and does not allow this migrant to manage adequately the flux of this contemporary life (Colombo 2010, 464). In other words, having the skills to access both worlds, in spite of the obstacles, is still better than being completely embedded in one without any level of adaptation whatsoever. This in-betweenness (Bhabha 1996), and the blurred of self-containedness or boundaries permit the young migrants and those born and socialized in the new society to face the possible *inclusion* and *exclusion* of their hybridity. They do so by pivoting from one identity representation to another (Levitt & Glick-Schiller 2004) according to different contexts and in some ways, as will be defined within the analytical chapter. They try to resist the impossibility or the rigidity of belonging and living with only one culture when one has both a parental *culture* and a different *way of life*. The pivot focuses thus mainly on issues of cultural ‘cut and mix’ and deploys a notion of identity that could be seen as multi-layered or fragmented (Anthias 1999).

Identification or rather the representation of it, for the Sikhs in Italy, in common sense language, is a discursive approach where identification is a construction, a process which is never completed—always ‘in process’ (Hall 1996, 2), it cannot be ‘won’ or ‘lost’, it simply is there and ever changing. In Colombo’s perspective, he finds that the migrant youth, “far from being the mere extension of their “native lands” and their traditional “roots”, negotiate and define collective identities separately from their ethnic and cultural citizenship. They borrow their identifying symbols from the global cultural flow, as well as from the distinctive features of their countries of origin and destination” (Enzo Colombo from ISA World Congress of Sociology in 2006). This emulates the saying from Hall in 1996, which the young migrants “relate to the intervention of tradition as much as to tradition itself. Which they oblige us to read not as an endless reiteration but as ‘the changing same’: not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our ‘routes’” (Hall 1996, 4).

Nevertheless, as soon as a migrant arrives on a foreign shore with his or her family, that person will be challenged through an internal struggle, this dilemma will shape who he or she will become. As described here,

“so-called ‘hyphenated identities’ (Mexican-American or Moroccan-Italian, [Sikh migrant] and so on), is the natural outcome of all these processes: whether the troublesome aspects will prevail, or, on the contrary, a process of reciprocal enrichment and cultural innovation prevails, it’s a dilemma that takes shape from the very first steps of the family’s settlement, that has the families at the forefront, but

involves the whole institutional (economic, political, social, cultural[...]) framework in which they are going to fit in” (Ambrosini, 2007).

Furthermore, the members of the local Italian main society are not necessarily agreeing with this hybridity and may thus not enforce this sort of reciprocal enrichment. Then again, some members of the Sikh community would also strongly disagree with this statement of being hybrid and having the capacity to pivot. Hence, one of the limits of this *inclusion* of the Hybrid representation of identity is that those that would agree about recognizing the state of being attached to two cultures of two worlds see it as a transitional phase before reaching complete assimilation and not as a rhetoric of identity representation. Since representations of identity are not fixed, and change according to the surrounding contexts (Vertovec 2009, 140), it is true that holding on to two types of membership at once is not always regarded as possible, neither encouraged. Being Hybrid may mean an *inclusion*, but it also means a direct *exclusion* in some settings and is conflictual for many hybrid migrants since having the solidarity of the others, the recognition to be part of the group, their identity can be reinforced and somewhat guaranteed (Melucci 1996), however, without it, it might create some internal struggle of identity representation. All in all, in the case of the Italian society, the situation is not so categorical. *Inclusions* and *exclusions* do affect a person’s identity representation quite extensively, being one identity or another, or else becoming another rhetoric is thus possible so as to embrace two cultures at the same time.

1.4. Concepts and Analytical Tools: Space Relationships

Envisioning the main overarching theories once again yet in relation to the Space Relationship venture into examining how the Sikh respondents’ community interacts and experiences their relationships with the spaces and the places in their lives. The specificity of the rural northern Sikhs of Italy and their specific connections and sometimes disconnections with a geographical location may well be understood through the two overarching frameworks provided at the start of the research design, but further concepts must be unveiled so as to establish the possible connectedness of the migrant Sikhs with Italy through a sense of place and their struggle related to this prospect. The Space Relationships chapter revolves around the topic of space as a locality and the relationships that one or a group of migrant Sikhs can have with either an abstract space or a concrete place.

The research has been exclusively conducted in the north of Italy despite the modern trends in migration studies. As discussed in Antonsich’s analysis used by many scholars to study ‘belonging’, he claims

that “[w]hile in fact the interrelation between the ‘here’ and ‘there’ of belonging has been largely investigated, no studies are available which explore the ‘here’ in all its multiple scales and in their connections” (2010, 20). This dissertation does not claim to explore the complete depth of ‘here’ and the many scales and connections but, only to focus on the ‘here’ rather than the fashionable transnational perspective of ‘here’ *and* ‘there’ of migrant communities in general, is one of the motives for this place-based research. It is rare that the ethno-religious Sikh community is identified as an ideal subject for a place-based ‘here’ study because of their long-lasting migration history of diaspora community. In other words, the intention is to observe with a certain depth the analysis of ‘here’ of the Sikh migrants in Italy, thus not their connection with their ‘homeland’ per se, only as a justifiable comparative to Italy and the discussion of the migrant trajectory. The analysis and the concepts discussed henceforth will mainly focus on the Sikh respondents’ new land, where they are at the moment and how they feel in this new society.

As the chapter begins with the abstract notion or nostalgic memories of the homeland of Punjab India, it embarks on presenting the vision of the Sikh respondents’ and their viewpoint of this ancestral space whether they were born, raised, socialized or simply visited this environment, this country. It then goes into an equally senseless perspective towards the Spaces of Italy. One way to introduce the Spaces of Italy and the relationship that the Sikh migrants have with this country, is by presenting different instances of everyday life that could encompass the auto-biographical factor (Antonsich 2010) but in a space specificity, or more precisely in the spaces of Italy or of India. This everyday life, or routine that this migrant group experiences daily has been named and defined in various ways. In Sztompka’s (2008, 31-32) terms, ‘everyday life’ which could be defined as the observable manifestation of social existence which always includes relationships with other people, will always materialize itself in a social context and is indeed localized. Its occurrence at particular spaces—at home, on the street or on the athletic field—are often integrally important to the activities they involve since the character of the site significantly determines the character, style, form and content of social events. Other than this localized everyday life particularity, Seamon (1980) introduced the concept or ‘time-space routines’ explained by Lewicka as ‘place-ballet’ in order to describe “automatic, daily routines which are performed in specific places, which he [Seamon] viewed as the basis for the existential relationship between people and places” (2013, 52) which in turn are generating “strong sense of place because of its continual and regular human activity” (Seamon 1980, 159). These routines and habitual actions produce memories through ‘living’ in a place and thus create more meaning and relations to the space, gradually becoming places for some of the members of the researched group.

In fact, the debate states that the concept of space and place, are simply two different views of the same coin. Indeed, both the space and the place could be the same actual location, but one would hold more meaning or life histories possibly through time-space routines to a single individual or to his or her community as a whole. The concept of space

“often merges with that of place. ‘Space’ is more abstract than ‘place’. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we know it better and endow it with value. [...] The ideas “space” and “place” require each other definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Tuan 1977, 6).

Thus, this endowment with value makes a ‘space’ become meaningful and then transformed into a ‘place’, and this idea, as Gupta and Ferguson point out, “there is hardly an older or better established anthropological truth” (1992,111) and in this case, could be assumed and understood as a truth in the social sciences as a whole. Indeed, other social scientists such as Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga have also thrived to understand this reality. It is all about the formation of meaningful relationships with the locale that people occupy and how they attach meaning to space, hence again, transforming ‘space’ into ‘place’. The interest should be directed towards “how experience is embedded in place and how space holds memories that implicate people and events. Furthermore, the relationships between people and their surroundings encompasses more than attaching meaning to space. It involves the recognition and cultural elaboration of perceived properties of environments in mutually constituting ways through narratives and praxis” (2003, 13-14). The key to understanding how and when migrants transform their spaces into places is by observing their relationships with their landscapes geographically and through a social context. If the environment or the geographical location is perceived as having the right properties in order to expand one’s culture and is recognised as such, then it could be understood to have been transformed into a place of value. Equally, when the community attaches meaning to landscapes in virtue of social context through memories, meaning, and purpose it does evolve into a place, as a sort of means to an end.

Upon analysing how and when ‘spaces’ become ‘places’ for the Sikhs in Italy, it is important to keep in mind that one of the most common approaches taken by social scientists when the notion of place arises during the discussion the creation of a sense of place of a group or a community, is the assumption of its simplicity. As Rodman points out, “the problem of place arises, paradoxically, because the meaning of place too often seems to go without saying. [...] place is unproblematic. It is simply location” (2003, 204). The idea is to analyze the associations of place as a geographic location and the people living in those places, however, it is not only and simply a location in itself. It has become much more important and revealing for the people

residing in this locality. A place in an anthropological construct as a 'setting' or as a socially constructed spatialized involvement is experienced through spatial relationships, and values attached to places and relationships and this connection may be called 'lived space' (Rodman 2003, 206). Seamon then argues in favor of another scheme of idea. In his view a 'place realization' which echoes Rodman's view on 'lived space', refers to a palpable presence of place, not simply its mention, its understanding but more about its existence and what makes a place. He also claims that

“[t]he Environmental ensemble of the place (its particular physical constitution as a landscape or building or furnishing or otherwise), coupled with that places' human activities and meanings, evokes a distinctive place ambience and character that seems as real as the human beings who know, encounter, and appreciate that place. In short, place is 'realized' as a unique phenomenal presence as substantive as its environmental and human parts—for example, the 'London-ness' of London or the 'Istanbul-ness' of Istanbul” (Seamon 2014, 17).

In other words, the constitution of what makes the landscape added to the activities that the inhabitants convey within this space, creates and 'realizes' this particular place. The 'Italian-ness' of Italy in its environmental ensemble, could very well be meaningful for the growing rural Sikh community of the north of Italy after all, and possibly much more than the 'Indian-ness' of India means to them.

Whenever someone begins to see a 'space' as a 'place' with all its meaning through the social landscapes, it involves the notion that 'places' are more than just simple locations. As Perkins and Thorns concluded, the places, “they are created by people, who in turn identify with them” (2012, 14). People read places as acting in them. They are created, through actions and practices that give meaning and history to those places (Cresswell 1996; Berberich, Campbell & Hudson 2012), and therefore for a number of respondents in this research, they have more to read about the histories of the place of Italy than any other country. In fact, the more a person feels comfortable with a place, creates memories and histories with it, the more the same individual will take the identity of this distinct location, often with pride. This definitely associates the different analysis of this dissertation by looking at one's place in the world, the essence of belongingness. It shows adequately how this process of identifying one's place in the world and to represents oneself in connection to this place which has become their place is accomplished.

In relation to creating histories in a place, it inevitably involves a notion of time, not just of place. Once the creation of the sense of place has been grounded it becomes necessary to aim towards the establishment of one's home. In Antonsich's work, he mentions the compelling relevance of the length of residence when generating a sense of place-belongingness among 'incomers', despite not fitting in his five initial factors of belonging (2010, 11), which will possibly increase the chances to feel at home. In Lewicka's research it is mentioned that the residence, the house or the home, presently used by migrants is a definite

source of autobiographical memories and that their “number and richness depend on residence duration—the longer one lives in a place, the richer are place-related memories, which, along with time-space routines discussed previously, contribute to the sense of belonging to the place” (2013, 53). It was explained that the time spent or living in a country or region in the world is the basis for a reliable case of association with a durable place attachment to this said place (Lewicka 2013, 52), although currently, the notion of length of residence is much more often used to predict the future possible attachment rather than the absolute assumption of its achievement. It is thus seen as a predictor and a popular scale in place attachment (Ibid, 49). One must be careful since this predictor is not infallible; some may spend a short time in a place, live intensely and feel connected and rooted in the place. As for others, living for a longer time in an area does not make it a home by itself, and through the possible narratives of disconnection, it may never be felt as will be presented afterwards in the analytical chapter.

In fact, some migrant Sikhs of the research group may feel at odds with the assumption of place attachment. As mentioned by Seamon, “[...] place attachment, which can be defined as the emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment” (2014, 11), is not experienced by everyone. Some people simply feel unattached to the spaces of Italy enough to think about moving away once more through their migrant mobility. This condition of ‘non-attachment’ has been classified by Gustafson in three categories: ‘alienation’ which implies explicitly negative attitudes to one’s current home place. There is also ‘place relativity’ which represents ambivalence and provisional acceptance. Finally, there is ‘placelessness’ basically equalling a general indifference to the place (2013, 40). In a constructionist paradigm, this analytical categorisation of the disconnected migrant has been adapted to fit the specific narratives of the migrant community studied henceforth. In considering the concept of emotion and how a place becomes important, as a feeling to be at the right place, it is important for people to feel connected with the proximity to the resources and interest of the specific population and thus to feel a certain motive to remain in a specific location for a simple space to become a meaningful place and affirm a sense of place.

The argument can thus be upheld that belonging is inherently written in the landscape (Trudeau 2006, 423 in Antonsich 2010, 648), and that place may indeed hold enough meaning and emotion to become a place. When discussing the terminology of ‘a sense of place’ Massey and Jess (1995) explain that it “is the phrase used by many geographers when they want to emphasize that places are significant because they are the focus of personal feelings. Many geographers thus use ‘place’ in this quite specific sense, to refer to the significance of particular places for people. These feelings for ‘place’ are not seen as trivial; geographers argue that senses of place develop from every aspect of individuals’ life experience and that

sense of place pervade everyday life and experience” (Massey & Jess 1995, 88). Indeed, even Gustafson will invite the opinion of specialists from various different fields to define this place-belongingness. In fact,

“[h]umanistic geographers, environmental psychologists, and community sociologists have often regarded place attachment as good and mobility as potentially bad. Local roots, community ties, and strong emotional bonds with one’s home place have been described as important sources of well-being, whereas mobility has been associated with uprootedness and social disintegration” (Gustafson 2013, 38).

Thus, Massey and Jess claim that feelings for a place may very well be created within the everyday routine, but Gustafson precises that place attachment and length of residency become the important step, one must stay put in order to have those everyday life experiences and develop emotional bonds or social anchors that will make you establish a home in this a country. As seen previously, the notion of time may be important as it may not, the only certainty is the quality of the time spent and the emotion depth of the histories, memories and personal experiences lived in those places which creates this feeling of being rooted, and thus of establishing one’s home.

How can one distinguish when a meaningful place has become the roof under which, a person will, can and want to create a homey feeling? One of the ways to describe that phenomenon is by understanding that “[...] place attachment implies ‘anchoring’ of emotions in the object of attachment, feeling of belonging, willingness to stay close, and wish to return when away” (Lewicka 2013, 49) meaning that the anchoring of one’s emotions equals the anchoring or rooting of a person up to the point that this person will endeavour to go back when absent. Furthermore, the social proximities along with the emotional bonds with the surrounding people may encourage the migrants to stay put or to remain in this location longer, so as to create the necessary memories, habits and likeness of the place which would ultimately make them feel at home, and thus build their home here, in Italy. Recurrently, as Fortier point out, that however temporarily the attachment period and the rootedness, within her notion of ‘migrant belonging’ where she claims that the sense of place is not only about the movement (becoming) but also of this idea of rootedness, any time spent in a place may create this attachment (2000, 2). Hence, the time spent is not the only factor, but the way someone may be rooted in place will create and feed a deeper place attachment.

Tuan further analyzes the connection with the people and the land by defining that “social attachment [created by humans described as being like trees needing roots and thus a group creates a social attachment to a particular locality] could be a family, a village, a country, a nation, but it is in this view, spatially rooted” (Tuan 1997). Similarly in Rodman’s research on native people, their claim and their

‘rootedness’ to the land, she proposed “the concept of social landscape as a broad perspective that rests on the notion of lived spaces of an individual’s experience in the world” (2003). In her view, each person sees and experiences the landscape differently and accords meaning to it individually. Connecting the perspectives together means that the affiliation with people or a ‘proximity’ to a social network as a family or a neighborhood, this emotional bond individually felt helps in becoming spatially rooted and create social attachment in connection to the people as well as to the landscape itself. Then, the community or the people individually may have experienced this “idea of locality—that is the ‘meaningful space’, the place for relationships in which people feel themselves *chez soi*, at home—profoundly transformed” (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 62). In other words, the transformation from ‘space’ to ‘place’ may have led to a further connection of being rooted to the place thus the possible creation of definite *chez soi*.

The French philosopher, Simone Weil wrote a modest and eloquent quote about place attachment which will be used during the analysis as well: « *L’enracinement est peut-être le besoin le plus important et le plus méconnu de l’âme humaine*⁵ » (1949, 36) and as Lewicka pointed out, if we follow this all-encompassing vision, “[p]lace attachment seems thus to be a pretty universal phenomenon” (2013, 50). Hence the interest is researching the feeling of being attached to a place in the world. This feeling of place-belongingness or rather to have a place in the world where one feels right, and simply belongs, is a quest for everybody, but it is even harder for those that expatriate themselves into a new and strange country. As Antonsich points out, “[p]eople who choose to live in a place different from the one where they were born (‘incomers’) do so for various reasons (better quality of life, improved material or intellectual opportunities, aesthetic enjoyment, etc.)” (2010, 11), thus sometimes it is needed to move away in order to make a better living or to offer a more interesting future to their offspring. While exploring the notion of feeling and creating a home in Italy, it is important to realize that the trajectory that migrant communities experience throughout their passage is also thought of when deciding in a definite place to live. Thus, many elements could influence positively and negatively the decision or choice of where to establish a house, and possibly a home for the family.

One way to distinguish this feeling of ‘home’ by looking at the different phases of sense of place or place-belongingness as described and coined in John Eyles’ 1985 study where he listed ten dominant senses of place articulated by his research participants, residents of a small English town. Distinctively three of those ten are applicable to this research. The first sense of place namely ‘Social sense of place’ is the sense that

⁵ ‘to be rooted is the most important and less recognized need of the human soul’

explains that place is socially significant and social relationship also has place relationships, which is much more related to the creation of a sense of place a connection to the landscape and to the social context, a necessary step towards rootedness, but not the most precise feeling of home as the two other senses will express. Therefore, the seventh sense is 'Family sense of place' which place is where the family interactions and attachments reside. This sense is definitely present while discussing the proximity with family and friends, which may also count as a sort of social anchor to Italy. The last sense discussed here is the 'Way-of-life sense of place' when the research participants' whole *way of life* is bound up with a specific place (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 19). This connects both the *way of life* or place-ballet of the everyday routine that the participants experience in their life in Italy which may make them see Italy as a significant place rather than a space like another; to be at the right place and thus to feel at home. The engaging analytical concepts provide angles intertwined to the previous analytical chapter as well as stand alone viewpoints for the study of the Sikh migrants in the north of Italy, examining the situation 'here' while taking into accounts that 'home' or where the memories and histories of a person may not necessarily reside in Italy but where they are personally rooted.

In consideration of these multiple concepts, namely the overarching theories of Antonsich's five factors of belonging to a place or to a group in conjunction to Colombo and Rebughini's two-fold typology of mundane *culture* and *way of life*, which are the base of the research design deeper analysis of the research group is expected. Furthermore, the various individual concepts including the contrary 'us' and 'other' seen as similarities and differences, or the difference between space and place, one being an empty environment, a point on a map versus a meaningful location where one experiences comfort, security, personal experiences and deep attachment to this place will also help in constructing a valid and logical analysis of the perspective on the lives of rural Sikh from the north of Italy.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1. Research Design: Overarching Theories

The ethnographic data presented in this dissertation are structured in a specific framework which conveys the argument about the identity representations and the relationships to space and place of the older and the new generation migrant Sikh respondents from the north of Italy, and in the end, through their story of everyday life, will answer the main research question. Though this enterprise researching a migrant community in a foreign country began with deep interest and personal motives to deepen the knowledge of ethno-cultural communities, cultures, traditions, sociology of migration and adaptation to a new place away from their original land; the subject of the various Sikh communities outside India has been a favoured topic of mine for the past six years, and thus working closely with a thriving diasporic community in Italy for over a year, has been a most insightful experience.

Concerning the methodology used to answer the main research question of this dissertation: ‘How the northern Sikh community perceives their identity representations within their experiences of spaces and the place of Italy in this contemporary context?’ and subsequently, the sub-questions of each chapter; the qualitative sociological approach was the best suited method to use in order to gather data about the research group, their lives, how they feel and how they see themselves contextually speaking in this day and age. Thus, the design used to study their relationships and representation to a group and to a place for the researched northern Sikh community of rural Italy was constituted mainly of ethnography, different types of interviews besides visual and academic literature analysis. The fieldwork began by reaching one of the few gurdwara associations in the north of Italy and receiving a positive answer from them in regards to the research at hand. This correspondence commenced with the association of *Cultura Sikh* from the largest gurdwara of mainland Europe, *Shri Kalgidhar Sahib* located in Pessina Cremonese, in the Cremona province of Lombardy. They supplied the name and email of a young female member of their association that was fluent in Italian, Punjabi, English, German and spoke some French as a guide within their community and their

gurdwara. She was often designated by the community as a sort of public relations person for people inquiring about the community who did not speak the common local Italian language or the traditionally Indian Punjabi language.

Harminder, part of one of the oldest family of settlers in this region of Italy provided some much-needed advice, insights and thoughtful reflections whereby she became the main informant of this research. Her presence in the research process contributed to the more 'emic' perspective of what was encountered as seeing through the eyes of those inside the community which balanced the evident outsider's 'etic' perspective (see Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 16, 17, 20, 176) of the researcher. It offered a helpful hand and an ability to understand the migrant Sikhs' remarkable situation nowadays. Harminder opened her house, communicated her story and described her life which produced an incredible chance to see the 'behind the scene' of most events happening at the gurdwara or connected to it by her position as a member of the gurdwara association. Moreover, as an educated young woman she also understood the need of seeing both sides of the same coin and the necessity of being unbiased in this overall research project. Most of this work is owed to this person, to her family, to her countless days and nights answering questions, discussing various topics and creating a complete mini social network around this research to benefit from many angles. This modern-day gatekeeper started as a main informant and later became a valuable friend along with her most obliging family; without them, this research would not have been so insightful.

2.2.Challenges and Obstacles

After contacting this central informant, many regular visits were scheduled at this person's home several weekends in a row to conduct the research. The goal was to participate in the northern Sikh community life, but a few challenges were met along the way; namely the language barrier, the geographic distances between the members of the community, the lack of access to gurdwaras without any vehicle and the rarity of opportunities for the community to gather during the year aside from the more religious events. Yet, getting involved in as many projects as possible related to the Sikh life in order to answer the main research question, remained the objective. In other words, it led to attendance of many religious, political and social events at gurdwaras or other locations in the northern provinces of Italy.

Through those numerous instances of meeting with members of the researched Sikh community it was sometimes difficult to find appropriate times to meet more than one person for interviews and such

during the day. The Sikh community is established in the rural areas, in houses quite far apart, and the family members usually work several long days before having a day off. Their main non-work-related activities are to go to the gurdwara for the Sunday ceremony or visit close friends and family during the weekends; therefore, religious ceremonies were attended assiduously, and family gatherings were also visited later on during the fieldwork. The younger generation during weekdays are busy going to school and spend most of their time traveling from their homes to their local schools or distant universities. As a matter of fact, the occasions to meet and greet or discuss and observe their customs and behaviours were not so frequent at the beginning of the fieldwork. Thus, approaches were changed in order to accommodate the researched group: every opportunity to meet more than one member of the community at a time was accepted and, other meetings and activities with individual members were scheduled as often as they could meet. It equalled a fieldwork which was a series of weekend get togethers and scattered weekday meetings on special occasions. Despite the difficulties encountered, the work remained a successful assembly of the data including the interviews and literature combined to the participant-observation realizations in a more concrete and realistic way. This method of participating in the community's events and at the same time keeping track of what was unfolding in the fieldnotes, were definitely the core of the research. This core research was based on a method combination, as said before, of both ethnography and different types of interviews.

2.2.1. Ethnography

Ethnography, which is often referred to as participant-observation, could be explained by Ermerson et. al., in a way that “[t]hese two interconnected activities [first-hand participation in some initially unfamiliar social world and the production of written accounts of that world by drawing upon such participation] comprise the core of ethnographic research” (1995, 1). In other words, putting yourself into the studied group and participating with them, while observing and taking notes was the main overarching method. The goal of this method of participation in these actions is to live “a day-to-day experience in which you are simultaneously caught up and distant” (Clark Ibanez 2004, 1508) from the environment, the situation or context present at the moment of this participant-observation. The daily activities where the method of participant-observation was conducted happened in various circumstances, but mostly they were carried out during the religious celebrations or activities on Sundays at a few different gurdwaras all over the north of Italy as explained in the previous section. The reason why the first and main events participated and eventually observed happened at the gurdwara is because the Sikh temples constitutes one of the significant sociocultural arenas where Sikhs gather on a regular basis and which is open to the public (Hirvi 2015, 38).

Because of this fact, it has to be made clear that the majority of the respondents in this research attend religious services and are rather close to their faith which created a sample of the community following the Sikh faith earnestly, thus the research does not present a complete picture of the Sikhs in the northern rural regions of Italy, but only those in fact attending and participating in the religious life at the gurdwara.

Other instances of possible participant-observation include Sikh family households, noteworthy religious festivals and celebrations—Sikh festivals, Vaisakhi also known as the Nagar Kirtan⁶—, family gatherings, libraries, service centres, schools, contests, and so on. The accomplishment of this ethnographic fieldwork happened from November 2014 to February 2015. One of the techniques used in this research is a combination of both ethnography and interview and is the ‘go-alongs’ or ‘walk-alongs’ method coined by Kusenbach (2006). In this research there were in fact few instances of ‘drive-along’ or ‘outing’, which are derived concepts from the original technique of ‘go-alongs’ developed to investigate “naturally occurring” encounters from the viewpoint of locals in slices of ordinary lives by combining interviewing with in situ observations of environments, activities, and interactions (Kusenbach 2006, 285) which brought valuable data from some of the respondents. They usually happened in cars when a small group of two to five people would drive to a nearby family house or to the gurdwara on Sunday. As mentioned, the houses in the rural fields of the north of Italy are situated far apart, close friends or family relatives will live often about 25 to 45 minutes from any other members of their family, from their preferred temple, workplace, train stations and so on, which resulted in small occasions to discuss their perspective about their everyday life, about the landscapes and about their social networks.

It was also important during the entire fieldwork process to mention the purpose of my visit as an ethnographer collecting material for the research, thus this status and the fact that notes and observations were gathered, was reminded to people in plenty of instances. Verbal consent from those sharing their life stories and personal insights were also sought out. To be present with the Sikhs in their community and perform varied activities with them generated an insight on how the individual or the group develops a cultural construction to others and to the place (Herbert 2000, 551), it also led to explore the “complex connections that social groups establish with one another and with the places they inhabit, cultivate, promote, defend, dominate and love” (Ibid., 564). During or after these ethnographic episodes; jottings, extensive notes, mapping and verbal snapshots were written in order to keep in mind all the information gathered (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 84, 91, 103-105, 187-189, 194-200) producing more than 50 different

⁶ For more information about those events and more, keep reading!

ethnographic entries for this research. Eventually ethnography is “the written product of [the ethnographers’] work, [it] is a researched study that synthesizes information about the life of a people or a group” (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 4) which is a guiding approach to a thesis on the subject of the migrant Sikh respondents from the rural north of Italy, their rhetoric of representation and their connection to the Italian landscape.

2.2.2. Interviews

The second method used to gather information about the perspectives of space and identity was the interviewing of members of this migrant Sikh community in Italy. For qualitative sociologists, interviewing respondents to make their observations and visual analysis sound is a prerequisite. Accordingly, altogether 25 self-identified Sikhs attending various gurdwaras in the north of Italy, 13 men and 12 women from the age of 15 to 55 years old, 3 non-Sikh members of the Italian society were interviewed, and two interviews of Sikhs of the same community conducted by a BBC journalist were observed. Amongst the two observed interviews, one of the interviewees had already been interviewed twice before the arrival of the journalist and thus her comments were used but she was not counted as an extra respondent. As for the second observed interview, this member of the Sikh community was not re-interviewed afterwards for reasons which will be explained further along; but his testimony was counted as an added respondent, thus increasing the research group of an extra self-identified male Sikh, totalling 26 respondents.

The Sikh respondents all have a migration background and they now reside in the north of Italy, where those interviews took place, predominantly in the surrounding regions of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna, more precisely in the smaller provinces of Cremona, Bergamo, Brescia, Reggio-Emilia and so on, located in the geographic and agricultural Po valley region. Once again, these respondents all come from the rural zones of Italy and are thus not exactly fair representatives of the whole Sikh community in Italy. In relation to the 3 non-Sikh members of the Italian society, they remain important stakeholders for migrants but were not necessarily sought out in this research. The main idea was to obtain the interpretation of the Sikhs living in Italy and not necessarily of the local Italians such as administrators or employers/employees. The local Italians respondents were solely interviewed because of their direct involvement in an event observed or because some of the respondents mentioned essential services which were provided by local Italians and arranged meetings with these specialists. These were special circumstances and not the expected technique to be used.

All things considered, the interviews were semi- or loosely-structured scheduled in-depth interviews and sometimes they were non- or semi-structured informal encounters with one respondent or more, both sorts including possibilities of open and closed-ended questions (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 238-246). Each interview took place in one of the three usual languages (or a mix of), Punjabi, Italian or English, and the respondents were sometimes accompanied by a translator to make sure both parties, the respondents and researcher, could understand each other well. These interviews or encounters usually lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours, and they were tape-recorded with the help of a voice recorder (except on one occasion where only written notes were accepted) along with having the (verbal) permission of the interviewees. During these interviews, the questions touched upon several themes, but offered enough room for free discussion. To protect the anonymity of the research participants, the use of pseudonyms throughout the entire research were used in order to mention or refer to quotes, excerpts, encounters or family connections.

2.3. Interview Sampling & Setting

From the total of 29 respondents, as said previously—26 self-identified Sikhs (counting one extra respondent from the BBC interview) and 3 different stakeholders for the migrant communities in Italy—were all reached through the snowball and cluster sampling. The first is an “effective way to build an exhaustive sampling frame from which you can select people at random to interview” (Bernard 2011, 149), it is a technique where the respondents refer other people within the community for more interviews. The second is cluster sampling, which “is based on the fact that people act out their lives in more or less natural groups, or ‘cluster,’ like geographic areas (counties, precincts, states), and institutions (like schools, churches, brotherhoods, credit unions, and so on). By sampling from these clusters, we narrow the sampling field from large, heterogeneous chunks to small, homogeneous ones that are relatively easy to find. [...] It also lets you sample populations for which there are no convenient lists or frames” (Bernard 2011: 120). This method came in handy since the community is quite difficult to reach and since the research is done as a place-based research, the intention was to remain in a particular area of northern Italy. The migrant Sikhs’ predisposition to stay in rural lands added to the fact that Italy does not gather data about religious tendencies of their migrant communities, make it complicated to find any particular network within for example the governmental associations of official data about their actual locations.

Following these two sampling methods, the respondents were usually introduced by friends, new acquaintances, family members of these acquaintances, or through institutions such as gurdwaras, gurdwara associations and event organisations. However as stated beforehand, the specific situation of meeting the Sikh respondents at the gurdwara, interviewing them at the gurdwara and obtaining cluster samples from the gurdwara, possibly created a stereotypical vision of a single-minded community oriented towards a religious way of life. No interviews were conducted with Sikhs whom were not regularly attending the temple. Cluster and snowball sampling led to respondents whom would know each other or hung out in similar religious temples which does not completely exhaust the complexity of the Sikhs' reality in northern Italy. All in all, the, the sample group of respondents may not have represented every layer of the Sikh migrant community in Italy, but it created a homogenous group of migrant Sikhs self-identifying as such, probably likeminded but people of different age range and gender, coming from all over the rural lands but gathering at a said location and experiencing similar stories while not being proximate neighbours in life.

2.4. Respondents

The respondents, mainly university students, teenagers, professors, religious leaders, mothers, fathers, farm or factory workers, stay-at-home parents, brides, grooms, grandparents and their offspring, were met in many different settings. Due to the newness of this community, most of the interviewees had been born in India and many spent some years of their childhood in their home country before migrating with their family to Italy. However, several of them have spent more years of their life in Italy than in India. A few dream of going back for a moment or forever, others are glad to have never lived there more than a few years and some again are happy where they are and want to remain static. It is in fact a very diverse sample which took some time to research and understand to a greater extend. It took more than a year with the members of this researched Sikh community to obtain key interpretations for the main and sub research questions.

In order to contextualize the information presented in this research, here is a table combining some of the particularities of each respondent divided in two major categories, each section in descending order of age. The first part of the table comprises some of the oldest respondents which are in fact part of the older generation, those who migrated to Italy as full grown and socialized adults, the so-called first generation or the community's first settlers. They are a substantial part of the respondents—10 respondents—and thus

have a significant input to this research. The second part of table represents the greatest portion of the respondents; they are the new generation of Sikh migrants in Italy, containing those who arrived in Italy as children or teenagers and also, those who were born in Italy for the last four respondents at the bottom of the table. Only four Italian-born Sikh respondents were interviewed, as most of them are still very young in the migrant Sikh community due to the obvious youth of this diaspora. Thus, the respondent from the new generation, the four Italian-born plus the twelve Sikhs who migrated to Italy with their family as children, constitute more than 60% of the research respondents, hence the important presence of their inputs throughout the research. Table 2.1 summarizes some socio-demographic data of the research participants from both the older and the new generation such as their age, gender, age at arrival in Italy, languages spoken, their location in Italy and their current position (academic or employment). These participants' reported words, opinions and elements of differences or similarities should be contextualized bearing in mind that information.

Table 2.4.— Respondents' Sociodemographic Particularities

Name	Age	Sex	Age at arrival in Italy	Languages Spoken	Location	Current Position
Gurnam (by Maurizio)	54	M	30	P-I *E	Olmeneta	Dairy farmer
Nanjot	52	F	29	P-H-I- *E	Olmeneta	Stay-at-home mom
Rajdeep Singh	45	M	28	P-H-I-E- *S- *F	Corvo	Factory worker
Livpreet	38	M	Legal in 2002 (25)	P-I-E	Spina Desco	Meat factory worker
Shinder	36	F	26	P- *E	Spina Desco	Stay-at-home mother
Suneeta Kaur	35	F	25	P-I	Verolanuova	---
Kirat Singh	30	M	18	P- *I	Pescalora	Factory worker
Remeet Kaur	29	F	29	P- *I- *E	Ostiano	Gurmukhi teacher
Baldeep Singh	27	M	18	P-I-E	Calcinatte	Mechanic metal work
Jasjit	27	M	23 (the 1 st time)	P-E- *I	Bergamo	PhD student

Harminder	25	F	2	P-H-I-E-F-S	Olmeneta	Student
Parminder	26	M	9	P-I-*E	Calcinatte	Factory work & student
Priya Saini	23	F	10	P-I-E	Persico Dozimo	Student
Armandeep	21	F	8	P-I-E-*F	Grontardo	Student
Harjinder Singh	21	M	10	P-I-E	Sulla Nova	Newly graduated student
Ravinder Singh	21	M	10	P-I	Sulla Nova	Student
Ravdeep Kaur	19	F	6	P-I-*E	Bulgare	Student
Jagjit	16	M	10	P-I	San Marino	Student
Arvinder	15	M	10	P-I-E-H	Romagna di Lombardia	Student
Kaaptan Singh	23	M	14	P-I-E	Corte Cortesia	Student
Amrit-Raj	22	M	13	I-P-*E	Prabuano	Graduated & Computer business
Satnam Kaur	21	F	13	P-I-E-H	Romano di Lombardia	Unemployed
Jazpreet	20	F	Born in Italy	P-I-E-*F	Cremona	Student
Gopal	18	M	Born in Italy	P-H-I-*E	Cremona	Student
Amrit	18	F	Born in Italy	P-I-E-*F	Capella di Picenardi	Student
Rupi Kaur	16	F	Born in Italy	P-I-E-*F	Piove San Giacomo	Student

Table 2.1 summarizes some socio-demographic data of the self-identified Sikhs whose words are reported in the text; their words and opinions should be contextualized bearing in mind that information. Languages spoken: (I)-Italian, (P)-Punjabi, (H)-Hindi, (E)-English, (F)-French, (S)-Spanish, (*)-Difficulties with the next languages.

These new generation migrant Sikhs sometimes named as the 1.5 and 2nd generation (Rumbaut 2004), were de facto raised, socialized and educated in Italy. The two super-categories of the old and the new generation were created from observed divisions amongst the Sikhs since the new generation have obvious differences with the older generation as Phinney et al., explain,

“[g]eneration and age at time of immigration are also related to identity and adaptation. Immigrants generally arrive in a new country with a strong sense of their national or cultural origin and with varying degrees of willingness to adopt the identity of their new society. Subsequent generations face differing identity issues associated with their sense of belonging to their ancestral culture and to their country of settlement.” (2001)

In consequence different generations experience migration and the possibility to relate to a said identity through adaption or location through attachment in unequal ways. These divisions will be utilized henceforth as a mean for transmitting the necessary data in a contextualized and accurate manner and not as an analytical tool.

2.5. Interview Types

For the likelihood of gathering as much information as possible on this developing migrant community in the rural north of Italy, several types of interviews were used. Altogether, five types of interviews were used, each attributable to a particular situation, contextual difficulties or as a means to a specific kind of data. There was one group interview (1), meaning to gain preliminary information on the community as to orient the future interviews afterwards. There were a few joint-interviews which means either a two respondents interview (2) or the joint-interview including a respondent and translator (3). There were also the customary one-on-one interviews (4), and finally, there were two observer interviews (5). These five types will be explained adequately hereafter.

In the first type, the *(1) group interview*, it is important to specify that this type of interviewing technique can

“be formal with a specific, structured purpose such as a marketing focus group, or, it can be informal taking place in a field setting where a researcher stimulates a group discussion with a topical question. The data generated can be instrumental and factual, or, it can be subjective and qualitative. Researchers can use group interviews as a more efficient use of resources and as a means of adding valuable insight to the interpretation of a social or behavioral event.” (Frey & Fontana 1991, 175).

The original reason of this group interview was because of the cluster sampling which in the end resorted into an insightful and subjective yet disorganized preliminary interview. On a Sunday afternoon, after being introduced to many members of the community as a researcher wanting to learn more about the community in Italy, the general impression was that several people wanted to participate to this research on their own

community. In fact, many members of the main gurdwara association of Pessina Cremonese, *Cultura Sikh*, were met and thought they could answer my questions—all together—with the intention of answering the questions in a valuable and somewhat ‘bulk’ manner. Since it was one of the first times attending and participating with the community, the decision was made to accommodate the respondents in a five-people group interview of the *Cultura Sikh* members along with a translator for good measure. The translator, another member of the association, eventually participated in the growing group interview. Finally another man ended up becoming another helpful translator despite being a ‘gate crasher’, someone that came unannounced and decided to remain despite not being part of *Cultura Sikh* and participated in this conversational ethnographic group interview of now seven people. Four of those participants in this preliminary interview were re-interviewed in some secondary interviews later; it effectively helped in orienting the questions discussed in the interview for future encounters.

For the second interview type, the (2) *joint-interview with two respondents*, the importance at that point was to gain the confidence of the participants in the research. Thus, the need was to make them feel comfortable around a researcher which may or may not ask delicate questions. Many were afraid that interviews equaled interrogations, and therefore asked to be joined by their friends, for a more conversational feel and argued that it would lead to more data. As Richie and Lewis claimed, “an in-depth interview is based around the ability of the interviewer to establish a good rapport with the participant. Researchers have to be able to establish a good working relationship with people from all walks of life, [...] A good working relationship is achieved where the researcher seeks to put the participant at ease and to create a climate of trust” (Richie & Lewis 2003, 143). In the end, there were six instances where this type of interview was accomplished. Often it resulted on discussion amongst the respondents about their similar or dissimilar opinions without necessarily creating any power relations between them or with myself which could have been the main issue of this technique. Some interviews were longer than usual, and others were shorter since the respondents went quickly to their point to leave time for the others. All in all, it balanced itself quite adequately. It is also true that on “the positive side, joint interviewing helps to establish rapport and an atmosphere of confidence [which] reveals the different kinds of knowledge held by each person and, produces more complete data as interviewees fill in each other's gaps and memory lapses” (Arksey 1996, 2).

The third type is the (3) *joint-interview with translator* type, this time with one alleged respondent and a translator for either Italian—since my knowledge of the Italian language was not achieved appropriately at the beginning of the fieldwork in Italy, however this situation evolved throughout the months—or Punjabi.

Typically, the incorporation of this information about a translator in the methodology is a matter of the researcher's discretion, however, it was noticed that often the translators, even if they were three volunteered young women which were previously interviewed individually, managed to compare and contrast their own opinions to those of the present respondents. Sooner or later the translator's opinion changed, or their personal opinion made the respondents re-think their response to clarify their points. This power dynamic between the translator and the respondent, often even if unconscious and far from being malicious, was much more important than when two friends decided to answer questions in a joint-interview. Since those simultaneously translating interview responses and questions may create a sort of translator version of the interviews, ultimately, they "bring their own assumptions and concerns to the interview and the research process" (Temple 2002), thus a great deal of attention was regarded to acknowledge any sort of opinion that a translator was making related to their own views and compiled this data as part of their own answers. For example, if a translator interpreted an answer from Punjabi to English by giving their own previous response as a comparative and then adding more information, in order to quote this excerpt, the translator's name rather than only 'translator' would be used as if it was a joint-interview and a secondary interview for them.

Every translator agreed in their mention as a 'translator' or as their individual names if the situation was pertinent, thus even if this role was to be kept as unbiased interpreter in the interviews, it was sometimes needed to give them an actual voice within the other person's interview. Moreover, agreeing with Temple and Young when they state that the "translator always makes her mark on the research, whether this is acknowledged or not, and in effect some kind of 'hybrid' role emerges in that, at the very least, the translator makes assumptions about meaning equivalence that make her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator" (2004, 171). As it happened, sometimes the translator, wanting to make sense of the actual respondent's response in English, would use more of a flowery language in order to 'sell' the answer (Temple 2002) so to get the importance of the statement even if the direct equivalence in English would be more or less similar. It is true that the "process of meaning transfer has less to do with *finding* the cultural inscription of a term than in reconstructing its value (Simon 1996, 138, emphasis original)" and it is precisely what happened in a few instances.

The next type of interview is the simplest type, the expected (4) *one-on-one interview*. Essentially it occurs when a single person is facing the researcher and is answering questions by themselves in English, and one instance in a mix of English and Italian towards the end of the fieldwork. This type of interview happened in six different instances on the total of interviews. Some of these interviews were conducted as

secondary interviews of members that were part of either the group interview or a joint-interview. In truth, some people were interviewed more than once and thus, there was more information gathered and managed from interviews than the actual number of respondents. Also, it was at this moment often that some respondents would volunteer their help in translating in subsequent interviews. This has led to a great deal of snowball interviews and was much appreciated. In the end, five one-on-one interviews were done with self-identified Sikhs, and one one-on-one interview was done with a key stakeholder of the Italian society working daily with migrant communities.

The last type of interview is a much more a passive type, (5) *observer interview*. During the fieldwork in the north of Italy, an Italo-German BBC reporter specifically came to Cremona to interview the Sikhs working in the cheese industry. Two interviews were done by Maurizio Molinari for a BBC podcast. The interviews were only attended with the permission of all parties involved, not recorded. As an exchange for help with photographs, the recordings of the two interviews were shared in a collaborative manner. Admitting to the cooperative gesture, preference remained with the written notes made of this episode to base the analysis from this singular day. One of the interviewees of the BBC reporter had already answered the interview questions from this research therefore the analysis was oriented towards the analysis of the differences and similarities between the two types of interviews: a journalist asking direct questions with the aim at having it on air very soon, versus an indirect researcher who wants to investigate high and low before publishing any results, both can gain much different results. As for the second reporter's interviewee, he had already been the subject of numerous observations in various events and his answers were quite similar to what he had discussed with friends, families and with other reporters since he had already been the subject of many other pop culture articles. Thus his responses during the journalist's interview along with unplanned small discussions became the main source of data for this respondent rather than a formal and structured interview. Despite the fact that this type of interview is not active on the part of the researcher, it is considered valuable and quite fascinating. Arguably this passive technique has provided some pertinent data of what the community has to face through to the type of questions the reporter was asking and how the respondents usually managed to answer in such a quick and simplistic way. All in all, this last type of interview is counted within the regular count of interviews since the re-transcribed excerpts from written notes taken during the journalistic performance were achieved, however it could also count as a sort of ethnographic observation of the community members with a reporter.

2.6. The Research

Ethnographic research in qualitative sociology is always a challenge. This social science is unique since the data gathered is unique in itself. It would be impossible to reproduce the same fieldwork at the exact time and with the same parameters. It is not only about space and time, but also about the ethnographer; with different positions, a researcher will produce different data than another one. One's reflective and interactive nature while investigating the studied community will lead to a specific type of data, data collection and analysis. This is why an ethnographer or qualitative sociologist may encounter some issues with, for instance, reflexivity and limitations.

2.6.1. Reflexivity

Conducting such considerable and substantial research, researchers risk projecting their own assumptions and biases onto the groups they study, this is why it is important to unpack one's cultural baggage as well as position oneself in the field site (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 4). It is understood that everyone is subjective in their personal worldviews and assumptions on the field which may affect how the researcher sees the data. How the community will receive the study and the researcher is also subjective. Determinately, who I am changed the outcomes of this research. I have to position myself within the research through the fixed and the subjective positions in order to contextualize the data I collected and analysed in this research. At first, I had to be aware of my fixed positions which are personal facts that do not change during the course of the research: age, gender, cultural background, socioeconomic status, nationality, race (skin color or ethnicity), educational level, social and financial support, freedom to travel and of religion, and so on (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 131-132, 187). As a researcher entering a field site I need to consider that at the start of this research I am a 26-year-old female researcher coming from a French-Canadian broad-minded white middle-class family with a detached catholic upbringing from Montreal, Canada, executing a PhD degree in a foreign country: Italy.

Therefore, during the research it is comprehensible that I was able to connect more easily with women than men, and with the youth than with older members of the community. The choice of the words is important when I present myself since only my appearance, as a non-Indian looking young woman often carried more assumptions than the importance of my work to this research group. This is why the term 'student' was used rather than 'researcher', since this status is less intimidating and often implies that I seek help and guidance from others, instead of simply analysing them without looking for more of their input. As for my cultural background, from my own perspective I was eventually researching a foreign community,

the Sikhs, in a foreign local society, Italy. In fact, from researching the Sikh communities or diasporas both in Montreal and in Birmingham, UK, my expertise on the traditional behaviours of the Sikh culture was much more familiar than the culture of the Italians during the fieldwork, which affected my interpretation of the data. As for the reception of the research and myself as a researcher the main questions revolved around explaining who I was, why I was in Italy looking into the Sikh minority and how long I was staying. After answering their many questions, it is true that the situation was simpler and invited more of their trust for various reasons.

An important realization is also that that my situation is one of privilege, as a traveller from one country to another, with an employment as a graduate student, a Canadian with a certain liberty, and time on my hands to be amongst them almost every weekend instead of working in a traditional style job or doing something else. There were also probable influences during interviews, as one-on-one sessions turn out to be a facing of each other and realizing the power relationships between us, a foreign educated inquisitive researcher versus a young Sikh feeling studied, a difficult situation sometimes. Therefore, the joint interviews became of real value, in those instances I was simply directing the conversation towards the topics I needed to advance, and the interview evolved into an amicable meeting amongst the three of us. The supposition is that the fixed position of my situation, intimidating or not, have influenced the process of this research but then again through being amongst them as much as possible, it was meant for them to see me as peaceful and amiable rather than hostile person and thus gain acceptance or at least access to their community and their world.

The main factor which tilted their view on the fieldwork and the researcher as approachable and valuable for them, was the seemingly long stay in the country and the long-term research schedule. They have apparently experienced people visiting and studying their ways of life often, but they were seen as short-time visitors being intensively present in the community and then disappearing from their sight. This factor along with the fact that I am from Canada made their interest in me quite positive. Canada is the country of many of their family members, it is seen as a 'good' country for migrants, and my expected long stay meant that I was there to stay and build a solid base with them. Many asked about the reasons to choose their community in rural Italy and not to remain in the wonderful country of Canada. It then came as a shock that I had read about their community in my local newspaper from Montreal and decided upon researching their recent diaspora; I definitely wanted to meet with them and they realized my passion as well as my sincerity.

As for my subjective positions which are life histories or personal experiences that may affect my views on this research (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 132), they were in fact significant and influential of the angle of this research. The first point is related to my deep interest in the Indian *way of life* and in Sikhism (without seeking conversion, simply understanding). This passion which governed my academic and professional interest for the past six years, has allowed me to have a better knowledge on how to 'fit' in, be respectful and how to spark some interest from my respondents and main informants as for example wearing traditional Indian outfits when visiting the gurdwaras on Sundays. According to personal experiences, this is an excellent ice-breaker, the Indians around the world are usually responsive when an outsider attempts at dressing appropriately at the temple and during religious celebrations. Owning those outfits, or the fact that I bought some myself when I visited Punjab, meant that I was really involved in the culture and wanted only more guidance to do things right. My diligence to come nearly every weekend and at popular events also meant that they community would slowly see me and assume my presence as being usual after some time. A researcher always creates a distraction within the field site, but with some time and trying to be 'invisible' or at least accepted, is when the fieldwork can really begin.

My entry into the community was chaperoned by a specific family, known to most of other families attending the Pessina Cremonese gurdwara. Thus, I participated and helped in the organization of events by and for the Sikhs in the north of Italy with them. Because I was being guided by these influent members of the community, it probably inhibited my access to other specific groups or families which did not share the same worldviews or particular migration histories and this needs to be acknowledged here. Moreover, in relation to some more personal experiences, my ease and ability to travel mentioned in the fixed position did not undermine my presence as much as anticipated at first. In fact, my situation, the unfortunate experience of the Italian government bureaucratic nightmare simply resembled some of the Sikhs' own stories of complicated paperwork from the departing country and being misunderstood in the new host country. My struggles with the residence permits, visas and such, made me 'look' like a new migrant by some, and thus not necessarily that different from them.

The last and most influential element of my subjective position and after reflection, the factor which changed the course of the research the most is related to language. As said previously, I researched a migrant Sikh minority speaking Punjabi, in the rural Italian north, where they speak Italian, two languages I do not speak fluently. This has been an important limitation of my research, as well as a specific lens which has sometimes made me see the unique situation of the respondents Sikhs in Italy as intriguing and other times,

as challenging to envision. My personal assumptions after having studied Sikh communities in three countries, Canada, United-Kingdom and India, was that Indian Sikhs, especially the new and younger generation would speak English fluently. Truthfully, the two first countries have English as one or their only national language, and thus it makes sense that a migrant community would learn it as a secondary language. As for India, English has been understood as the language that one needs to speak if one wants to migrate, work in the business sector, or meet and discuss with diasporic members of their family in other Commonwealth member countries. My expectations were that I would manage to meet Sikh migrants who spoke English either due to their life in India previously which the educational requirement include English as a second language more and more. Or that I would meet younger Sikhs with a fluency in English in order to discuss with new generation Sikhs on the online platforms—almost exclusively in English—and with their family all around the globe. I was in fact mistaken.

The Italian Sikh community does not have a strong predisposition to English or any other language other than Punjabi or Italian. Thus, the people I met and interviewed were either from the few members with a good mastering of English because of some of the mentioned reasons above, or they were respondents with which I would need a translator, which turned out to be a good method finally as pointed out earlier. My knowledge of both the Punjabi and Italian languages greatly improved throughout the research —Italian more, as it has a common Latin root with French, my mother tongue. It is true that when “you pay attention to the way language serves as a tool with an insider-outsider filter, you’ll learn about your informant’s perspectives. [...] But when you listen to and record its language, you’ll understand the connection of language to a culture’s way of being” (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater 2007, 308). When I listened to the way language was used and personified, I heard Punjabi, sometimes more from the new generation Sikhs in Italy than what I heard from the new generation in other diasporas, but I also heard Italian, being used in many different settings and often for various different purposes as will be enlightened in the analytical parts of the research. In the matter of the subjective positions it is then noticeable that some of the angles of this research have been biased due to the constant proximity to English-speaking Sikhs, as well as the continuous noting of Italian speaking or crossing languages around the fieldwork in Italy. All in all, the analysis remains justified through the presentation of the data gathered in a sound and theoretical manner however after reflexion it needs to be said that these subjective and fixed positions, the elements of my personal background, what I see is affected by who I am (Ibid 2007, 128), have influenced the way I explored the researched community and the overall viewpoint of this research.

2.6.2. Limitations

Limitations or self-imposed restrictions exist to make the fieldwork feasible and achievable. Choices had to be made since the research only lasted for a little over one year, a time limitation in itself. As declared just above, researching a migrant community while not speaking any of the two obvious languages at the beginning of the fieldwork, did not only influenced the position of the research, it also limited the way interviews had to be conducted, the ease in reaching out to other possible respondents and the understanding of random small discussions when in a larger group. These language limitations have already been mentioned and will be analysed over and over throughout the dissertation, nonetheless, it is important to state that it is a significant limitation at this point.

As for methodological limitations, two important notions are necessary to mention. At first, the field site was purposely small, placed-based and isolated from the rest of the Sikh community all over Italy. The reason was to analyse a specific group amongst the Sikh community, those working and living in the rural north of Italy and draw conclusions from their particular situation uniquely. The fact of working in only one space, in Italy, in order to study place attachment to this country rather than approaching the Sikhs' transnational precondition and study both the host and the motherland, is also a limitation on the dataset. In fact, all the information gathered from the respondents about India, their homeland, were only hearsay and their personal perspective of what they knew, they thought or what they were told. This may have limited the analysis of the Sikh community in space since most of the recent literature discusses their connection to India in quite a distinctive manner or approaches their community with multiple-fields ethnography. It has significantly narrowed the research field and analysis, but it also controlled the size of the research in a positive manner and resulted in a leading-edge study.

A second methodological limitation which has narrowed the research field and analysis is related to the respondents, the choice of who to interview and how to bring about who they are. At first this research looks to the identity representations and space relationships of the Sikhs themselves, their own perspective and their thoughts. Therefore, the interview of Italian locals had only been conducted in relation to specific circumstances and not as a common trend in the research. However, many comparative statements have been brought up by the Sikh respondents in contrast to the locals. In fact, every key question was answered with a narrative and counterparts, the references given brought the situation of the local Italians in the balance. When the data reflects on the researched Sikh community and the local Italian society, it implies a perspective of the Italian society by the Sikh respondents and not actual and factual data per se except

from academic sources. It must be acknowledged as a limitation as the full perspective of the Italians has not been taken into consideration. Furthermore, the researched Sikh community has been taken literally as a community of similar religious background, considered the dominant religious identity because of the 'mirror game' (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011), as a limitation, employed by the Sikhs to the local Italian society as exposed further along in the analytical chapter.

Even if the notion of religious identity has been brought up as an important part of identity rhetoric, the differences between those following a rigorous religious demeanour and those practicing their faith more subtly, the variations within the group, have not been identified preponderantly. The 'Sikhs' have been expressed as an encompassing category of those self-identifying as such, and only when the notion of their religiousness, as the beginning of wearing of a turban, would change the perspective of the data, was then mentioned. The fact that most of the respondents were found during cluster sampling and snowball approach also limited the researched group to those that were in fact practicing their faith publicly, and not Sikhs whom may identify as such, but not practice the faith as a common Sunday outing. It would have been interesting to have some of those people in the research sample, but the limitation of time and sampling method did not permit this inclusion. Furthermore, in order to simplify the dataset as well as permitting a deeper analysis of other elements of identity rhetorics, as much as because it was not a prevalent notion during the fieldwork, the notion of caste status was not presented in this work. Because of those choices and circumstances, one limit of this research is that it presents a homogeneous community of a possible likeminded perspective without any internal conflict, which is not a true vision of the diasporic community and needs to be disclosed here. The methods were probably not perfect, as more time would have led to more participant-observation, visits to different and further sites, meeting with various Sikhs with different backgrounds and worldviews of the Sikh community in Italy on a regular basis and so on. Nonetheless I am still quite pleased with the results of this research.

Chapter 3: Identity Representations

In this chapter, to answer the sub-question ‘How do Sikh migrants in Italy negotiate the different rhetorics of identity representations?’ the main concept analyzed is ‘identity’, or rather the representations of it. The aim of this chapter is to examine the specific aspects of identity representations of the Sikh migrant respondents in the north of Italy, thus Being Indian, Being Italian or Being Hybrid. Firstly, the concept of ‘identity’ itself is one of the most all-encompassing topics in social sciences and it is a notion that has been discussed extensively. In the last few decades, it has been defined, reduced, repurposed and it has become more inclusive of countless other concepts. As Brubaker and Cooper describe ‘identity’,

“[i]t is used to highlight non-instrumental modes of action; to focus on self-understanding rather than self-interest; to designate sameness across persons or sameness over time; to capture allegedly core, foundational aspects of selfhood; to deny that such core, foundational aspects exist; to highlight the processual, interactive development of solidarity and collective self-understanding; and to stress the fragmented quality of the contemporary experience of “self”, a self unstably patched together through shards of discourse and contingency “activated” in differing contexts” (2000, 8).

The term ‘identity’ is used in many different heterogeneous and inconsistent angles that are not easily combined. This chapter will focus on investigating the rhetoric of representations of identity and not the entire ‘identity’ narrative; or engaging into the current debate surrounding the meaning of ‘identity’. Taken from Brubaker and Cooper’s, the angle chosen for this rhetoric draws guidelines from the idea of ‘sameness’ and its opposite ‘difference’; in relation to the dual concept of *inclusion* and *exclusion* as presented in the ‘Concepts and Analytical tools: Identity Representations’ (1.3) from the Theoretical Framework. Thus, in expressing differences or similarities with the majority or minority group through ‘otherness’, whether it may be an individual defining oneself, an individual exploring oneself, a society defining an individual, and so on, a preponderance of one identity over another is revealed.

The study of the researched Sikh community’s representation in Italy as well as solely individual respondent Sikh migrants through the ‘inclusion’ or ‘exclusion’ binary, will essentially show what a person

uses as personal practices or performances in a defined context, to fit into a said identity representation within the uncovered rhetoric through reciprocal recognition (Melucci 1996). As Hall explains, “identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being; not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (1996, 4). Identity representation is thus considered an endless attribute that can be defined, readjusted or adapted to befit the actual interest of the person performing them as it reveals to have some potential for change and transformation (Anthias 2013). A person will definitely carry a baggage of their cultural background and physical phenotypes, but this is not necessarily who they have become or who they can become by using specific practices. Hall claims that “identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation” (1990, 222; 1996, 4), thus a certain mix of what others perceive of themselves as much as what the people may want to represent to others in terms of identification, is closer to the reality.

Identity cannot be said to be static or an accomplished fact, it is always a ‘production’ (Hall 1990). Consequently, when an individual decides to create sameness or differences through his or her production of representation, this individual will then behave in his or her own personal practices of representations (Grossberg 1996, 90) through everyday performances in correlation with what this individual may want to become. This adaptive behavior could be a social-construction (Savage et al. 2004, 12; Kumsa 2005, 181 in Antonsich 2010, 650-651) which brings forward the notion of ‘performativity’ (Bell 1999 in Ibid), i.e., the act of performing or ‘doing belonging’ (Skrbiš et al. 2007, 262 in Ibid) towards a group of some kind. Belonging to a group might be the absolute goal in the representation of identity interplay. The ways in which belonging to a group can be performed and displayed, is enacted through individual and collective adapted practices (Fortier 1997; Lovell 1998; Duruz 2002; Fenster 2005; Fenster and Vizek 2006; Bell 2009; Instone 2009; Mee 2009 in Ibid) readily observable in ethnographic research. These practices are the essence of the representation of identity and will be examined in this piece. Inclusion, exclusion, sameness or differences, are all valid concepts which will shed light on the operationalization of the empirical data in this research. Although, the analytical theorization of the empirical data will need to be deepened through the ‘relational’ and ‘cultural’ key factors by Antonsich and expanded with Colombo and Rebughini’s take on the (mundane) *culture* and *way of life*, as presented in the ‘Research Design: Overarching Theories’ (1.2), so as to analyze the portraying of an individual’s representation of identity.

The researched Sikh community of the north of Italy are the focus of the analysis where the struggles of the individual negotiation of their representations of identity are uncovered. After collecting numerous empirical data from migrants Sikhs in the provinces of Cremona, Bergamo, Mantua, Brescia and more, the assumption is that the Sikh respondents are facing the reality of representing a different identity or identities, through the practice of inclusion and exclusion. In this chapter, the goal will be to indicate how those studied Sikh migrants in Italy represent and undertake the challenge of being part of any of the three rhetorics of identity representation defined in this research: Being Indian, Being Italian or Being Hybrid. This chapter is not meant to define ‘what’ an Indian, an Italian or a Hybrid identity is *per se*. However, it aims at defining how the individuals represent themselves by adopting one or many practices over the others, associated with one of the three narratives revealed from this in-depth ethnographic research of a community that has slowly become an economic success integration story in the Italian society. Through the current strategies behind the choices made by these members of the community, the research demonstrates the challenging endeavours encountered daily due to the choices of narratives. It examines how and in which context the migrant Sikh respondents move from one rhetoric to another and, the chapter will thus be divided amongst those three representations of identity.

The first part of the chapter will begin with the rhetoric of Being Indian, which is usually the obvious and most assumed identity according to both the researched Sikh community and the counterpart Italian society. There will be an analysis of the Sikhs’ conscious or unconscious pattern of *inclusion* and *exclusion* with ‘Indian Sikhs’ and ‘Italians’ as well as connecting or disconnecting themselves from other eastern religious groups. In the case of the Sikhs in Italy, they construct their representation of identity through their chosen practices from their mundane *culture* and, or *way of life* leading to a general representation of who they are, of Being Indian even while living in a foreign country: Italy. The second part of this chapter, Being Italian, will introduce the confounding identity rhetoric of not necessarily performing the Indian Sikh *culture* since in fact, some Sikhs do represent sometimes as Being Italian. Through observations of the Sikh community and of the local Italian society, there will be a thorough analysis of the adapted behaviours in which Sikhs aspire to be *included* in the local society and society’s adjustment in various institutions in order to *include* those migrants. It will then introduce the challenges and struggles that migrant Sikh respondents undergo when they feel and become Italian in their representation of identity as well as when they do not. The third, and last empirical data presentation part of this chapter will suggest that Sikhs in Italy, in the face of their obvious connection to both Being Indian and Being Italian, may also confront the challenge of being both these identity representations at the same time but for different circumstances. Being Hybrid is not

necessarily a straightforward concept neither in the literature nor in reality as mentioned in the Theoretical Framework. It implies a possible dynamic of double *inclusion* or even a double *exclusion* of two very different cultural worlds. It also demonstrates how the New Generation of Italian-Sikhs use the pivoting technique in order to navigate the thin line between these two cultures while seeking sameness to two representations of identity as Being Hybrid.

3.1. **Being Indian**

The concept of identity is difficult to grasp and even to define for the individuals themselves. However, the way people feel or how they want to be perceived is a struggle as difficult as defining ‘identity’.

“Sometimes [...] I just, I feel I am Indian, but I am also Italian and sometimes it is like [...] not that I am more Indian than Italian [...] more Indian yes [...] I am Italian from nationality, I’m Italian because I speak [the language], I am Italian because I live it. But my origins are Indian and I, I feel that I am Indian.”

(Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8)

“When I go out with them, in a sense, I prefer to remain Indian even if I go out with Italian friends. I don’t want to seem Italian if I go out with the Italian friends. I prefer to maintain my own culture.”

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

What is tangible of these two examples is the confusion and then the conviction of their last claim; their connection with their origins and their culture is the strongest asset that they want to put forward. They are feeling Indian as much as they want to maintain their Indian culture. They compare their feeling of Being Indian, to the possibility of being more Italian, or to seem more Italian, which is ultimately something that they do not want to do in those instances, and they make it clear in their interviews. For Armandeep, the talk began at the gurdwara, thus her thoughts may have been biased due to the sacred environment and the surrounding religious congregation, the *sangat*. On the other hand, while meeting at the charming historical public library of Cremona, Amrit disclosed a much stronger vision about her Indian culture despite being one of the few interviewees born in Italy. Thus, the influence of the location of our meetings on the opinions of these two young ladies were probably not a direct impact, although their opinions came from their usual day to day life which may include visits to those two sites, and thus reveal a deep and connective perspective about their life, not a simple statement disconnected to their usual behaviors due to a sacred or profane environment. All in all, both Armandeep and Amrit excluded themselves from the ‘others’—the Italians and this is the heart of the first part of this chapter.

Understanding the representations of the Indian Sikhs respondents in Italy involves understanding the dynamics of *inclusion* and *exclusion* that are being used to do so. As revealed by Hall, “in common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the nature closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (1996: 2). Hence, a certain recognition from the group is necessary in order to identify with them or to perform as being with them; to be included one must have some sort of sameness with the group in question. Having a common origin or shared characteristics for example, is a good way to assert a certain allegiance to a group and to perform as to represent oneself within this group. The opposite is also true, since having distinctive differences in recognition of a common origin or even refuting similar characteristics with another person or group is a different way to exclude oneself from a group and represent oneself accordingly.

The two parts of Being Indian will include: ‘Being Indian, Being Sikh but Not Italian’ and then ‘Being Indian Sikh & the Connections to Other Religious Groups’. The first part shows the relevance of the religion and clarifies the importance of the religious factor with the struggles that it has brought them in Italy, thus leading to the notion of excluding themselves from being Italian. The second division hints at the notion that the Indian Sikhs may at times join in the representation of identity with other religious groups, and sometimes they play the game of refuting any allegiances in order to achieve maximal integration into the Italian society. Consciously or not, those divisions of *inclusion* and *exclusion* are implemented by the Sikh migrant respondents in Italy and their function is to define their representation of identity in a brighter light.

3.1.1. Being Indian, Being Sikh and Not Italian

A crucial notion which needs to be stated straightaway is the fact that all Indians are not Sikhs and all Sikhs are not only Indians. As a matter of fact, in India, there are many different cultural and religious backgrounds. One way to look at the population’s demographics in India is to identify the religious groups existing in its midst. The greatest of the religions, the Hindus account for about 80% of the population, the Muslims for 14.3%, the Christians for 2.3%, the Sikhs are only a minority group of 1.7% and the remaining 1.7% includes Buddhists, Jains and other religious groups (Census of India 2011). The Sikhs, originally from a north-east province of India, Punjab, practice a religion that is, compared to other religions of Asia and of the Western world, quite young, only over 500 years old but remains the fifth largest religion in the world.

For these reasons, the Sikhs in and out of India, have often been isolated since they are the minority groups in both their country of origin and in diasporic communities and thus, have developed specific ways

of living and learned to overcome many different challenges. With all this in mind, the ethno-religious members of Sikhism have often fought to be represented properly, to be recognized by outsiders and to express the importance of their community, consequently this should be acknowledged in this context. In this analysis, the researched group is solely composed of Sikhs from Indian origin either born in India or in Italy⁷. In other words, the national and cultural background of the research's respondents is Indian in arbitrary measures and this, notwithstanding their country of birth or their self-identified involvement with the Sikh religion. Consequently, in this section of 'Being Indian' the observations and analysis will revolve around the representations of identity related to Indian representation of identity as much as the (self-identified) Sikh representation of identity, which is, as explained above, imbedded within Indian representation of identity for this particular researched community. Thereupon, some expression of how it is to be Sikh in Italy or how one represents oneself as being Sikh, becomes essential for the reader's comprehension of the context and the possible struggle at this point.

As for the local Italian society, as observed in usual day-to-day actions and discussed with the respondent group, they are not necessarily aware of the growing Indian community that exists in the rural parts of the north of their country. They are often amazed about the community when they talk to an Indian or when they happen upon religious festivals such as Vaisakhi⁸, the birthday of Guru Nanak⁹, the inauguration of a new gurdwara and, so on. During the first year of the field research in Italy, it was an astonishment to realize that the Sikhs, the researched community of this project, was not commonly known by fellow colleagues and many academics. Academics, students, natives of the north of Italy and the society at large were repeatedly surprised by the community itself, its size and its grand economic involvement in the production of the *Grana Padano* (Zanichelli 2012; Povoledo 2011; Singh 2013) and *Parmigiano Reggiano*, both Italian staples (Azzeruoli, Forthcoming; Lum 2012^b; Sahai & Lum 2013; Compiani & Quassoli 2005). An example of this unfamiliar knowledge of the Indian Sikh community happened during a conversation with a former Master's student of languages and social sciences which was encouraged by her

⁷ There were some exceptions in the sample of the people interviewed. Out of 25 Sikh people interviewed from the age 15 to 55, four people were born in Italy (age range: 16-20), 1 person was born in Jammu, Kashmir (it is a disputed region that has only been recently administered by India, even if not fully recognized by other surrounding countries, but its people have always been historically, culturally and linguistically connected to Punjab, the birth place of Sikhism), and one person was born in Libya but moved back to India at the age of 9 months and then migrated to Italy where that person was interviewed.

⁸ Vaisakhi: The inauguration, or 'birthday', of the *Khalsa*, celebrated as a festival or public procession with *Nagar Kirtan* (playing music and singing hymns) on the 14th of April. For more information see *Sikhism: a very short Introduction* by Nesbitt 2005.

⁹ Guru Nanak's birthday: The birthday of their first Guru (prophet), also celebrated most of the time at gurdwara in a sort of celebration. Form more information see *Sikhism: a very short Introduction* by Nesbitt 2005.

supervisor to learn about the Sikh community. She attended the opening of the largest gurdwara (to this date) in mainland Europe, which opened in Torre de' Picenardi, in the municipality of Pessina Cremonese, the province of Cremona on August 21st, 2011 named *Gurdwara Shri Kalgidhar Sahib* (Restelli 2011). The gurdwara is indeed impressive in size since this temple can hold 600 people comfortably, but nearly six times as many people attended its inauguration (Povoledo 2011).

The master student's initial reaction, as she described it, was a 'cultural shock' and a disbelief of the extensive size of the community, since she lived her whole life in the province of Cremona without even knowing about their presence. The Cremonese master student did explain the same impressions in the documentary *Sikh Formaggio* where she stated that the temple was in fact built in the country side of Cremona and that it was undeniably like being in a different world (Duran, Wise & Bison 2012). This feeling ultimately led her to write her thesis on the topic. This is a common example of an Italian's average response when faced with this large Sikh community and their representation of identity: shock and then curiosity. The main society may be in shock at first, but it is not necessarily easier for the Indian Sikhs which must keep on explaining who they are over and over again. As an example, Livpreet recalls the moment he first had to really define who he was to his neighbors that had known him for some years.

“It is difficult for me, you can say! One day I was going to the Nagar Kirtan¹⁰ and my neighbors, they were just watching me and from there, the man comes to me and makes a surprised face. I was looking strange for them [Livpreet was exceptionally wearing a turban for this occasion even if he cuts his hair]. He did not say anything. But then after, I went to explain everything: I said, ‘I am a Sikh, I am a born Sikh, I have Sikhism in my blood’.”

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

Livpreet is known within his community and his family not to wear any of the religious symbol frequently, thus seeing him with a turban on his head for his neighbors, might have been a surprise for them, as much as some of his family members. On a regular basis, he has short hair, shaved beard and works in a meat factory; a simple and less identifiable culture pattern for most Italians. Then on some religious occasions, he would wear a turban and go out with his family all dressed up, and this moment was one of those rare moments. It created a slight surprise for the people in his neighborhood and Livpreet felt that he needed to visit his neighbors and clarify his origin and ultimately the reason for him to wear this headpiece. Since he

¹⁰ *Kirtan* (*Nagar Kirtan*) means a collective singing of the sacred scriptures accompanied by musical instruments, a devotional music.

did not mention if he had previously told his neighbors about his religion, his visit to explain his identity probably clarified that he was a 'born Sikh', and made sure he was not confused with another faith.

Visible symbols of faith, such as a turban in Livpreet's story, is often the first element of foreignness that the main society sees as visible minorities. A turban is part of the 5Ks¹¹ which are seen as 'ethnic markers' (Bertolani & Perocco 2013) that are voluntarily worn by the followers of Sikhism. The so-called '5Ks', 'Five Ks' or in Italy the 'Cinque Kappe' are distinctive religious symbols that all begin with the letter 'K' (kakka in Punjabi) and they are the *Kesh*¹², *Kirpan*¹³, *Kara*¹⁴, *Kanga*¹⁵ and *Kachera*¹⁶. Sikhs may choose to use the religious symbols of the 5Ks and the turban as membership emblems or as attempts at becoming a 'true Sikh' (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 102) or in the ultimate goal of one day, to take *amrit*¹⁷ and be baptised as a 'complete' Sikh. This ritual involves for instance the wearing of the 5Ks, the changing of their names to erase caste-specific names and the observance of some rules and prohibitions called: the code of conduct or code of discipline (Nesbitt 1991). The turban, the symbol that characterised Livpreet as a Sikh for the first time to his neighbors is not among the 5Ks, however it is an integral part of the Sikhs' expression of commitment to their religion. The turban has become a symbol of Sikhism, despite the many men who identify themselves as Sikhs are shorthaired, clean-shaven, and turbanless (Nesbitt 2005, 51). Nevertheless, the will to identify as Sikh or represent themselves as Sikh makes people wear some of the 5Ks or the turban, so they feel they are following the religion in 'different degrees of Sikhness' (Nesbitt 1991), especially when attending a religious celebration.

For Livpreet, the internal conflict of wearing or not the turban is apparent. He discussed the situation of meeting his neighbors because he thought it was funny, and slightly because it made him realize that his true identity is not reflected on the outside. He would like to be an *amritdhari*¹⁸ Sikh with long hair, the long beard and the 5Ks, as his uncle Gurnam, a real model for him. However, working in a dirty environment

¹¹ For additional information, see the further footnotes or see McLeod (1997) and Nesbitt (2005).

¹² *Kesh* means the uncut hair, beard and body hair symbolizing the respect for the body as it was created by God.

¹³ *Kirpan* is a bent steel dagger representing the call to uphold justice and protect the weak. The *kirpan* is usually 20 - 25 centimetres long but may vary from a miniature one worn on a necklace to a full-length sword. Over the years, this battle dagger came to represent the spiritual warfare in which all Sikhs should be involved. Thus, it symbolises resistance to evil, the readiness to fight for truth and justice and to protect the weak and oppressed in society. It should only be drawn in the service of God.

¹⁴ *Kara* is a steel or iron bangle in a circular shape as a reminder of infinity and so of God.

¹⁵ *Kanga* is a small wooden or ivory comb, which is worn in the hair. It symbolizes order, care and cleanliness at the physical and the spiritual level.

¹⁶ *Kachera* or *Kachh* are long underpants cotton breeches up to the knees, which symbolizes chastity and matrimonial fidelity.

¹⁷ *Amrit* (that is, drinking holy water from a common recipient). In simple terms, this ritual could be compare to a sort of 'baptism' or 'initiation' since it marks the subject's entry into the group of the observant Sikhs. See McLeod (1997) & Nesbitt (2005).

¹⁸ *Amritdhari*: Those Sikhs that have followed the ritual of taking *amrit* and thus became the 'pure' ones.

such as the meat factory, has made him reconsider his desire to represent himself as he feels to be inside. One of his dream as he explained “I want to tie a turban on my head and then change job. And I even applied for the Italian citizenship. My wishes (sic.) is to have a photo with a turban on my Italian passport. Yes [...- my wishes right there!”¹⁹ Furthermore, both Livpreet and his wife are worried about the example that they represent to their children. They want them to be close to their roots, and wear the turban, or the *patka*, a common small top knot turban among young boys, so that they go in life without having this sense that a turban is not convenient outside of India. However, Livpreet is worried about how he will inculcate the notion of respect and importance of this symbol to his children in Italy.

“Other people from the community here touches [the hair which becomes] dirty hairs, not washed [...] kids play with the long hairs of our boys at school and laugh and touch on your head [...] this is a shameful things for us [...] because the people in Italy they are without minds I would say [...] they have [...] they don’t know to the Sikhism (sic.). But I am trying now, you can say, you can see their hair is too long [...] but I am trying to bring them back to attach them, [...] yes to wear a patka [...] to be a born Sikh!”

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

Livpreet is so resentful of his situation of having cut his hair upon arrival to Italy so as to find work, and now that he has short hair, finding the right place, the right work, and the right time to become a complete Sikh once again seems only a dream. He feels disloyal to his culture and to his faith and does not want this to happen to his children. Even if their situation might not be easier to live with long hair in a dirty elementary school yard than in a meat shop, he remains convinced that if they wear their hair long since youth, they will construct this attachment to their faith and will create a new generation of Sikhs which will grow up in Italy, with a turban on heir head, and thus have all the tools in hand to live a life of a turbaned Sikh while working and living in Italy from childhood.

An individual can represent oneself as a Sikh by either claiming to be part of the *sangat*, the congregation, or by following the code of conduct and by eventually—if and when the person is ready—being baptised/initiated, as Livpreet considers accomplishing just before taking the Italian passport photo. Many of the people interviewed see their religion and culture as a very positive influence on their life and wish to be part of it more, by wearing the religious symbols, such as Livpreet just before, whether occasionally or gradually. They also know that it is not simple for the main society to understand who they are, and they feel the need to explain and reinforce their representation of identity as Being Sikh as in these next excerpts.

¹⁹ Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002.

“But then they ask me things about my religion, my culture. So, I want to be happy to tell them also about my culture. In this way, they have to know, there [are] also other religions. Other than their Christian, Catholic, yea [...] Because here many Italian people they don’t have the knowledge about the Sikh religion.”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

“Well they are asking questions, ‘why are you wearing a turban’, ‘why the Sikh man has a beard’, or ‘why do you have the beard’. Then you just tell them it is a religion. And these are the rules of our religion, our community, our culture, our tradition [...] then we are fine, no problem. But it is hard to find people that can understand easily. It is too hard to find that [kind of] people.

(Satnam, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 13)

The fact that these Indian Sikhs are being asked many questions about their culture, origin and religion, is not new neither surprising when we consider that this community has been very discrete in Italy and that the 5Ks or the visible symbols of their faith have gone unnoticed for now. However, the reason for this shortcoming of knowledge of the Sikh culture and traditions from the Italian society, as described by the respondents is because the first generation of Sikh migrants remained concealed in the rural lands for nearly a generation.

One of the reasons why the Sikhs know about their culture, traditions and religion, and thus can surely answer all the Italians’ questions, is mainly because they are expected to know how to be a ‘Good Sikh’ according to their religion, which should guide them to live a worthy lifestyle wherever they are, even if they were not born in their traditional homeland. This belief is usually passed down from one generation to another and includes both the code of conduct including a complete *Khalsa*²⁰ identity (Nesbitt 2005) and the moral orientation of Sikhism. Nonetheless, the circumstances of Sikhs residing outside India have made it hard to preserve or even have the right understanding of a ‘Good Sikh’ identity. In Bertolani and Perocco’s research on the religious belonging of second-generation immigrants in Italy, one of the first concerns about the Sikh community was about the external symbols, referring to tradition and membership religious symbols. “Most youths consider the ‘5Ks’ as indicators of Sikh identity and as compulsory for ‘baptized’ *Khalsa*-fellows. However, many have an approximate knowledge of the religious meaning of these symbols: wearing them is above all a sign of membership to the group” (2013, 104). In relation to this concern, the question of what is a ‘Good Sikh’ came up in this research in the intention of knowing how an individual can self-represent themselves as being Sikh to others and to themselves. Two young women explained their

²⁰ Khalsa: literally ‘pure’ Sikhs and especially *amritdhari* Sikh (those that have taken amrit)

perspective of themselves in relation to the ‘Good Sikh’s’ code of conduct and if they perceived themselves as good Sikhs at all.

“First of all, they have to follow the code of conduct, because if they take *amrit* but if they don’t follow the code of conduct, they are not Sikh, they are not ‘pure’ Sikh. And in this code of conduct, the main articles, a few of them: a Sikh has to put every time the 5 articles [...], to do hard work, to be honest and to practice humility, and to not steal, not cheat, not say a bad thing, saying wrongs about your work [for example]. He has to conduct a truthful life, to help every needy person, he has to give 10% of its salary and he has to read the prayer.”

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

“[laugh] for now, no [not being a good Sikh] [...] because I have started recently [to wear a turban], because if also, even some people that have tell me that I am a very good Sikh, in me, I don’t think so [...] Because to be a really good Sikh, that our tenth Guru wants, it is a little hard. And without hard working we can’t do anything!”

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

“[laugh] I am trying [to be a good Sikh]. I mean, there is not a right definition of being a Sikh. As you can see, in the etymology ‘Sikh’ is learning, I think everyone is not really complete. Okay the complete form is when you take *amrit* and then [...] it’s a start! So, I am really far away, and I am just trying to follow some of the principles.”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

Those are some of the quite meaningful responses given during both scheduled and random interviews. At first with Amrit, defines herself as not being a good Sikh according to those rules and situates this state of being in time as simply ‘for now’. Similarly, Harminder, following only some of the rules (for instance *kesdhari*²¹ Sikhs who wear a few symbols without being ‘baptized’), defines herself as in transition, since she is trying to become a better Sikh. She also specifies that Sikhism means to learn and thus, even if you adopt the full attire, take *amrit*, follow the code and such, there is still more to do and to be, to attain the status of a ‘Good Sikh’; there is still the moral orientation of Sikhism to take into consideration.

Amrit’s first attempts at wearing a turban have not been without challenges. She is anticipating that she will become closer to her religion by slowly following the code of conduct, but then in order to do this, she has to change her appearance, and her everyday life small actions, such as diet, and early prayers. She is simply beginning because she has not taken *amrit* yet. Amrit is simply testing herself in a liminal phase step by step, which will lead her to consider herself as a ‘Good Sikh’. Her conflicting emotions towards this change in outside identity representation, matching her inside identity rhetoric have been described henceforth.

²¹ Keshdhari: Sikh who does not shave or shorten his/her hair. This person may wear a turban but not necessarily the 5Ks.

“Because you know, in some classes, if there is a person of another country, people don’t see them very good. But in my case, it wasn’t it. So, at first when I put the turban, they also start to watch me and ask: ‘but what you have put it on your head?’ [laugh] my friends also told me[...] we want more our old Amrit[...]. But now I am happy because I am the only girl in our school to put the turban and in our school, there are maybe 500 students and when I go, and when I walk also on the street or at school, or the market, I am happy because all of them watch me! [laugh] In fact, I think sometime that if I would not have a turban, people would not see me.

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

In this new stage of life experienced by Amrit, it is clear that, despite her laugh, she felt the negative reaction of her friends quite deeply. She probably assumed that her change in symbolic representation would affect her life at school for some time. However, she probably did not anticipate her friends to request her to go back to the way she was. To be devoted to her faith and religious traditions, made her feel sad and uncomfortable for a time. Then, Amrit presents a more positive side of her journey, a personal trait that is very interesting, she has begun to see positives in her situation. She is now visible to people around her. Quiet and serene in nature, she was now blurring the waters around her, and thus the compromise of having her friends look at her in odd fashions, was worth it in her opinion, she has become unique in her opinion.

Aside from the challenges of wearing a turban as presented at first with Livpreet and then with Amrit, there remains the principles of the faith. This notion of the moral orientation of those who decide to take *amrit*, is about following a clear path without deviating. Being part of the *amritdhari*²² Sikhs is not effortless, simply wearing a turban in Italy is a constant challenge, thus following every religious rule becomes another level of hardness in everyday life. For example, in the past few years, Gurnam²³ has taken *amrit*, and has thus become an *amritdhari* Sikh. However, he is still working in a dairy farm, and his schedule is quite hectic. Thus, his daily prayers have taken a different timeslot to adapt to his work schedule. Furthermore, he has adapted his perspective towards the turban, since he wears a less complicated and less valuable fabric when he goes early to work as it will necessarily become extremely dirty and he does not want to be disrespectful. During a family morning brunch, he showed the different types of material for his two types of turban, the classic one was soft unicolor, of good quality and stretched purposefully for the right length and right fit. The second, intended for work, was shorter, coarser, in a darker plaid design, highly unusual style, and less intricate to wear on the head. This sort of compromise has been the only way Gurnam managed to be a baptised Sikh while keeping his employment.

²² Amritdhari: Those Sikhs that have followed the ritual of taking *amrit* and thus became the ‘pure’ ones.

²³ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30.

The concept of religious membership adopted within this baptised ritual may be based on the respect of many rules and prescriptions that could be above all, very rigid at times (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 104) and is often not for everyone. However, not being *amritdhari* does not mean that a person cannot be a good Sikh, personally and morally. In other words, to be a good Sikh can either start by following the so-called code of conduct and then adapt to the moral orientation of Sikhism, or else, one can be morally thorough according to their religion and then decide upon donning the religious membership of the *Khalsa*. Other interesting views of being a ‘Good Sikh’ that did not necessarily include the complete physical appearance were mentioned during various occasions in a gurdwara near Bergamo with Rajdeep and at the house of Livpreet while his wife was cooking us a light lunch.

“Because Sikhism is a religion but not only a religion, it is a way of living. One can live his life for himself, for the society, for others. And being human, we have, we are mentally open people and we adopt people. Everyone that wants to join us, we are open handed and open minded, and everybody is welcome here in our community. There is no division of caste, color or else, it does not matter which continent you come from. Everybody is welcome here. Everybody is served equally, [...] everyday, because of our gurus, you know. Our gurus practiced, practically did in their life what they teach us, what is the meaning of Sikhism, what are the teachings of, the meaning of the teaching. For example, our first guru gave us the concept to work first as a priority, second to meditate, to learn and third to share your wealth with the community, to share wellness with the community and our first Guru did the same.”

(Rajdeep, age 43, born in India, arrived here at age 28)

“According to me, I have seen a lot of person that have taken *amrit*, but they are not 100% according to the religion, according to *amrit*. You have to pray from the heart and not according to the religion about how I have to show to everyone, with the things that says I am a Sikh. I have to be Sikh from my heart.”

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

It is interesting to see how each of these respondents explained the moral orientation of how to be a ‘good Sikh’ slightly differently. At first, the religion itself is glorified as a good and open-minded religious community, and it then leads to the fact that Sikhs have to follow this understanding of fairness. It shows a more mature understanding of the Sikh religion than only wearing the 5Ks, and it is assumed that Rajdeep is a fervent believer of this view. Having lived in India until the age of 28 might have given him time to understand the religion in another light before migrating to Italy compared to the younger generation. Then Livpreet, another more mature man, claims that often those that take *amrit* and are not completely ‘pure’ Sikh which would go beyond most Sikhs’ understanding of the religious perspective of Sikhism. To him, it cannot only be a vow to follow a code of conduct that may dictate what you eat, what you wear and when

you pray, 'you have to be Sikh from the heart' and thus exercise this moral orientation all day and every day for yourself and for others, and this may be the most effortful challenge of them all.

The compelling notion of these last excerpts from both the code of conduct and the moral orientation to be a 'Good Sikh' is that most of the respondents have a deep will to become more religious. This is ultimately because the interviews were conducted most exclusively with self-identified Sikh which felt connected enough to their faith to attend the gurdwara on the weekends. However, the situations of the interviews were all unique in setting and juncture, thus did not generate any predisposition on the respondents about specific topics. In fact, these Sikh respondents still have a quite different view on the importance attached to the adoption of the rules of living and of the mentality behind them. To be a 'pure' Sikh is sometimes seen as a life accomplishment and understood as a goal or a start to a more religious life, as Harminder said, as a 'learner' to the world and Sikhism. Since these Indians are representing themselves as Sikhs, they also follow their culture and try to humble themselves, while accepting the hardness of it all. Attempting to reach the goal of being a good religious person in any given country, as in Italy, establishes those that are consistent about their representation of identity of 'Being Sikh'.

For those that self-identify as being Sikh, the knowledge of their religion and culture is usually passed down from the parents to their offspring. The parental mundane *culture* explained in the Theoretical Framework is seen as an 'essential' element of one's own identity, something that is received 'at birth', such as national belonging, language or especially religion, and that now influences sensitivity, moral orientation, preferences and behaviour (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 88). This idea of *culture* is used in the representation of identity as a catalyst for the construction and understanding of a shared sense of identity. This parental *culture* passed down from the parents to the younger generation is also a part of the cultural factors by Antonsich. In this view, religion is a form of cultural expression that stands for a way of constructing and conveying meaning and, a certain way of interpreting and defining some situations (Antonsich 2010, 647). This whole comprehension of what is religion and the Sikh religion itself, must be carried by the parents, the elders, the family and the community so that the youngsters, those that were not born or raised in India, can still relate and grasp its importance for the community as a whole and for themselves; which is no easy task.

One way to develop the rhetorics of representation of Being Indian Sikh is with this idea of the shared culture and origin, which Sikhs will frequently oppose to the culture of Italians. As named in the title of this section, Sikh respondents often represent themselves as being Indian, as being Sikh, but not

necessarily as being Italians. Other circumstances can change these odds, and they will be presented in a next part of this chapter. Due to the difference in the mundane *culture*, Indian Sikhs that do not want to be seen as Italians in this context will emphasize the dynamic of differences rather than sameness to Italians. Thus, they exclude themselves from the Italian rhetoric of identity representation in a very dichotomous manner. Bertolani and Perocco pointed out in their research, that young Sikh migrants always reinterpret their religiousness or origin referring to someone or something else, and the key is that in this context, they are doing so by comparing themselves to the Italian society (2013). In other words, one way to define oneself as Indian Sikh, is by identifying oneself as not Italian. It will become apparent in the next part of this chapter that Indian Sikhs definitely can play on both tableaux and represent themselves as Italians and even ultimately as being Hybrid, but this will be explained as the chapter progresses. For this section the focus will remain on how Indians respondents represent themselves as Sikhs and not as Italians, as well as how they exclude themselves voluntarily from the rhetoric of being Italians.

Sikh respondents in Italy do exclude themselves and reinforce their representation of being Indian Sikhs in various ways by putting forward the many distinctions that they entertain with the local majority Italian society. They may feel proud about their heritage and showcase it boastfully; they may emphasize the differences in an instrumental way or simply focus on the differences in the language uses for example. This voluntary appeal to difference may indeed be an instrument of representation, as much as a simple statement of preferring one culture's connection rather than another, such as Priya in this next example, when she talks about being mistaken for an Italian.

“[Nursing student] When I was in the hospital I was doing the training, many patients, many times, many patients asked me ‘are you an Indian? I thought you were an Italian?’ It was when they asked me for the name I say ‘Priya’. So, they were like, ‘it is not an Italian name’ and I would tell them in fact it is not, I am not Italian, I am an Indian girl!”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

In the hospital situation that Priya is describing from a quite multicultural environment dominated by Italian patients, it is not rare for her to have to state that she is in fact not Italian but Indian. She laughed while she was remembering the amount of times that it happened to her. It is not wrong for the main society to think that she is Italian at first, she actually likes it, but she prefers to be clear and state her actual culture of origin since she is different from them: she is Indian. Identity representations, contrary to how they are usually presented, are constructed through and not outside ‘difference’ which is a direct result of contrasting and comparing with another group. As observed by Priya, she is not Italian; she is Indian, which is certainly different on many levels and particular of this precise situation. Hall alleged that it is in fact the ‘radically

disturbing recognition that it is only through the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term—and thus its ‘identity’—can be constructed” (1996, 4-5). What the ‘other’ lacks, compared to the ‘we’ have, may define and construct the identity representations that the Sikhs such as Priya, have the Italians local, as expressed by the respondents do not have.

Historically speaking, in the 1990s, the religions which fell outside of the Christian faiths, coming in the hearts of each migrant, especially since their God needs no passport (Levitt 2007), were traditionally met with ‘hostile indifference’ by the greater Italian society. Nonetheless, curiosity was still prevalent for at least a small minority, which led to sympathy, some genuine interest, and at times a deep interest into exoticism (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 139; Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 94). This idea of exoticism came into play when in the past few decades; the many migration waves have “produce a rapid diversification of the social and cultural demands and a greater visibility of the social practices connected with diet, dress and religious rites” (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 93). The migrants’ obvious differences in culture and social practices have attracted interest by the Italian society and are often translated into curiosity at first.

“Everyone is curious! I mean they all ask, ‘what is this, what is that?’ because this kind of dress is like that [pointing at the difference of dress between traditional and westernized]. For me, I don’t understand why people react like this for the turban and the style of dress. Of course, some people don’t know others. But me, everyone knows me, and they know how I would answer questions [...]”
(Rupi, age 16, born in Italy, Indian parents)

“At first, what came first, was surprise [...] I used to go out with my cousins, then we would meet with people from the region, and they would start to ask, so we would answer [...] I found it quite difficult here because I was not good to express myself about the fact that I am Sikh, I have long hair, and I have found it very difficult. And then, when I managed to be better at expressing myself [in Italian], I was able to answer every question that they would ask me. Then, I did not encounter more difficulty, they accepted us.”
(Harjinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10)

They are not used to presenting themselves so exhaustively by clarifying all of their life habits and style of dress, especially in the Italian language. When the language barrier is overcome according to Harjinder, the Italian counterparts can obtain the answers they were looking for about the ‘new’ culture of the rural Sikhs of the north and they will therefore be accepted as Indian Sikhs, and thus not as Italians. For many Indian Sikhs of this research group, it is valuable to explain their parental *culture* and social practices to the main society, so in other words, the exoticism within the curiosity that they are being subjected to, helps them to provide the information of who they are. Overall, this gives them the means to differentiate themselves to the others; the Italian majority society.

The many questions asked to the Sikhs may give them opportunities to differentiate themselves in a positive way and learn how to represent themselves to the Italian other. These situations may either be a very positive experience for the migrants, as it may be a quite difficult endeavour at other times. Especially since it may be the very first encounter that the local Italians would have with a foreign culture in their own country, as if they were unaware of ‘others’ at all. The Indian Sikhs in Italy do not necessarily discuss topics such as how to fulfill the exotic requirements of their counterparts, colleagues and neighbors. They may in fact exhibit a sort of pride of towards their unique culture and thus would fit the exotic expectations of the Italian society. This sort of data is not necessarily easy and accessible to observe and to understand. But much can be analyzed from their memory of their first meeting with Italians in important places in their lives such as when they started school and how they felt in those moments. These observable events can be operationalized as understanding how Indian Sikh respondents can represent themselves as different, as being Indian Sikh and not Italian. For both Ravinder and Priya, which lived similar migration trajectory, it could be essentially defined in those statements:

“I was only 10 years old, so when I go to school every child was very happy because I was the only Indian around and they asked me everything [...] They were proud!”

(Ravinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10)

“When I was here at 12 years old, at that time, there were not too much Indians but too much foreign people. So, in my class I was the second Indian, a girl. First there was only a boy. He was an Italy born boy. Then it was me, and they were happy to have an Indian girlfriend in the class. So, they always come to me, to teach me Italian, help me with the subjects, for the texts and the exams also. Yea [...] they are helping some ways too, so that I can learn Italian.”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

The Indian Sikhs’ responses to Italians’ strong curiosity, pride and happiness as described here came in the form of surprise, equal happiness and sometimes discomfort of the reactions from Italians. Ravinder and Priya became exotic in the eyes of the main society upon their arrival. The sudden happiness of becoming friend with someone from another culture is comprehensible for the youth in schools from the rural provinces of the north of Italy. The two respondent’s souvenirs of how they felt is an equal excitement and strong appreciation that their culture was not putting them aside, but on the other hand, they were brought to the forefront of their group and became a new sensation.

In other times, when an Indian Sikh respondent meets with Italians of their entourage for the first times, there might be many questions asked that will indeed sound threatening and confusing for the newcomers. While they may be happy with the constant questioning of their social practices connected with diet,

dress and religious rites, the Sikhs sometimes find it difficult to make it clear to the dominant society who they truly are. Just as Baldeep and Ravdeep point out:

“No, no issues but *they* [...] a lot of people asked me, what is this [pointing at his *pag*²⁴] and which religion you are, [...] and I told *them* in detail that what is this, what is those, etc. [...] the value of this one, and so on”.

(Baldeep, age 27, born in Kashmir, arrived in Italy at age 18, emphasis added)

“[...] Because now that I grew up, I want to wear a *dastar*²⁵. So now, I have changed, but also for *them* [Italian friends]. So then sometimes, *they* find me different. Before, *they* did not want me to wear the *dastar*. But I think *they* don't understand what it means to me, the value and the appreciation of me to wear the *dastar*, so it is not easy for me to live a normal life with my *dastar*.”

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6, emphasis added)

This is a common illustration of how the studied Sikh community feel towards Italian questioning as well as some more challenges towards the physical apparel of Sikhs which are interested in wearing the turban or to become *anritdhari*. The emphasis put on highlights how Baldeep, a young man from Calcinatte and the only one originally from another country than India in this research, and Ravdeep, one of the rare young women starting to wear a turban amongst my respondents, define who they are versus the Italian other. They both experienced moments where they had to separate who they were from what the main society sees in them. They indeed tried to ‘educate’ the others about their precise identity representation through their religious symbols which they are very proud of. Thus, this has become an integral part of their identity, of who they are. This will probably reinforce their rhetoric of representation, not that they want to be Indian more than Italian, but that they are Indian Sikhs against the representation of being Italians in these situations.

In these last examples of the life of Ravinder, Priya, Baldeep and even Ravdeep, it has combined curiousness of Italians, and the feeling that they may be exoticized by the main society as well. The feeling that they are considered to be the exotic other, or that they use the mean to an end situation and automatically resort to become the exotic and folkloric version of the Sikh migrant in the eyes of local Italians in order to fully explain their differences and the essence of being Sikh, is not fully understood within the community. Bertolani, Ferraris and Perocco state while discussing the ‘mirror game’ of the Indian Sikhs state that “Sikh instrumentally adhere to these descriptions and contribute to recreate them, representing themselves as ‘good and well-integrated immigrants’ and hiding their cultural and religious pluralism in the

²⁴ Pag: another term for turban, but this style of tying the turban usually includes going about 7 times around the head.

²⁵ Dastar: another term for a turban, the direct translation means a ‘crown’, another way to mean that each Sikh is a king or a queen.

public space” (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 146). The religious symbols of faith are not necessarily still hidden from the public eye anymore as would be assumed through the concept of mirror, as presented in the last examples where Baldeep and Ravdeep display their *pag* or a *dastar* proudly. However, they may definitely use these symbols to reinforce their Indian Sikh identity representation and use the interest of local Italians in order to pass on valuable information about who they are. Sometimes even to the point of sensationalist situations such will be showcased in this next vignette on Cremona’s first Sikh Festival, a secular event which was directed towards the Italian population and the goal was to share a part of their culture to the public and thus creating awareness about who they are, not Italians, but Indian Sikhs. In fact, the lure of exoticism does spark interest in the main society with external Sikh symbols such as the turbans (*pags* and *dastars*), beards, swords and *kirpans*, public religious events in city processions such as *nagar kirtan* and *Vaisakhi*, and it answers exactly what Italians may be looking for within an orientalist discourse (Said 1979). It is a definite reflection or ‘mirror game’ of what the Italian society, as reflected by some respondents visiting this festival, have in mind when they think of Indian Sikh: colorful, exotic, different, adventurous, slightly serious and yet peaceful and invisible most of the time. By being Indian Sikhs and not Being Italian, the respondents of this research, they have conformed partly to the implicit stereotypes of those discussing their culture, their Italian interlocutors.

Vignette #1: Cremona’s first Sikh Festival

Recently in the town of Cremona, there was the first edition of a ‘Sikh Festival’ staged in a theatre in mid-February 2016, where I gathered an interesting amount of empirical data from my attendance and from some of the perspectives provided by some members of the Sikh community, respondents to this research. This modern way to present the Sikh community was organized by volunteers that decided to join and present interesting aspect of Sikh religion and culture to the public. There was of course, Indian food, traditional *Bhangra* music and dancing, turban tying, colorful traditional outfits, a photo exhibit and a demonstration of *Gatka*, a Sikh traditional martial art. Usually *gatka* is a sport/martial art that is organized and practiced outside. It is common to see some groups, formed of children, teenagers and adults, outside of the gurdwara on Sundays or at the *Vaisakhi*, presenting their ability to perform this disciplined martial art. Although, on this particular evening, the performance happened on the stage of a theatre, enclosed in a quite small place in front of many Indians and a decent minority of Italians. Surprisingly, the few Italians that were not necessarily acquainted with this form of martial art did not look uneasy, on the contrary, they looked mesmerized. In fact, “[t]he Sikh identity that prevails in the contemporary public discourses mainly coincide with the *amritdhari* identity. Indeed, during religious festivals, swords and *kirpans* do not provoke

defensive reactions in Italians, because they are presented as harmless traditional ‘cultural’ objects, in a similar way as Indians’ spicy food and colorful dresses” (Sai 2009 in Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 133).

This combat training sport in many countries, will use wooden sticks to replace swords in sparring matches. Instead in Italy, from quite young people up to experienced *gatka* performers, the Italian Sikh version of *gatka* holds to the traditional use of sword fights as much as wooden staves, net throwing, gymnastic prowess, and various sorts of swords or daggers against shields attacks. On this fine evening, the finale of the *gatka* segment was a performance of a blindfolded experienced martial art leader doing a precise sequence of artistic moves representing the ‘cutting heads’ of people, but instead, the performer goes around cutting bananas placed on small cushions on top of about ten youngster’s necks positioned on the stage. It does create a very strong impression of control and technique for this final performance to be executed perfectly. This historical and traditional practice was originally a way to train the Sikh warriors for the many wars that Punjab and India went through.

On the one hand, against all odds and to support the claim made by Bertolani, Ferraris and Perocco, the Italians that attended were very impressed and adored the whole of the festival. Many small articles were published in the next days in local newspapers praising the beauty of this ‘very different world’ shown at the very first Sikh festival in Cremona and often the *kirpan* were simply indeed referred as a ‘religious ornament’ (2011, 146) without any mention of the possibly misinterpretation of the *gatka* performance. The organizers were even invited to have a second edition in 2017, despite the fact that some Indians did feel uneasy about the whole festival either because they considered it not really a ‘Sikh’ festival but more of a ‘Punjabi’ one; meaning that it showcased more of the cultural rather than the spiritual side of Sikhism. On the other hand, others, which were Sikh respondents in this research, deplored the use of traditional rituals such as *gatka* and the turban tying as a sensationalist instrument to attract the positive and orientalist attention of the local Italian society. In my opinion, the use of the turban tying practice may be interesting in showcasing the neat and time-consuming ritual that all baptised Sikhs go through every morning in a humble manner, however, the showcasing of sensationalist performances of youngsters with swords, as stated, may be confusing.

All in all, within this complete vignette, the most challenging question is: When does the need of showcasing one’s culture as startling and mystical end, and when do the ‘others’ understand the importance of the cultures around them begin? This is a question that may not be answered at the moment, but only reflected upon as a thought towards the nature of the situation in Italy at the present. The question of the

startling and the mystical Sikh also brings back the idea of the game of mirrors with the local society of the north of Italy. The Indian Sikhs respondents, in the hopes of differentiating themselves from the Italians, have valorized the more formal and normative aspects of Sikhism and religious identity representations, as in the vignette. They publicly represent themselves in a manner, which reaches the local society's expectations of exotic spirituality and strange customs. This valorized and normative aspect of the Indian Sikh's representation of identity analyzed through the notion of the 'mirror game' permeates the ways in which Sikhs juggle with the dominant neo-assimilationist discourse (Grillo & Pratt 2002) in Italy, and thereby have been able to find an original and positive way to make their own identity representation accepted by Italians (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 133 & 141; Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 99). This context and understanding has been often critiqued and interpreted as the fact that the community is still quite young and is invisible to the majority society by remaining in rural provinces and working in specific ethnic niche. This version of the representation of Indian Sikhs as well-integrated, tolerant, exotic, folkloric, quiet and hard-working migrant may not be wrong, but may not only include Indian Sikhs as such; other religious groups have been lumped together with the Sikhs. Instrumentality has been at play in this mirror game with other cultural and religious communities for either facilitating or refuting any connections with other groups.

3.1.2. Indian Sikhs and their Connections to Other Religious Groups

The rhetoric of representation has been clearly defined earlier as a production or performance that either creates sameness or differences in their everyday practices in correlation of what an individual may want to become. Evidently, in the previous section, Indian Sikh respondents have come against increasingly different *way of life* and *culture* from the Italian culture and were able to represent who they were by focusing on how they are not Italian, as well as using the mirror game of the exotic other in order to gain more awareness from the Italian main society and thus uphold a clearer identity. One may think it obvious that the Sikhs living in Italy are indeed creating their identity representations against the Italian identity because of their actual residence. Nonetheless, the Indian Sikhs also use the concept of sameness and difference towards other religious groups around them so as to once again, use the mirror game to their advantage, as well as clarifying their position in the Italian society. When Indian migrants live in Italy it may be understood that the main society might not see the difference between the Sikhs, the Hindus or the Muslims because all may indeed come from India and thus they may 'look' the same in a phenotypic perspective according to Italians. India is indeed home to many religious groups, and as stated earlier, the largest being the Hindus, then Islam, subsequently Christians, Sikhs and so on. Hence, for Italians in general and conceded by the researched group, if a Sikh is representing themselves as Being Indian, he or she could be understood to be

part of any of those religious communities. The issue is that with each of these religions, brings stereotypes that may help or hinder the Sikhs.

Therefore, Indian Sikhs will use sameness and, or differences in order to take advantage of the overall situation. The studied Sikh community is seen as “a supportive and cohesive community of good and pacific workers, immersed in a religious dimension of life (Bertolani 2015, 209; see also Bertolani, Ferraris and Perocco, 2011; Sai, 2009). In fact, the idea proposed is that the Indian Sikhs respondents could be compared to Hindus to some extent in the Italian context, especially related to the idea of exoticism, but also, they are different because of the contradictions in their religious understanding; resulting in ‘possibly’ including themselves with Hindus. On the other hand, the Indian Sikhs would focus on the differences in relation to the Muslims’ community, and thus exclude themselves from them, in the eyes of the Italians. As Frisina mentioned, “Italians generally consider Sikhs as well integrated in spite of their religious difference and contrary to other immigrants, especially Muslims” (2013, *cf.* Bertolani 2015). Thus, Indian Sikhs researched community purposely represent themselves as the good migrant, the quiet and passive religious community which is seen as a positive asset within the Italian economic angle, in a closer match to the vision of a Hindu migrant than to a Muslim migrant. In spite of obvious differences in religion, repeatedly host countries, Italy included, do not always make a specific distinction between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus as a matter of fact. Just as Priya claim: “[...] I know that the Hindus are a majority so people all think that Indians are all Hindus. That’s right [...] but there are also Sikhs. And they think, well the Hindus does not wear the turban. Who’s got a turban? That type of people is a Muslim. But that is not the right thing!”²⁶ Confusion does exist in the views of Italians, mainly about physical appearances such as turbans and even sometimes about the 5Ks with specifically the *kirpan* that may bring confusion to people that do not know the peaceful nature of this ceremonial dagger.

It was already mentioned previously that the main Italian society, according to academic sources, has a specific attitude towards the Sikhs, which is indeed coming from widespread stereotypes about India, which reinforce the expectations of non-violence and of constant immersion of Indians in a spiritual dimension (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 111). Sikhs are perceived by local Italians as simply and only ‘Indians’. Notwithstanding the fact that, ‘Indians’ are largely considered Hindus by most. Furthermore, the religious differences between Sikhism and Hinduism are neither known, nor seized upon by the majority. This may create more confusion than anticipated with the main expectations of the Italians by both the general

²⁶ Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12.

population and local institutions. At first, the connections to the Hindu religious group with the Sikh community could be summed up by their shared history, religious confusion mainly related to cows, the similar mirror of exoticism and their definitive skills as farmers. Hindus and Sikhs have some very important differences in religious behaviors and beliefs, although sadly often they are understood to be either the 'same religion' or even that Sikhs are a sect of Hinduism which would render the Sikh religion a simple courtant of beliefs rather than the greatly significant religion it is for a great deal people all over the world.

Needless to say, that mainly all the Sikhs will deny these two previous claims (See McLeod 1997; Nesbitt 2005, 5-7). However, it is also true that both Hindus and Sikhs share common history and original homeland, and that some Indians may worship the two religions. Once again Priya, while discussing the various religious images on the walls of her family home, presents this fact by talking about her family, "[yea] [...] in my family, there is no, nobody who has *amrit*, okay? But my dad, my grandparents were half Hindu and half Sikh, but now my dad is more more, more Sikh. Sikh! He wants to wear the turban."²⁷ This example is quite unique amongst the interviews conducted within this research since most of the respondents rarely mentioned their heritage of the Sikh tradition, possibly due to the nature of the research directed at the Sikh community²⁸. Nevertheless, Priya and her family are not alone in the community and deserve to be revealed. In Italy, being Sikh and accepting the stereotypical assumptions about themselves that would usually be used towards Hindus, is another instrumental way the Indian Sikhs gain success in economic growth and maintain their representation of identity by being the exotic 'others' played with the Hindus.

In another completely opposite fashion, the migrant Sikh respondents exclude themselves purposefully, within the game of mirrors conversely of the Hindu dynamics the Sikhs formally distance themselves from the Muslim community. The researched Sikhs actually dislike Muslims and their religion; they play extensively on their differences to avoid any possible association with this religious group. However, this is not necessarily so obvious for some of the locals that do not see the Pakistani Muslims as being so different, phenotypically speaking. It is understandable if one looks at the cultural aspects of some Muslim migrants coming from India, Bangladesh or Pakistan. These countries are all situated in a very near geographic distance from Punjab, India. Islam is the main religion of Pakistan, a neighboring country to India that was in fact part of north-West India, before partition.

²⁷ Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12.

²⁸ For more on this topic see Nesbitt, E. 1991. *'My Dad's a Hindu, My Mum's Side Are Sikhs': Issues in Religious Identity*, Charlbury: National Foundation for Arts Education.

“On 15 August 1947 the partition of India became a reality. The creation of a Muslim state of Pakistan, commanding most of the united Punjab, was accompanied by communal disorder on an unprecedented scale. Almost the entire Hindu and Sikh populations of West Punjab migrated to East Punjab, while the Muslim population in the latter region followed their example in the opposite direction. In all about 8.6 million people were uprooted in the ethnic cleansing and over 300,000 died” (Singh & Tatla 2006, 20).

The region that was historically split in two by the British empire before giving back their independence to the Indians and the newly formed state of Pakistan is the region of Punjab. Punjab means ‘the land of the five rivers’ which contained five rivers no more, was now in an open conflict with their neighbors about land, sacred sites and life of the members of the Sikh faith. This large and bloody migration (McLeod 1997) is not a happy moment in the history and the memories of many Punjabi Sikh families, and up to now, it remains an important event that built this antipathy towards the British decision and the Pakistani Muslims whom caused many deaths on their side of the newly created border²⁹ which divided the Sikhs’ motherland/homeland in two regions. In Nesbitt’s research the numbers are closer to an estimate 12 million people that were dislocated and nearly 500,000 deaths (2005, 80) were counted on both sides of the Pakistani-Indian border.

Aside from the historical background of Sikhism, Hinduism and Islamism, the confusion about the religion and the misconception with these various ethno-cultural communities has given the Indian Sikhs respondents opportunities to create their representation of identity against other religious groups rather than only against the Italian identity. The rhetoric of Being Indian Sikh could also use the mirror game to its advantage. One common assumption is that (all) Indians are reliable and quiet workers adapting themselves to the local socio-economic system, family fathers/mothers, “honest people who do not disturb” (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 111), and who can work with cows in superb manners because of their faith and the sacredness of these animals for them. This ‘sacredness of cows’ for all Indians is a commonplace mistake, which is a result of a misconception of a Hinduist religious behavior for an all Indian cultural behavior. In fact, in general the Hindus, the most important religious group of India, are indeed vegetarian and worship cows. The fourth largest religious group, the Sikhs (Census of India 2011) are often vegetarian but do not worship cows. The *amritdhari* Sikhs are indeed formally vegetarian but for the non-baptized, the choice is theirs to eat meat or not; even if most of them will refuse to eat red meat while certainly not worshipping cows. As for the third largest religious group, the Muslims, there are not vegetarian but will only eat halal meat thus once again: do not worship cows.

²⁹ Atrocities happened on both sides of the border, and this is also an important root of the ‘hatred’ between those two nations. See ‘Partition’ and ‘Muslim Relations’ in McLeod 2005, for more information.

In other words, many people in India do not eat beef, many worship cows, but cattle slaughter is not necessarily prohibited all over India, because the various religious groups do not prohibit it. Nevertheless, the mistaken belief of who worships cows and who does not has made the Sikhs from the researched group more valuable to the Italian agricultural market. Indeed, since the local Italian usually believes that every Indian (including the Sikhs) consider the cows to be sacred, some Italian farm owners think that Indian Sikhs are very good in keeping cattle and working in farms. In a recent research conducted by Azzeruoli in 2014, the owner of one of the cheese farms from Parma claimed during an interview that Sikhs had a good hold on those animals since it seemed that “they were born in the barn. The cow is sacred [...] and they have this Hindu mentality that in our line of work is great because Hindus have this education [...] the Indian has a different kind of reasoning[...].” (Azzeruoli 2016), which attests that some Italians count on these stereotypical beliefs about Sikhs and their devotion to an animal considered sacred, particularly the cow, thus *naturalizing* a predisposition to work in agriculture (Bertolani, 2003, emphasis original, in Ibid).

This acceptance of the stereotypes by the Indian Sikhs is both an instrument for them to get more work opportunities and a game of mirror to their society. This sort of ‘branding’ is used as an instrumental means to consolidate the preconceptions thus creating a sort of symbolic and social capital for migrants that is constantly reinforced in their connections with the Italian society, at both the individual and collective level. Or as understood as ‘I am as you see me, I am as you want me’ to be seen more valuable to the Italians” (Bertolani et. al., 2011; cf. Azzeruoli 2016, 37), just as a mirror and will be highlighted slightly throughout the dissertation. It is known that the construction of stereotypes that influence the different networks in allocating people to various productive sectors (Ibid, 9) may be manipulated when the actual group of people accept or refuse those stereotypes, such as considering some animals to be sacred. Consequently, the combination of the Indian Sikh respondents as being a ‘good worker’—including a disposition towards agricultural work, community organization, and the tendency to respect authority (Jacobsen & Myrvold, 2011, 5)—along with acting as considering the cows to be sacred, they actually use their ‘positive stigma’ (Azzeruoli 2016, 37) united with the mirror game, to be able to find a better position than other nationalities within the segmentation of the Italian labour market (Ibid). They ultimately respond to the orientalist appeal of the local society by emphasizing the differences existing within their culture and tradition—whether it may be their culture or the culture of Hindus—versus the culture and tradition of the Italian main society. Throughout this study, respondents would not necessarily purposely use false impression of being ‘like’ Hindus in the context of this research, and never mentioned using it directly *per se*. If asked, they would clearly and proudly state that they are Sikhs and not Hindus, while they would not

interfere if local Italians just assumed otherwise. They did not see any wrongs with it, unless it would hinder them in any way. In other words, they still find it quite comical when they are clearly misunderstood as Hindus without being asked about it when the situation arises, such as in the next vignette.

Vignette #2: So good with cows?

Once during a Sunday at the gurdwara a fascinating event happened that brought up the topic of Hindu-Sikh confusion amongst the family of my main informant. I personally witnessed and then helped an Italo-German BBC reporter which specifically came to Cremona to interview the Sikhs working in the cheese industry. The interviewer was asking remarkable and direct questions to those that volunteered to guide him through their religious and work life. One of his question was obviously: “Why are Sikhs so good with cows? And how would they justify their direct and rapid involvement with the agricultural cow farms? It was clear that the interviewer, having read many small media articles on the internet or in local newspaper about the Sikh community by Italian journalists or the Italian population at large, that he was hoping for a religious statement that would confirm the regular assumption. However, Harminder’s answer left him wanting for more since she simply answered: “We are used to have farms, so they know about animals.”³⁰ Thus, after two interviews where Sikhs gave practical answers, he seemed to be puzzled as of why, independently of how he would ask the question, the participants would not reveal their behavior to be related to the sacredness of the cows. Therefore, in a short informal discussion afterwards, I felt that I would need to slightly interfere in the events unfolding and managed to explain the fact that these people were not Hindus but Sikhs, thus not worshipping cows. The BBC journalist, satisfied to know that it was not because of his interview method, went on with his day without asking about the cows and expecting a religious statement anymore.

After the interview with Maurizio, Harminder was told that the underlying bias of the question about ‘being good with cows’ was related to the possible sacredness of cows for the Sikhs and she clearly found this very funny. She simply admitted to Maurizio and myself in a short conversation later on in the day, that no, they do not eat beef, exactly like many Indian Sikhs, but that they do not worship animals. She was slightly upset that still so many people confuse the two religious groups so easily, as if the wearing of the 5Ks along with the turban was not enough for Italians to see that Sikhs are unique and very different from Hindus. Conversely, she never mentioned the fact that this common misconception should be righted for all Italian

³⁰ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2. Interview done by Maurizio Molinari for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

farm owners. An assumption could be that she probably recognizes the good that was brought to her community by adhering to this stereotype as a mirror game of the ‘good spiritual migrant’ since it has permitted many people from her community to gain the trust of the Italians and become valuable to them. Despite not worshipping animals, the studied Sikhs are still good farmers and know without a doubt how to take care of the cows which now only understand the Punjabi language (Singh 2013), and they have proven so in the past twenty years. As stated by Azzeruoli, the Punjabi workers possess intimate knowledge of farming activities because they themselves were often farmers in their country of origin and, in some cases, continue to conduct their own business transnationally (2016, 38). So, even though Sikhs are rather different from the Hindus at the religious level, it is probably better for the Sikhs to be considered the ‘other’ along with the Hindus, as an inclusive representation of identity, to gain successful economic accomplishment and trust from the Italians.

Albeit the religious groups, the Hindus are not the only ‘other’ religious group that the Sikhs are confused with, there are also the Muslims. As defined by Priya earlier, it is true that wearing a turban for the Sikhs, may have rendered the comparison to Muslims quite straightforward even more with the many images that came in the media after the events of 9/11 (Singh & Tatla 2006, Nesbitt 2005), many will now associate the wearing of a turban as a symbol of Islamic faith. Having long hair and covering it with a turban added to a long beard will often resemble their Muslims counterparts, and thus, it is sometimes a taboo amongst some Indians living in Italy. It may look foreign and possibly threatening to the main society, but the Sikh respondents would greatly appreciate if they could follow this cultural and religious tradition without being judged. Few respondents have shared their experiences such as Livpreet. He believes that if he would have kept his beard and turban, as an extra layer of challenges in relation to the turban for Livpreet, he would have been taken as a Muslim.

“You can say I would have had less opportunity. Even in Italy, you can see the percentage of those with a turban and beard, they have less opportunities than me, you can say. Because the Italians did not totally change because of Sikhism. It is totally different because of the percentage of the bearded Sikhs [...] even now they compare us to the Muslims. “

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

The arrival of Sikh migrants in Italy has not yet changed the perceptions of bearded and turbaned foreigners; they are still seen as Islamic radicals. On top of this, the historical background and original homeland of both the Punjabi Indian Sikhs and the Pakistani Muslims are from the pre-partition Punjab region of the British India. Muslims do come from various countries in the world, but in Italy there is a great deal of

confusion with Indians and Pakistanis since they both come from similar geographic roots, they are culturally similar, but often religiously antagonistic and here lie the main difficulties.

In many studies both in North America and in Europe, Sikhs' personal narratives have been marked by the demeaning of Islam after the events of 9/11, which made Sikhs in and out of Italy, launch an identity as 'good migrants' and distinguish themselves from Muslims through a politics of 'mistaken identity' (see Jacobsen & Myrvold 2011). Despite animosity, Jasjit would simply explain that "[...] they think that 'oh you are a Muslim' and sometimes, some people are directly mixed. Because some Muslims also have the beard, and this would be sometimes but not all the time. And sometimes [...] it is also this kind of a problem."³¹ This sometimes-problematic situation could also translate into more racist encounters, such as how Amrit-Raj discusses it,

"Not in Italy [...] there are more people that are racist but not all. When I go to school in Cremona, there are some people that say that I am a Taliban. When you talk about it with each person and you explain that 'no I am not a Taliban'! Because [...] because the Muslims that wear the turban and that there is a Muslims and now I am a Sikhs [...] but they don't know that we are another religion."
(Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, in Italy since the age of 13)

Both Jasjit and Amrit-Raj agree that it is only a mistake, that the local Italians they have encountered simply do not know the difference. They distinguish themselves from the Muslims even if it is not easy to constantly clarify their identity representation in a new culture. They have to explain that they are not in fact Muslim, but from another religion, a 'good' religion versus what Italians understand of Islam.

"the kind of interactions that exist between Sikhs and the host Italian society, and more specifically on the Sikhs' ability to cope with the neo-assimilationist discourse, which has permeated migrations policies, public opinion, and local entrepreneurs, by representing themselves as the 'good savage' in opposition to the 'bad' migrants, and Muslims in particular" (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 133).

They try to become the 'us' the good religious group that would be included within the 'good' people in Italy, just like Italians. They represent themselves as the 'good' religious foreigners, versus the 'other' the 'bad' religious migrants even if they also came from India. So, the Sikhs, in a very instrumental and emotional way, are performing and claiming their representation of identity as being non-Muslim, since their physical appearance with an Indian suit or turban may make people think that they are Muslim. It is important for them, whether it is in India or abroad, to be separated from Muslims that they consider very different in religious perspectives as much as in social realization.

³¹ Jasjit, age 27, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 23, travels every year for a few months to North America and China for work.

The Sikh respondents are aware that Muslims are badly seen by the majority of Italians and refuse to be agglomerated with them, and by doing so, hope to gain more favours and trust by the main society. It is not necessarily easy for them to live in a society that ‘lumps’ them all together, when one of the religious group is seen so negatively at the governmental and social level. In the first place it is important to understand the situation in Italy which changed around the early 2000s. The migrants’ religious identity became a crucial debate in the public discourse. Their cultures and religions were then understood to constitute an obstacle to integration, which was certainly a problematic aspect especially since the most pressing challenge was judged to be Islam. The Islamic religion came to stand as a symbol of the rejection and condemnation of immigrants’ religions by many institutions and by the Italian society as a whole (Perocco 2008). The distorted notion of the concept of ‘otherness’ was then used in the mass media to produce specialized discourses on immigrants (Binotto & Martino 2004 in Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 139). In the media, the Muslim culture and faith was indeed singled out as the paramount advocate of such ‘otherness’. It was implied that they, the Muslims, carry a radical and organic difference from Italians and must be kept isolated and at a distance. The Islamic religion would then constitute an insurmountable obstacle to social inclusion, *a number of intellectuals* would claim in making connections with the Muslims and the Italian society (Sartori 2000; Fallaci 2001 in Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 94, emphasis original). The Indian immigrants, without any regards to their religious background, were depicted as subjects totally immersed in the religious dimension— ‘characterized as uniform and perennial’ (Ibid; Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011).

When a government takes such a deep stance against religious pluralism, by isolating one religious group, it rarely leads to good results. Even if the situation that Muslims face is precarious, and far from being acceptable, the subject of this dissertation is not regarding this religious group, thus the attention will be kept towards what the Sikh participants of this research think about their situation in the Italian context. The situation may be harsh and the conscious or unconscious ways those Sikhs may use to lift themselves up in the good graces of the local Italians of the north may not be those of the highest morals; they remain to be actual tactics used in gaining more from their life in Italy and thus, needed to be addressed in this section. Markedly, the Sikhs with their hostility towards the Muslims, do not necessarily act upon this understanding of the difficulty of integration for the migrant’s culture and faith as a whole, but instead, they work on dissociating themselves from the Muslims and propose themselves as being a ‘better’ version of an Indian migrant, which has had some kind of success, as claimed by Rajdeep which has lived more than 15 years in

the north of Italy: “Everybody knows Sikhs are apart from Muslims. Maybe in the south”³². In the north of Italy, there are new processes of distinguishing the Sikhs from the Hindus and Muslims, which is supported by the media and the Sikhs themselves (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 139).

“Well currently, due to certain huge influences of foreign people and due to latest violence attacks and so on, people are starting to be more careful. So, they are not more interested to know someone more. But one thing which is very clear is that the Sikh community amongst between Muslims and Moroccans of North Africa are considered the most reliable. So, between 25 years being here, something we get here is the trust of Italians because if where we are, for example in the province of Brescia or Mantua, you can ask who whenever and they would say ‘oh the Indians [...] they are hard workers, they would never create issues [...]’ So, I think this is a good point in our favor in 25 years, at least we gained their trust, at least!”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

They indeed consider it important to explain that they are not Muslim; they are Sikhs, from another faith, thus, they are trustworthy. In order to make their Italians counterparts more at ease, to keep their trust and gain more respect from them, they emphasize their differences. It is not necessarily fair for Islamic communities in Italy *per se*, but it has helped the Sikhs in Italy to be regarded as good working people, *the* ‘good migrants’. Even the public recognition has been experienced from the central and local authorities during the opening of gurdwaras which “usually do not give rise to the polemics and demonstrations that are customary on the occasion of the opening of Islamic prayer rooms [...]” (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 98). Thus, it is in fact true that playing the card of not being Muslim, and having an underlying disfavour for Islam, has rendered some Italians more sympathetic to the Indian Sikhs in general; an element that the Indian Sikh respondents never fail to use to their advantage.

3.2. Being Italian

In this part of Being Italian as a rhetoric of identity representation for the Sikh migrants from the research community, the complexity of identity as a concept will be reinforced. They identify as Being Indian or as Being Sikh by contrasting their representation and *culture* to the Italians and to other religious groups. Beyond this on the contrary, they also sometimes represent themselves as Being Italian on specific occasions, and this will be the theme of this part of the chapter. As hinted earlier, when the claim that Indian Sikh respondents are reinterpreting their identity by comparing and contrasting themselves to the Italian main society; they also play on both tableaux. During their attempts at defining who they are and perform

³² Rajdeep, age 43, born in India, in Italy since the age of 28.

accordingly, they also perceive the dynamic of sameness to the local Italians and thus include themselves in this rhetoric as well. Alternatively to the previous part, but not in complete contradiction, the data will show that the researched Sikh migrants could represent themselves as Italians through performances attributed usually to Italians. Though it may be a struggling notion that some Sikhs often represent themselves as Italians, becoming is a process and it brings potential for the migrants to change (Anthias 2013) their representation of identity and transform their *way of life* in tune with the Italian identity representation.

When some Sikhs confront the assumptions that they are incapable of Being Italian, considering specific characteristics such as standard stereotypes, physical characteristics, and different cultural origins and so on, they adapt and overcome these misconstructions and perform as 'Italians' to the best of their abilities. They truly have an amazing capability to adjust to their environment in various diasporas³³ and in Italy likewise. Being integrated or raised and socialized in other countries compels the Sikh migrants in general to adjust to a new *way of life*. The results remain the same: studied Indian Sikhs can become Italians and represent themselves correspondingly. Although the concept of 'becoming' provides the means for a shift, a new development as well as the recognition of practice and intervention, it remains arduous to conceive the processes used to represent this identity. It is undoubtedly difficult to appropriately recognize and operationalize situations where some Sikh migrants use the rhetoric of identity as being Italian in a context where some members of the Italian society and of the researched Sikh community have prejudgements against the notion of the 'simple' Indians becoming Italians. Thus, this part will be divided in two sections in the interest of clarifying this complex situation.

The two parts of Being Italian will include: 'Adaptations in Italy' and then 'Becoming and Feeling Italian'. The first part assumes that the Sikh respondents want to include themselves into the local majority Italian group and wish to be included additionally. It will present a thorough analysis of the people's and the community's performances as adaptations and the society's adjustment in various institutions. These will highlight the struggle that the Indian Sikh respondents, representing themselves as Being Italian, face every day. The second part will be a straightforward assessment of how some of the Indian Sikhs feel and become Italian, where the wide-ranging idea of Anthias' 'becoming' rather than 'being' concept (2013, 5) takes its complete sense, since these they are 'becoming' full fledge Italians. This part will also hint at those that utterly disagree and feel un-Italian and thus exclude themselves from this rhetoric. To be at the margin

³³ See for example Jacobsen 2011, 2012, 2015; Myrvold 2011, 2012; Hirvi 2011; Lum 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2015; Nesbitt 1991, 2011; Singh 2011, 2012, and, Jakobsh 2012.

shows the boundaries surrounding the Italian Sikh community and, the constant challenges that they are facing from the outsider's reactions to the feeling within themselves.

3.2.1. Adaptations in Italy

In Italy nowadays, the fact remains that some researched Indian Sikhs do perform towards becoming Italian by adapting their lifestyle or *way of life*. Since a part of the community does want to include themselves as Italians, at first the commonplace reluctance from the Italian society will be stated briefly. Further on, the adaptations that the studied Sikh community undergoes as to include themselves in the dominant society as well as the dynamic of their inclusion by some members of the Italian society, will be stated. Then, the adaptations or accommodations by the Italian societal structures towards the researched migrant Sikhs to make them feel more included in Italy will be mentioned, especially since the actions performed will affect them. A clearer understanding of this foreign religious group by the local society decidedly helps the respondents become more Italian and thus this Sikhs' new society becomes a definite agent into this rhetoric. These adaptations are often seen as small milestones for both sides of the society. In pursuance of attaining a certain integration, a mutual accommodation or adaptation is required, involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different people (Berry 2005, 706).

The most common bias from the local Italian society of the Sikh migrants, about having a place in Italy referenced from the respondents themselves, is based on the rhetoric of sameness and difference. The majority group of the Italian society dominantly those associated to the Northern League worldview will generally draw on this rhetoric and on their preconceived notion of 'Italianness' to define who are the 'us' and who are the 'others' as stated antecedently in the Theoretical Framework. In the case of the researched Sikh migrants, together with having different phenotypic traits since they were all born in India or from parents born in India, they also prefer to keep their Sikh religious traditions regardless of most of them being socialized in Italy amongst the new generation. This certainty about the Sikhs, contradicts strongly the aforementioned rhetoric of sameness and the requisites that one is supposed to pursue to be accepted as belonging to the dominant Italian group. Thus, even if some of the Sikh respondents perform as Being Italian, they are most certainly seen as failing at this representation by the local main society and thus 'they' will be excluded. It does not mean that it will prevent those Sikh migrants to keep their religion and behave as being Italians would, just as Satnam, a young amritdhari women from Bergamo working in an Italian factory explains that "[i]t is hard to get people who are, who appreciate [...] yes, it is your religion, that's

good. But you know there are racist people over here and all over the world.”³⁴ It is true that xenophobic people are present everywhere and definitely not just in Italy. However, the Indian Sikhs researched group have always been known to master the art of interiorizing the gaze of the majority, the Italian society, by knowing and handling this notion quite calmly. In fact, the group of Italians who do not appreciate ‘others’, stigmatize the creation of migrant communities as an example of non-integration, and simultaneously tend to ethnicize the ‘other’ (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 142). This form of exclusion gives strength in unity to the minority group of Sikh migrants, since they have a history of displacement and migration in foreign parts of the world and they usually know how to adapt and how to get accepted despite their will to keep their religion and traditional *culture*.

One way that the researched Sikhs have interiorized the local society’s negative gaze is by presenting themselves with very low profiles, as simple peasants with humble goals as earning a good living and providing opportunities for their offspring. Even though this may undermine them to a lower level of the society, for the sake of the younger generation and the benefits that they would enjoy by being part of the Italian society, the Sikhs in general have accepted the status of simple ‘peasants’ (*contadini*) in the Italian society. This gloomy image of the Sikhs working in the fields, in the *stalle*³⁵ or in the dairy farms in Italy, has granted them few sympathizers from the Northern League which occasionally appear to think well of the Sikhs and perceive them as peasants (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 141) and not just as migrants which grants them more privileges. Even if in official statements the Northern League states that the Sikhs in general are probably only endured. In fact, a great part of the local society tends to deny the reality of the presence of migrants on their soil. Some Sikhs are seen as helpful for the work which a part of the main Italian majority has evaded, but the policies are slowly going towards a reduction of encouraging laws to support migrants in Italy. The Italians do not want multi-ethnic cities, but they still need an increasing number of workers. Therefore, Italy is part of those reluctant importers of foreign workers in Europe, where the immigrants seem to be accepted individually if they have a name and definite place in society—helpful, modest, possibly invisible (Ambrosini 2011, Ambrosini 2013). Albeit this very unpleasant portrait and political situation, it remains that the researched Sikh migrants are not completely viewed as foes in Italy, yet this is still a start towards inclusion.

³⁴ Satnam, age 21, born in India, in Italy since age 13.

³⁵ *Stalle*: a compartment in a stable or shed for cattle.

The investigated Sikh community has a strong desire to keep their religion and parental *culture*. Nonetheless, they also try to adapt their ancestral traditions in the aim of facilitating their integration in Italy. In psychology, this process is qualified as *integration* within the model of acculturation strategies as it means that an individual would express an extensive interest in maintaining strong ties in the everyday life with both their ethnic or cultural group as well as the dominant group (Berry 1997, 9; Berry 2005; *cf.* Bhatia & Ram 2009, emphasis original). Strong relational ties will be discussed below, but at this point, the strategies used by the researched group to be integrated will be highlighted. In truth the Italian government is slightly conservative on its approach towards the Sikhs religious group and their religious symbols when discussing cultural diversity. It has created difficult situations for some of the migrants, especially related to one of the 5Ks, the *kirpan*, the ceremonial dagger which is kept sheathed and then exposed to the public eye. In an interview while sitting at the back of the gurdwara with her two-year-old daughter, interpreted by a translator, Suneeta talks about how complicated it is for her to follow her faith in Italy because of the regulations towards the *kirpan* and this despite her apparent enjoyment of Verolanuova, as an appreciated town with a great deal of markets and amenities.

“Translation for Suneeta: No, she said that here living as the code of conduct of *Sikhi*³⁶ is very hard. Because here there aren’t now the permission that, like in England, like in Canada or Australia, about [sic] the *kirpan*. They want us to wear it inside the clothes and not outside the clothes because they feel scared about the *kirpan*. And also, because if we want to put *kirpan* we can only [wear it if it is] very small. We can’t put the *kirpan* of every size, and more it is big and more it is beautiful. But here we can’t. And some work, some boss don’t (sic) want that the dependent have uncut hair, they wear turban or keep beard. So, for a lot of people for a lot of jobs, it is very difficult. But they have started to get *Sikhi*. Also, she said that her husband before he cut his hair and then after when he kept his hair, his boss told him to, if you want to work here, you have to cut the hair. But he didn’t, then he put the beard, and then the boss said also, if you want to work here, you have to cut the beard. But he maintained, he stayed fix and then now, he took *amrit*, he wears turban and the boss doesn’t say anything. But here it is very hard, because they don’t have all the permission that they have in other countries!”

(Translator for Suneeta, age 35, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 25)

Suneeta describes how compared to other countries, she considers the regulations about the wearing of a *kirpan* along with keeping the longer hair and beard as not well understood by those that do not know the Sikh *culture*. She considers that the situation has been inadequately handled in Italy with the regulations that emphasize the restrictions towards the *kirpan*’s display and size. As for the keeping of long hair and beard and a turban on one’s head along with the circumstances of being told to adjust their physical appearance to

³⁶ Sikhi: a contracted way to mention the *way of life* within Sikhism.

resemble Italians so as to keep their employment, is not a recent phenomenon and has been experienced quite often by many members of the Sikh community in plenty of diasporas.

Despite disagreeing with the restrictions and the demands of the local society, Suneeta and many other respondents during the field research have decided to change some of their behaviors to fit in and to include themselves. They decided to follow the rules and mores of their new country in relation to their ceremonial dagger. For the followers of Sikhism, wearing a bent dagger at the hip is a religious symbol as emblematic and as harmless as a cross on a necklace. It is important that the blade must be available to protect the weak and it is common knowledge amongst Sikhs that a significant size *kirpan* represents devotion and ceremonial aspirations. Some Sikhs may be outraged by the regulations to keep the *kirpan* underneath clothes or under a certain size, and others are keener into the idea that at least they are permitted to be worn. There are some adaptations towards the *kirpan* as much as the *kesh* that have been established by the Sikhs in Italy to conform and they are often seen as small milestones for both sides of the society. Although these adaptations are positive, a Sikh migrant cannot and will not want to change his or her parental *culture*. If the changing of behavior would only affect their *way of life*, it would be simpler, but by adapting the way Sikh identify themselves as religiously and historically connected to Sikhism, it has rendered some members of the community desperate to find an alternative. In other words, those changes have been made from necessity to be included as being Italian, but most would much rather not have to adapt in this way.

The discussed possible adaptations of the *kirpan* has been interpreted by some by wearing this symbol through another medium. During the field work in Harminder's family house, a casual discussion was happening when Harminder³⁷ and her mother Namjot³⁸ talked about the *kirpan* and how it is seen by the community. From the field notes of that day:

Fieldnotes 005, March 14th, 2015

There are in Italy, basic issues with the turban and the *kirpan*. But I have seen that her mother is wearing a *kirpan* always around the house, and Harminder pointed out that her father, Gurnam³⁹, even if he has taken *amrit*, does not wear it when he works. He does not want to spoil it at work and it would be quite uncomfortable for him. There is also the fact that I have seen her mother wearing a sort of necklace with some symbols of the Sikh faith (a mini comb, mini *kirpan*, and a mini double-sided sword). This necklace contains three traditional Sikh symbols, the *Khanda*, the

³⁷ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2.

³⁸ Namjot, age 52, born in India, in Italy since the age of 29.

³⁹ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30.

*Kangha*⁴⁰ and the *Kirpan*. For the necklace, this was something Harminder talked about. She was re-enacting a hypothetical discussion with Italians about the *kirpan*. She said, ‘but it is just a symbol’, and the Italians would say, ‘if it is a symbol, why can’t you have it smaller or in wood’ [...] I started to respond to her by naming all that I have heard against this argument, meaning that it needs to cut, and to be usable, etc. [...] But then Harminder, said, “but it’s true that it is not necessary anymore, it will not change your whole faith if you don’t wear it all the time, the option of the necklace is as good and quite normal. It has this idea of symbols and does not affect anyone. I don’t know why we keep those old preconceptions of our faith as being at war like in the old times. We are not in India, neither in old times.” I personally thought that this was interesting and shows an important step in evolution of the immigrants and the next generation.

In this excerpt, the opinion shared by Harminder and assuming Namjot too, as she is wearing the necklace, is appreciated by some of the community members and at odds with others. This discussion is crucial for my comprehension that at this point in this country and in this generation Sikhs do not all agree on the *kirpan*’s visibility and size which shattered my very own preconceptions. There will be many opportunities for Harminder and her generation to debate the importance of their faith and symbolism in their new society by taking this necklace as a new element in today’s Sikhism. Namjot did point out that she did not prefer one or the other, she would wear them both without any deliberations. She would wear the *kirpan* around the house, at the gurdwara, at family houses, and the necklace as well most of the time. This method may definitely, even if reluctantly by some of the Sikhs, become a small step pragmatism to include themselves in their new society.

Concerning the other religious symbol of membership, *kesh* or the uncut hair, as referred to Suneeta’s husband’s possible dismissal at work, this story is a common one amongst Sikhs living abroad. For example, in the documentary filming the *Sikh Formaggio*, Harminder talks about her father’s story of leaving India in similar circumstances as Suneeta’s husband. She explains the Punjabi common phobia of non-acceptance of the Sikhs long hair and beard when traveling out of the country. Harminder’s father, Gurnam⁴¹ was told that if he left Punjab with long hair and a turban he would not find work or would even be denied entry to Europe. He then cut his hair as needed to be done to have a chance in another country and later explained that he felt ashamed. This shameful feeling pushed him to keep on tying a turban on his head despite his short hair. After some time living in Italy he realized that all those whom had also moved from Punjab to Italy had short hair and that he was not alone. However, as explained in the interview

⁴⁰ The *khanda* is a double-edged sword which represents the two-sided nature of the Sikh Gurus who combined the qualities of saint and soldier. Both edges of the blade must be equally honed. This represents the need for a balance between the qualities associated with saint and soldier. Even if the *khanda* is not necessarily part of the 5Ks, it is the main central piece of the symbol representing the faith of Sikhism on paper, just like the cross for Christians or the moon crescent for Muslims.

⁴¹ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30.

Gurnam gave to the BBC German-Italian broadcast journalist in 2015, his opinion of himself and his behavior changed when he realized that cutting his hair was not always necessary, especially in Italy. He told his story by saying: “I arrived here, and I found work, so I stayed here. When I came to Italy I cut my hair, with the long hair you cannot enter Italy. So, I cut it, but after a time, when you realize it is okay, then it is okay!”⁴² For Gurnam, more than 20 years ago when he lived and worked in France he cut his hair and beard to keep his contract. When he moved to Italy and found another employment changing from circus driver, to working in the fields, to working inside with the cows and the milking process in the *stalle*, his economic situation was more secure, and he started to feel more confident in his life and at work. So he persevered in wanting to regain his honor by adorning the religious symbols and with his newfound courage, he decided to let his hair and beard grow back so that he would feel better from the bottom of his heart. After few years, he went back to wearing a *sardar*⁴³ and to have a full beard (Duran, Wise & Bison 2012). Nobody judged him anymore, so he became a good ‘Sikh’ again, while being integrated in Italy economically speaking. Since his employer did not see any problems with him wearing a turban for work, it became something accepted and made a bridge between the two cultures.

Many other respondents related from close or far to Gurnam and had similar occurrences in their migration trajectories. They did not necessarily have the same opportunities but most long to go back to their religious roots and follow in Gurnam’s path. The reason why these Sikh migrants do not have the long hair and the turban is not necessarily known, but their emotions and eagerness to follow the 5Ks one day is indeed striking and speaks for itself. Many have been preoccupied by this,

“But I can say that I am a bit outside my religion because of my haircut. I have not a long beard as it is written, according to the religion ‘a Sikh must have long hair’ but, I’m trying my best to come back again, I would love to. It is a wish. “

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

“But to the question if I am a ‘good’ Sikh, [...] I would need to follow the 5K’s, having long hair, but there are many things, and I cannot do them all at once. I won’t just yet let my beard grow longer, but I try to do all the rest as much as I can.”

(Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9)

“[...] before coming here, he [Ravdeep’s father] had to cut his hair [...] and now 2 years after, 2 years now, like in India he can follow his religion. So, there was a standby, and now for the first time [...] now we follow religion”

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6)

⁴² Interview of Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30, done by Maurizio Molinari for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

⁴³ Sardar: another name to talk about the turban

Thus, in the case of Livpreet and Parminder, it is a wish to follow in the same perspective of Gurnam, and Suneeta's husband. In the last excerpt, Ravdeep is proud to tell that recently her father has now succeeded in living a religious life as he was accustomed in India, and this despite working and adapting his *way of life* to the Italian lifestyle. These are all instances that prove the will of the Sikhs to adapt to the Italian life despite their innermost need of their religion and *culture*.

It may be problematic to see the idea behind both the adaptations of the three-symbol necklace and the cutting and sometimes growing back of the beard and hair of baptised Sikhs however, for the researched Sikh community, it is an important step. In fact, these unimpressive examples of adaptations of some Indian Sikhs becoming Italian in their representation of identity, these microlevel everyday pragmatism, are crucial. These Indian Sikhs have a deep understanding of both their religion and culture. They live vicariously through those principles of life. When a Sikh, as those of the researched group, decides to adapt even his or her *culture* and religion in order to be included or to include themselves to a different society, Italy in this case, it is taking a giant step towards Being Italian and not simply Indian or Punjabi Sikh. As mentioned and agreed with Mahmood when commenting on the greater Sikh diasporas in the world: "I think that the ultimate adaptability of Sikhs to various settings from Canada to Kenya to Hong Kong—*whether individually they cut their hair and wear suits, or carry kirpans and sport saffron turbans*—is testament to the pragmatism at the heart of Sikh traditions" (2009, 62 emphasis original). Other steps will be mentioned henceforth and include the economic integration and the migrants' value in their host society and their regular connectedness in relationship ties with the society at large. Migrant Sikh respondents may have sometimes been depicted negatively in Italy, despite this, the way they are portrayed to those outside their group is not always so black or white.

Admittedly, it was formerly presented at the ISA World Congress of Sociology in 2006 by Colombo that the content and forms of inclusion of foreign people, the meaning of successful or unsuccessful assimilation and those who decree its success or failure are rarely questioned. Thereupon, the only considered factor which becomes highly important for inclusion or even adaptation to the Italian context in this case, is the economic success, which is assessed according to parameters and models belonging to the majority group. It has been claimed that Indians have saved the Italian staple of the *Grana Padano* and the *Parmigiano Reggiano*. The Sikh migrants, economically integrated, earned a decent living enough to reunify with their family, thus it stands as proof that Indian Sikhs have included themselves in both the Italian society

and their economic market⁴⁴. It is known that the norther rural Indian Sikhs receive impressive amounts of positive feedback about their work ethic and their life in general, due to an article published by the International Herald Tribune used in many Italian newspapers and acknowledged by Lum in her study, which explained that they are constantly praised for their hard-work and dedication. Those Sikh migrants in Italy are then gracefully thanked for ‘saving’ the Italian milk and cheese industry (2015). Therefore, it becomes another indicator that the dominant Italian society is not completely against some migrants and may even, at times, include them as part of the group.

Another way the researched is being included and include themselves as well, is through Antonsich’s theory of the ‘relational factor’. It was inferred earlier that in this factor, one can analyze the personal and social ties that enrich the life of an individual in a given place. The possible ‘weak ties’ can create some connectedness between two people from different backgrounds. In other words, for an Indian Sikh living and immersed in Italy, the relation that one has with classmates, workmates, neighbors, fruit vendors, postmen, and so on, are often very important and create affinity and personal social ties. Sikh respondents will surround themselves with family and friends from the same culture. However, they also want and sometimes need to meet with people from outside their *culture*. Historically speaking, when only a few Sikh men migrated to Italy less than forty years ago, they had to adapt and meet Italians during the day. These ‘everyday encounters’ (Amin 2002 in Antonsich 2010, 9) have made them see, live and understand the behaviors of the main society. After few years in this new environment, these social ties have become more important for them and for who they are and have become. Often, youngster which were socialized in Italy, as well as their parents, see their life embellished by personal and social ties which in turn, influence them.

“I don’t know, I think we were too lucky to live in Gabbioneta. On the right side [of the house] there were an old couple, an old family the old man and old women, she was always there to help us. Every evening I was there because she helped me to do my homework, my school homework. She helped too much my mum to learn Italian. And, on the other side of my home, there was another, she was too old. She helped us to, a lot, a lot, a lot (sic). and I can never forget her.

(Priya, 23 years old, born in India, in Italy since the age of 10)

Meeting with these people and the help given to her and her mother has marked not just Priya’s memories but also her emotions of feeling connected to Italians in a way that she considers lucky. Lucky, it was for her that someone was there to help with her Italian homework that was all in Italian, a difficult language for her to grasp as she had moved to Italy at the age of ten. These emotionally dense relations with family, friends

⁴⁴ For more information on the topic see Azzeruoli (2016), Compianni & Quassoli (2005), Lum (2012^b), Lum (2015).

or just neighbors, such as Priya's, have been influencing the Sikhs in Italy, and led them to address the local Italians in general with respect and goodness. By living in this environment from more than thirty years and connecting with Italians, it affected their way of representing themselves sometimes closer to Being Italian.

On the perspective of the Italian governmental system, the changes and adaptations towards foreigners, have been made mostly through the different institutions that affect the lives of migrants such as the communication with the authorities in the north, the health system, the cultural centers and the political implications. These were not necessarily only for the studied Indian Sikhs, but they are often seen as heavy on the balance of inclusion in the local society. Notably, as a short example, through communication with local authorities, the Sikh religious festivals of *Nagar Kirtan* and of *Vaisakhi* are celebrated with the benevolent consent of the authorities, political parties, and the local population (Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 98) in many towns in the north of Italy. Albeit these encounters were never attended, or described in full, they were mentioned often enough to be understood as a common factor that the researched community was proud and satisfied of. Often the city processions or the Sikh spring festivals are described as a happy, vital, pulsating...and an important tool for the integration of the whole community' constituted by 'good workers and citizens' (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 146 emphases original). In other words, the local host society, by accepting that the Indian Sikhs use the streets of Novellara, Cremona, Bergamo, Brescia, and most recently even Milan, has developed into a tool for integration in the Italian society. As some of the Sikhs have mentioned during the festivals, the idea behind *Vaisakhi* is to build bridges, not walls. This is an interesting notion to see that through interrelation of the researched Sikhs and their local authorities, it has included itself into the Italian landscape as much as the Italian authorities have accepted them in their country in some ways.

Other interesting steps towards inclusion of the migrants in Italy are accomplished every day in various institutions or governmental bodies which have a direct contact with the foreign population. Due to the fieldwork location, only official institutions of the province of Cremona were visited and studies for these possible small pragmatic steps. There will be short presentation and mention of small milestones done by the 'Mondinsieme Centro Interculturale di Cremona'⁴⁵ along with the 'Istituti Ospitalieri di Cremona'⁴⁶. These two governmental bodies have been known to have helped migrants to settle and to feel more at ease

⁴⁵ Official English webpage: Intercultural Center: <https://mondinsiemecremona.wordpress.com/guida-vivere-a-cremona-inglese/>

⁴⁶ Official Italian webpage: Hospital: <http://www.ospedale.cremona.it/public/index.php>

in Cremona and in Italy. They are in a sense, a place for migrants to gain access to help resolving an issue about their life or their health and the health of their family.

Formerly private, the Intercultural Center became a public service by the Commune of Cremona after the migration phenomena became too extensive. During a non-recorded interview with Elena Bergamaschi, the center's main referee, it was claimed that after formalizing the newly made public intercultural center, more administrative services and technical supports were offered to the migrants. It became a hub for families and house matters. A new support was being launched at the moment of the interview, an Antidiscrimination Desk Network (UNAR) which would provide a place for migrants to obtain social and legal advice if they experienced discrimination at work or elsewhere. The services of the Intercultural Center do not only help the migrant population in Cremona, it is also a consultant service for private and public organisations such as hospitals, schools, agencies, etc. At this center, they sometimes have contact with the Indian Sikh population from the Cremona region. There are examples of youngsters coming to the center for help in getting their Indian degree recognized in Italy. Other requests are about registering various Sikh organizations such as Sikhi Sewa Society or *Cultura Sikh*, at the government level. This procedure so-called the '*registrazione*' is not easy to achieve as it is time-consuming and grueling. For now, none of the Sikh organizations in Italy have gone through with the full '*registrazione*' yet. The service provided at the center offers help to accomplish this task, just as the Hindu association (Unione Induista Italiana) which has been formally recognized by the government in 2012 along with the Buddhist (Italian Buddhist Union) underwent. Nevertheless, with the latent economic crisis, many of the migrant-made groups have been dismantled, many migrants have lost their '*permesso di soggiorno*' (residence permit) and many others have left the country. Aside from the refugees, less and less migrants come to the center to obtain some help. In fact, it is believed within the Sikh community that a few large families have left the country to find better work opportunities abroad.

The second institution is the General Hospital of Cremona. It is particularly important to comprehend that a hospital is an unavoidable step for many migrants arriving to a foreign country, especially for those with young children or for the young brides that are pregnant. In other words, this is one service that is and must be highly modernized in cultural and linguistic services. Many services in Italy, are usually solely available in Italian, but this is definitely not the case for the health services. In this situation, Carmen Rauso, is in charge of the social services and services of mediation, linguistic and cultural aspects of the hospital. She explained during the interview, her services towards the migrant population exists since the

1970s. It has increased in size since the 70s considering the clients changed and their needs have changed as well. The people working in these services did not only need to speak the various languages of the foreign populations in Cremona, but also, they need to be cultural mediators in order to adopt the right behavior in various situations. An important part of this service is to translate documents, posters, or notes, either in written format or face-to-face with the doctors and patients. It involves weekly visits to the foreign people around the hospital to discuss their last appointment, their personal and medical information and instructions about medication in their native tongues. Another issue with language that was fixed by this service is related to the common information provided to new parents. Many young mothers follow their husbands in Italy where they will give birth to their first child, completely secluded in a world they do not understand since they do not speak Italian and their husbands are not cooperative. Thus, during doctor's appointments, there is a screen that shows how to bathe a newborn in the waiting room. At first, this was only in Italian, but lately some subtitles have been added, and the continual loop short clip is now subtitled alternatively in English, Indian, Arabic, Romanian, Chinese and French languages. This small step towards migrants creates a feeling of familiarity where the mothers can feel as if they were in control because of the important notions taught in their language on this clip. The help this small gesture provides to young women in a foreign country is difficult to measure but can certainly help the migrants in a virtuous general direction. It thus permits the clients of the hospital services to become more accustomed to the life in Italy.

The two institutions exposed above are vital governmental services that help migrants and also the Indian Sikhs in Italy. These services and notion of communication were briefly presented and some of their many services addressed to migrants were shortly mentioned. These institutions contradict the general claim which suggested that in the contemporary Italian society, cultural and religious differences, or the manifestation of 'different' religious traditions which are considered an example of the failure to integrate, is often the object of discrimination on an institutional level, (in schools, health services, and the like) (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011, 140; Bertolani & Perocco 2013, 95). Inversely, these services institutions and authorities in Cremona and probably all over Italy have adapted to the foreign members of their society thus permitting them to be or become Italian, as a way of representing themselves openly to the world. A final recognition of the migrants, especially the Sikh migrants in Italy, is about the awareness of the Sikhs as being Italian through the public figures of the Italian government visiting the Sikh community.

Vignette #3: President of the Chamber of Deputies

In November 2015, Laura Boldrini, the president of the Chamber of deputies (Camera dei Deputati), came to visit the province of Cremona as a part of a campaign for the President on the notion of work and the successful regional involvements and models that could be used as examples for the whole country. Few industries were visited and on the list of stops of the president there was the Sikh Gurdwara in Pessina Cremonese. The Sikh community, as later quoted by various Italian local newspapers, is understood to be a positive model of cultural and social integration as an immigrant population in Italy and that their work commitment into farming both arable and crop farming, greatly helps to keep the area as one of the most important and competitive supply chains of agri-food throughout northern Italy. When Laura Boldrini arrived at the Gurdwara, I personally witnessed the far-reaching commotion by both the journalists and the Sikh community that were gathered. At first, her scheduled stop did not leave much space for discovery of this vast temple, but upon arrival, Mrs. Boldrini decided to stay longer in the *Langar*⁴⁷ hall after traditionally covering her head and removing her shoes before entering the gurdwara, which all the journalists made sure to immortalise in pictures. She also went upstairs in the prayer hall for a memorable speech addressing the community and the leader of the gurdwara. It was a very heartfelt moment for many which were present at this intimate ceremony since it meant that the community was recognized as important for both the economic perspective and for the integrative model, at the political level in Italy. Many were impressed and saw this visit as an excellent sign such as Elena from the Intercultural Center as she states that “the visit of Laura Boldrini makes it obvious that the community is going well and that it is seen well for Italians too”⁴⁸. It was seen by many as a symbol of the effort that both sides, the Italian society and the Sikh community, have accomplished.

The researched Sikhs, as well as the Italian government, have adapted to this peculiar situation happening now in Italy. These many adaptations should lead to a better understanding of both worlds and encourage the Sikh respondents and their entourage to be more Italian or permits them to become the most of their Italian representation of identity. As for the local Italian society, it is slowly understanding and helping the foreign communities to be part of their group and making space for them politically and institutionally speaking. As said earlier, this leads the studied Indian Sikhs to act in a way that represents

⁴⁷ Langar hall is the place where people sit to enjoy free food from the public and communitarian kitchen.

⁴⁸ Elena Bergamaschi, Intercultural Center Director, moved to Cremona in 2009.

their identity as being Italian, and to be most likely included by Italians, which leads to the next section as the Indian Sikhs may start to become and *feel* Italian as well.

3.2.2. Becoming and Feeling Italian

“Io sono italiana quanto voi e questo è il mio Paese. Sono a conoscenza dei miei doveri e diritti. -- A noi italiani non verrebbe concesso di manifestare nel vostro Paese! Ci hai mai provato? ci sei mai stato? sai cosa si prova? L'integrazione dei Sikh è un processo vecchio di 25 anni e se oggi stiamo uscendo allo scoperto è solo per farci conoscere, per creare dei ponti non dei muri.”
(English translation in footnote)⁴⁹

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

In this impressive statement, a young Sikh woman felt that she needed to hold on to the honour of her community and of her very own feelings towards the status of being Italian—belonging to the Italian society—and her attachment and emotions to this country. Harminder is quite outspoken and gives credit to the statement of becoming and feeling Italian by expressing her irritation and her strong beliefs that she is Italian just as any other person living in Italy even if she was born in India from Punjabi parents. It is an exceptional behavior for Indian Sikh respondents to claim such statement unless pressed by certain factors. The example here is related to a comment posted online on a media article after the Vaisakhi celebration or the ‘Indian Spring Festival’ as coined by Italians. The original article had been commented by an Italian citizen and claimed that if he or she would move to India they would not have the right to organize a Christian procession there, so thus why Indians would have the right to coordinate one in Italy. Her point, besides the explanation that the Italian person may speak without knowingly been aware of the situation in India, is that the integration of the Sikh community has been on its way for quite some time. She claims that in 25 years, the goal had been to build relationships between the two cultures and not to constrain and exclude each other. This small example showcases how the Sikh community has strong beliefs in integrating themselves and, as being Italian as much as any other Italian born, or born from Italian parents.

As argued previously, both the local host society and the researched Sikh community often went out of their way to adapt and integrate the others as expressed through narratives and counterparts from the respondents, balancing the situation of the local Italians. For these Italians, the institutions offered some accommodations to the multicultural migrants establishing themselves on their land. For the researched

⁴⁹ For original article and the opponent’s post, see <http://www.laprovinciacr.it/news/cronaca/139877/La-festa-di-primavera-.html>. [Retrieved on the 20th of April 2016] English translation: “I’m Italian as much as you are, and this is my country. I am aware of my duties and rights. -- To us Italians would not be allowed to manifest in your country [India]! Have you ever tried it? Have you ever been there? You know what it feels like? The integration of the Sikh is a process which is 25 years old and if today we are going out into the open is just for us to meet, to build bridges not walls.”

members of the Sikh group, they have adapted some of their religious behaviors to the Italian regulations and social mores. Both the local society, which is promoting *inclusion* and the researched Sikh community that is tentatively trying to include them, have worked individually to accomplish a certain degree of civil life that is acceptable and enjoyable for both sides. Many of the migrant Sikhs have tailored their *way of life* on the Italian lifestyles because of their emotions and perceptual feeling of becoming Italian. This new feeling and this change in situation, of 'becoming' another rhetoric of identity is the main discussion in this Being Italian part of the chapter. The data gathered and centered towards the analysis of the Sikhs declaring their Italian identity representation, are focused on the changes in the *way of life* of individual Sikhs through the cultural factors interconnected to the wider context of the Sikhs respondents in Italy.

It was indicated earlier in this chapter how the *way of life* is seen as a personal taste, style or preference drawn from how a person learned and experienced life by expressing distinct customs, habits, practices and outlooks on life, coming precisely from the place where this person grew up (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 87). In this sense, the *way of life* could be understood as not simply a practical adaptation but a personal change in life due to having spent many years being socialized in Italy. It is not merely an adoption of different behaviors; it is having behaviors that are considered their own in an Indian Sikh way, but which come from the host country's cultural and traditional practices because of the time spent around people having those kinds of behaviors. Some Sikh migrants perform in their everyday life as Italians do, despite being very different from their Indian heritage in everyday normal activities or practices. Sometimes these Italian behaviors are observed, assumed and claimed by the few Sikhs themselves.

Rajdeep: I have been here [in Italy] for 15 years [...]

Catherine: Have you adopted some types of Italian customs?

Rajdeep: Yes, we adopted the Italian language, we adopted their culture, we adopted their food, and we adopted their [...] songs [...] I, I like Italian music."

(Rajdeep, age 43, born in India, arrived here at age 28)

In this slightly biased question about his interest of Italian customs, Rajdeep still discussed the changes he had when he arrived in Italy and the adoption of Italian customs. He noted the language, the culture, the food, and in his personal taste; he adopted their style of music which in general is not so common even for people that lived in Italy for so long. By preferring Italian styles to the more Indian style *Bhangra* music, he is in a small degree, claiming the adoption to a very Italian *way of life* rather than an Indian *way of life*, and his emotions towards the Italian culture make him part of those feelings as part of the Italian rhetoric. Other Sikhs, such as Ravdeep have had more recent assumptions about their outlook on life: "[N]ow I am trying out to change my life [...] but I consider it to be more difficult. But because, [...] maybe for my mind. Because

I always lived like an Italian [...].”⁵⁰ Living ‘like an Italian’ may include so much, but for Ravdeep, this young woman from Bulgare, it includes her mode of living in her everyday, even if she is lately wearing a turban. She changed her other behaviors, her *way of life*, and is now adapting her life to this country, mainly by hanging out with Italian friends since she has lived in Italy for more than ten years. She lived and still lives like an Italian and is thus: Italian.

In these last examples from Harminder, Rajdeep and Ravdeep, it was clear that they felt Italian in their *way of life* and performed as Being Italian in their representation of identity, but this is not consistently easy to notice or even systematically established for analysis. There are subtle ways that a Sikh performs as an Italian that is a change in his or her *way of life*. To observe other behaviors that could be analyzed for Becoming and Feeling Italian, Antonsich’s cultural factor related to the constructing and conveying of meaning in order to interpret and define their situations as a representation of identity to be (or become) Italian and most likely feel Italian, will be used. The cultural expressions that will be studied through empirical data include mostly language with its codes, signs and gestures coming from an equivalent semiotic universe. The everyday practices that an individual makes towards this cultural factor using language and all its components, could all be considered as microlevel manifestation of a high impact migrant’s Italian representation of identity and sometimes refrain from this same rhetoric, and thus highlight the boundaries of such claim. As a disclaimer, the cultural factor related to religion and religious practices from Antonsich’s theory will not be used since, the self-identified Sikhs that are part of the researched group, are indeed self-proclaimed Sikhs in the most identifiable part of themselves. Thus, if a migrant would change his or her *way of life* and practice another faith, this same person would not identify as being Sikh (in faith or in culture) and thus would not be part of this research.

Therefore, one of the important components of one’s *way of life*, described by Antonsich in his cultural factor, language expresses a message to others around you, and whether you are understood clearly, will definitely change the way a person feels due to this cultural expression. For many migrants living and experiencing life in a new country implies that learning various languages may have become a necessary skill to live, work and even study. When a migrant learns a new language later in life, the language—Italian—may be only partially mastered, and it may represent the language of institutions, of school or of work only, and be used superficially as an instrumental knowledge rather than a language which holds meaning to them (Colombo et al., 2009). But then again, for those that lived in Italy for quite some time, it takes only some

⁵⁰ Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6

simple steps for them to learn Italian, often simultaneously as learning their mother tongue: Punjabi. Although Punjabi is the parental language and characterizes ‘warm’ relationships (Colombo et al., 2009) within the family, the most everyday life language and probably most often used, is the Italian language. Because of how much the person has worked on learning in an immersed environment such as school, it is probably a skill that is attached to some pride and success in integrating with their friend groups and their school, or further along, their work space; thus creating new types of ‘warm’ feelings towards the Italian language.

The choice to speak one language or the other becomes a matter of personal choice, as in the *way of life*. It is a preference that some understand as being evident and ultimately, more common than not. When some young Sikhs reflect on their perspective on language and on their family, they often notice how their preferred language for most, is not seen in the same light within the family unit. Here are the voices of two respondents that experience the dichotomous language culture daily.

“No, my mother no [she does not speak Italian] [...] I don’t like it when she does not speak because we have been here for 10 years and she should speak Italian. But not my mother [...] but my sister is good in Italian.”

(Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13)

“Catherine: Does your mother speak Italian?”

Amrit: [hmm] not a lot. Like a little [...]

Catherine: So, at home you speak Punjabi [...]

Amrit: No [...] I mean, with my mother, with the parents we speak Punjabi, but with my brothers, we speak Italian.”

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

In those cases, the two young adults have very different upbringing backgrounds since Amrit-Raj has arrived in Italy at the age of 13, where he did not speak a word of Italian, and learned it at the Italian school and amongst friends. As for Amrit, she was born and raised in Italy and probably knows Italian as well as her mother tongue because of socialization in the Italian society. In these examples, they make observations about their mothers, the keepers of the mother tongue and culture, which none of them speaks Italian or, only a little. In Amrit-Raj’s case, he is disappointed and regrets that his mother never put the effort towards learning the language of the country they now live in, as he did. As for Amrit, she simply asserts that the mother tongue is the language to be used to parents, but then again, the language at home with her brothers, with whom she talks more often, is Italian, the language of brotherhood in a sense. In her speech, she seemed to imply that she simply did not converse with her mother much, and thus the reason why she would state, and then change her mind, about Punjabi, not being the home language.

In Italy, there is also another way than simply talking when one needs to convey meaning, which is still regulated by the same semiotic universe. There are codes, signs and gestures that are well-known from the very animated and demonstrative Italian culture and does not require any speech, but simple body language and facial expressions. Foreigners, as myself or newcomer Sikhs to Italy, as tourists, migrants or just passing by, and are always puzzled by the unspoken language of Italian gestures. As personally observed, a great deal can be expressed through a various range of emotions with simple movements made by one's hands. However interesting the gestures are, when recognizable Italian gestures are being used by migrants while speaking Italian or even Punjabi language, it becomes a genuine way to analyze a conscious or mundane representation of being Italian. By having a *way of life* that is tinted by cultural factors such as the Italian gestures in expressing oneself, some Sikhs can communicate opinions, emotions or statements that are not necessarily attached to a language but to a meaning. There are obvious cultural gestures in the Indian culture, but they are not as iconic and as commonly used in everyday speech as the gestures formed within the Italian language, culture and *way of life*.

One of the most well-known gesture from the Italian culture, is the gesture named often as the 'che vuoi?' gesture, meaning 'what?' and executed by forming a pear shape with the fingers of one hand by touching all fingers of this hand together at their tip with the fingers pointing up. Follows a movement of up and down of the hand or arm (or both hands alternatively). This small gesture has been used in all sorts of cultural platforms, such as in movies, to allegedly present a 'typical' Italian figure, which will more often than not make this gesture out of its usual context related situation. Anyhow, this small gesture is another interesting detail to observe in the researched Sikh community since it is being used both when the migrants speak Italian and Punjabi. As it is now used regularly in the everyday life of the Sikhs, it becomes a minor but intriguing evidence of the Italian representation of identity of Sikh individuals becoming and feeling this rhetoric. Amid a few occasions at the gurdwara, it was regular to witness some Sikhs communicating in gestures in the prayer hall due to the respect of quietness during the chanting. This gesture has been seen, as being made sometimes in a sarcastic way, others in an amusing way of discussing something happening at the front and so on. The fascinating thought is that, despite being a very Italian behavior, everything else at the gurdwara is very Punjabi Sikh, hence the contradicting and surprising connection of this behavior, proving an adaptation of not just the Italian language but of the semiotic *way of life*.

Once during a Sunday morning chanting at the local gurdwara of Pessina Cremonese, sitting at the front of the prayer hall, two adolescent girls come to the front to bow their head at the sacred scripture and

decide to go around the canopy to pay their respect. It is customary to go around in the four cardinal points and bow their head in worship. However, these two girls had another action in mind. In fact, they were heading at the back of the canopy, aiming at the electrical switches on the wall. It was a very hot summer morning and even if the prayer hall was not full, the temperature was rising quickly with the sun shining through the windows. The temple does not have central air, but it has plenty of fans on the ceiling which are activated by the remote switches behind the sort of altar topped by a shiny canopy. The girls' mission was to reach the switch and activate the fans closer to their family, located at the back of the gurdwara. Unfortunately when they reached the wall, there were several switches and were worried to activate the wrong one. Hoping to be very subtle and not to disturb the peace of those chanting and reciting sacred lines, the tallest girl, dressed in a pretty pink and green traditional outfit turned around and pointed at the many possible switches to her family and requested an indication of which one to press. Glancing at the back of the prayer hall, it was clear that there were confusions in indications of the right switch, as one of the girl pressed the third switch and the ceiling fan just above the music group began spinning very quickly. Realizing their mistake, they switched it off, then once again, the tallest turned and looked at her family, raised both brows and gesture a strong 'che vuoi' sign, meaning that she was not finding the situation comical, as her relatives were laughing at the back of the temple and needed a clear answer very quickly. In this short instance, it was first quite funny, and then fascinating to observe, and understand the situation despite not understanding Punjabi, since not a single word was used, simply Italian gestures, facial expression, and this in a very religious Sikh setting.

In this perspective of adoption of certain behaviors that would coordinate with the Italian *way of life* through various cultural expressions including language and the semiotic universe related to it, it is important to also see the other side of the coin. In fact, some Sikhs living in Italy do not agree with this idea of feeling or becoming Italian in the way it was described in this part. Partly connected to the previous section within being Indian discussing how the migrant Sikh respondents are being Indian, being Sikhs and not being Italian, it essentially brings back a similar understanding; some Sikhs exclude themselves from the Italian representation of identity through cultural factors. The previous approach was slightly different since it was an instrumental way considered a tactic within the mirror game, along with emphasizing differences creating pride of being Indian Sikh and thus helping in defining what was their rhetoric versus others. It created an environment where orientalism was used to integrate while being the exotic 'other', and in this case, the wholesome approach is oriented towards the feeling of un-Italianness. All in all, at this point, it is simply about presenting those whom reject the whole idea of becoming or feeling Italian, since in their mind

wherever they are in the world, they are Indians just as they would be in India. One of the most common angles seen in the fieldwork was when some migrants, diverging to what was claimed previously, refused categorically to learn the new society's main Italian language.

In psychology, this process of excluding themselves from the main society would be qualified as a *separation* within the model of acculturation strategies. It means that an individual from the non-dominant group places a higher value on holding to their original culture and seeks no contact with the dominant society (Berry 1997, 9; Berry 2005; cf. Bhatia & Ram 2009), rather than trying the *integration* (adaptation), or *assimilation* strategies. The individuals whom rejected the idea of becoming or feeling Italian not just instrumentally, but also subsequently, are outliers and only represent a small proportion of the Sikhs in Italy and in this research, but their presence and their worldviews help in identifying the boundaries in which the different representations of identity can perform. In reality, only a few interviewed Sikhs have mentioned their disconnectedness or *separation* with Italy as a country. This notion of attachment to a place and will of adopting a new *way of life* and thus become another rhetoric of identity, is one of the strongest argument for connectedness between identity representation and sense of belonging. Without going over too much of the space relationship data which will be discussed at great length in the next chapter, it is important to note that some migrant Sikhs have emphasized their goal to return to India, as a 'dream of return' as explained by Cohen, the Sikhs do represent members of diasporas inclusive of specific ethnic groups, albeit marked by their religion and holding very strong views about returning to their homeland (Cohen 1997; Vertovec 2000). Thus it is understandable that some respondents have made it clear that their disconnectedness to Italy has made them feel un-Italian and much more centered on being Indian Sikh as in the next vignette.

Vignette #4: Speaking or not Italian

Remeet, a 29 years old woman whom arrived only two years ago and her husband, both live in Italy while representing an identity of being Indian Sikh with a certain refusal to adopt new social practices. At the moment she is volunteering at the gurdwara to teach Punjabi to the younger generation, where I interviewed her, surrounded by curious children. When asked if she was also taking lessons in Italian to be able to help the children to translate from Italian to Punjabi, a translator relayed the answer as: "no, because she realized that if she has not to live here, no matter if she doesn't, if she speaks or not Italian!"⁵¹. In other words, Remeet and her husband, contextually speaking, made the decision that they would only stay in Italy for a few years and then go back to India. Thus, after acknowledging the decision to stay in Italy only shortly,

⁵¹ Translator explaining about Remeet's situation. Remeet age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27

her intention of adopting the identity representation of her new society, the Italian society, decreased and she decided not to learn the Italian language deemed unnecessary. As a matter of fact, this is quite different from those willing to keep the mother tongue alive within the family unit and for the offspring; the idea is simply that they do not ‘care’ about the Italian language for themselves, her husband and herself. It is simply a personal decision to cut themselves from the Italian *way of life*.

Ultimately, Remeet lives her life with her husband in Italy, but sees an end to this adventure when they will both move back to India. She mentioned that she did not feel comfortable to be whom she is in Italy due to the many religious adaptations that she would need to do to be included—mainly related to the *kirpan* and the turban. Be that as it may, if Remeet does not feel the urge to adapt to fit in the Italian society, then it is eventually better for her to stay as she is and plan to return to India after achieving hers and her husband’s goals in Italy. As explained by Remeet’s translator after the interview, as a personal reflection on the interview: “because she is from India and she wants to remain from India”⁵². This ‘remaining’ intention is a clear way to define the emotion of feeling un-Italian while observing the cultural factor of expression through language.

Through this last part, it became noticeable that some Indian Sikhs have adapted their *way of life* and their behaviors towards including themselves into the Italian society. The society with its institutional integration services made their point to include the Sikhs into the Italian society. Sikhs in general through relational and cultural factors portrayed in their new *way of life* started to feel and sometimes to become more Italian as a representation of identity. This ethnographical data observed and analyzed, highlighted the importance of the customs or choices that the many respondents made in adapting their social practices to their new country. It is true that some of the respondents may not have adapted to the life in Italy as much as another one, many factors can come into play such as the age when they migrated, how long they have lived in Italy, their gender, where they have settled at first and, so on. Some have also been embedded into the two cultures more deeply and are almost unable to completely adapt to one or the other. Often it is the younger generation of migrant Sikhs, and mainly those that were born and socialized in Italy, whom will encounter both the Italian *way of life* and notice every day the traditional *way of life* of their parents in the private of their homes or at the gurdwara. The youth sees the value that their parents’ *way of life* has, and often simply feels very connected and concerned as well. Therefore, the final part of this chapter reaches the completion of this far-reaching review of the representations of identity of the Sikhs in Italy; specifically

⁵² Remeet age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27.

when a Sikh migrant may feel it is equally important to represent not only one representation of identity, but more likely, both representations of identity, in different settings, namely being Indian Sikh *and* being Italian.

3.3. Being Hybrid

In the previous two parts of this chapter on the representations of identity, which explored being Indian Sikh and being Italian, it is unmistakable that for the Sikhs in Italy to be either solely one representation of identity or the other in a simple and clear fashion is not manifest. After analysing interview excerpts, academic facts, observations and the empirical data of this research along with the concept of *inclusion* and *exclusion*, there are still some issues to resolve and to comprehend about this community. In other words, the task is to demonstrate what the Sikh migrants' behaviours lead them to perform as rhetoric of identity representation either consciously or unintentionally. The two first rhetorics might have been reasonable choices, but they remain unsatisfactory to tell the story of the whole of the Sikh population in Italy. In fact, a remaining rhetoric has been observed and will be defined henceforth as **Being Hybrid**.

As it may have emerged from the text, there is often a slight ambiguous moment when a person with an Indian Sikh parental *culture*, born or socialized in an Italian context, performs upon one and the other identity representation at times in equal parts, since Indian Sikhs can easily play on both tableaux and not simply act as Sikhs but also as Italians. Beforehand, it showed two possible divisions in respondent Sikh migrant's identity representation that is not always so clear-cut and thus will often become more hybrid than a sole and completely isolated rhetoric. It is thus challenging to be clear about the action's origin in the person's mind and its meaning, as to what representation of identity it might specifically represent. It is not excluded that a single individual may sometimes be Indian Sikh and sometimes be Italian in representation of identity, which is ultimately the essence of being hybrid, and thus can be one, the other or, both at the same time. When a Sikh is born and living in Italy, he or she may be uncertain about feeling fully and unequivocally Italian as well as completely and undeniably Indian Sikh, upon contexts and situations. It may thus be complex for the researched Sikhs in Italy to feel specifically and plainly connected to one identity representation or another. The determination or the unconscious choice of one's identity representation is not as simple as one might think, especially when one feels attached to both representations of identity with the same strength.

Representing oneself as Sikh *and* Italian is the utmost result of being hybrid and it means that those Italian-Sikhs would be able to share an important part of the society's dominant *way of life* without having to give up personal particularities (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 154), namely their mundane *culture*. It matters at this point to formulate the fact that from now on, the worldview of hybridity will be acknowledged as a 'hyphenated identification'—meaning an identity representation with two terms linked by a hyphen such as "Italian-Sikh". The purpose is to put as much emphasis on both identifications while keeping a strong equilibrium of the two rhetorics through the hyphen. In order to show a first example of the struggle it may cause for a Sikh in Italy to state a clear identity as hybrid, an excerpt from the BBC interview will be put forward. In this instance, Harminder was feeling strongly attached to the two previous rhetorics of identity—Indian Sikh and Italian—and thus concluded otherwise.

“Maurizio: How would you define your identity?

Harminder: A double identity, I embrace the Italian culture. I spent more than 15 years of my life being influenced by friends and family [that are Indians] in Italy and my roots in India are very important to answer about myself: I am a hybrid!”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)⁵³

Sporadic are those individuals that mention their identity representation as being 'hybrid'. Most of the time, this becomes a much more academic concept that highlights the need to break the fixed categories of 'either/or' identity boxes, to go beyond the exclusive logic of binary categories (Beck 2006). It may be occasional, yet it is also considered a social phenomenon when it is recognized as such by those involved in social interactions and self-identifying as hybrids along with the realization of not fitting into one single category (Pieterse 2001, 227). In addition, in the case of Harminder, both how she self-identifies, and her practices demonstrate her hybridity, thus she is representing the identity of a hybrid Italian-Sikh. Hereinafter, the fact of not fitting one category is because Harminder is capable of representing both identity representations within herself, then she belongs to two different groups and is embedded in two different cultures with two different identification rhetorics.

Harminder, and many other youngsters in the Sikh community of Italy residing in the Po' Valley of the north of Italy are part of the new generation of Sikhs growing up in the rural lands. This so-called new generation, is mainly a group of individuals which is much more likely to possess the skills to represent themselves as hybrid, as will be portrayed further along. Some important factors in defining this group would be related to where they were born, where they grew up and were socialized, their age at arrival in Italy and,

⁵³ Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

or their current age, versus the older Sikhs residing in Italy at the moment. In fact this new generation signifies those that did not necessarily grow up or were not socialized in India, the possibly ‘stuck in-between’ cultures youth in transition, which were born in India or elsewhere but raised and socialized from youth in Italy. Thus, the young generation whatever their migration trajectory, or the age they arrived in Italy, as long as they have experienced their youth in Italy, either from birth or as soon as they landed in Italy, they are all related through their similar acquaintances of ‘difference’ and how they experience life. Also, in Colombo’s view of crossing differences and identities, he establishes the concept of ‘Identifications’ as an essentialist dimension to difference, which is a founding trait of identity and a shared based on common roots. According to him, difference helps to regulate the rigidity of the reified identity and the coping of changeable various contexts that are constantly fluctuating between the continuity, providing recognition and, adaptation promising the freedom to expand personal skills (2010, 465).

3.3.1. Evident Inclusion or Direct Exclusion from Both Cultures

At this stage of analysis of identity representations rhetoric of the researched Sikh community in Italy, one may wonder about the performance of a migrant Sikh in two representations of identity, as Being Hybrid, whether it would generate an evident *inclusion* from both cultures, or a direct *exclusion* from them. The struggle discussed here, is if they are partly one and partly the other, can they really fully feel one and the other at different times yet, or is it considered impossible anymore by those with the authority in the two different cultures. One of the premises of this section is about the hybrid’s struggles to fit in the Italian society, without neglecting the older generation and their ancestral *culture*. Considering that this studied Sikh community has been in Italy for more than thirty years, it is possible to suggest the evident *inclusions* along with the direct *exclusions* happening in this community and society. Firstly, the *inclusions* will be explored since it is often proving the hybridity’s validity as a good process of representing oneself while being part of more than one single cultural group. Secondly, the *exclusions* will be demonstrated since a concept such as hybridity has edges which are as important to outline and conceive, as the center view of the same suggested concept. At first on the angle of the obvious *inclusions*, there are three options where the Italian-Sikhs could feel fully included by: their Sikh community, their host society, or both parties equally. Secondly, the circumstances bringing a much-restricted vision such as direct exclusions of both cultural worlds include: comparable exclusions from the society as mentioned in the Being Italian and adaptations to the society because of similar issues, and of course, exclusions from the community or rather a misunderstanding of the new generation Sikhs as hybrid Italian-Sikhs.

Starting with the first example of inclusion from the researched Sikh community of those new generation Italian-Sikhs is with the first edition of the Sikh knowledge Quiz in 2015, organized by the main gurdwara in Pessina Cremonese as a rather effective example of the recognition of difference as an adaptation without undermining the common roots of the Sikh community. This quiz was designed to encourage youngsters from the age of four up to seventeen to learn about their culture and tradition and, to compete in a friendly quiz hosted by the religious institution. It had been discussed amongst the members of *Cultura Sikh*, the *Shri Kalgidhar Sahib* gurdwara committee that a contest would be an interesting way to encourage transmission of culture amongst the younger Sikhs. However, the notion of the language was a major issue. Some younger members of the committee were worried that some of the very young Sikh would not be able to read the exam in Punjabi (Gurmukhi writing) and that the parents would complain of the difficulty. The elders were not thrilled by the suggestions which followed to have the questions asked both in Italian and in Italian. Example of Sikh knowledge are available online in Punjabi and in English but not in Italian. It was not clear if these templates were used and translated or if the exam was written from square one, but it became much more complicated to implement than anticipated. Nevertheless, the elder members of *Cultura Sikh* agreed that it would reach more youngsters, which was ultimately the goal of this event.

Therefore for this quiz, all the possible questions and answers were available online both in Punjabi and in Italian beforehand, and only some of them were selected for the actual quiz. According to a quick count and observations of the day while conducting some helpful participant-observation, nearly 70 youngsters with Sikh heritage, answered the quizzes in either language. This is an interesting acknowledged example of the need to have the quiz in Italian as much as in Punjabi since as anticipated some of the youth did not manage to read nor write Gurmukhi; they only read and write Italian. The community coped well with this adaptations of their traditional language in this instance, since they recognised the fact that many young one had been brought up within the Italian society and thus to fit into this narrative were socialized both as Italians and as Sikhs, thus as hybrids. This reality was recognized and somewhat encouraged by offering this quiz in two languages and including all youth, not only those that had a good command of Gurmukhi and Punjabi.

The real challenge, according to some observations of the day, jotted down in some Fieldnotes 034 of the 14th of November 2015 on top of some comments overheard afterwards, came at the time of the correction. Those that volunteered to correct the copies were often from the older generation and most of them did not read Italian well. In fact, it became a moderate but meaningful clash since some younger

members, possibly new generation Sikhs, were needed to join in the correction of the quizzes in Italian. Sometimes, those young members of the community could not read Gurmukhi and had to rely on the help of their elders. It was pointed out in the fieldnotes how the situation was quite comical as the written quizzes were being passed from hands to hands until it reached someone that could read the child's answers in a given language easily. This was an intricate example of obvious *inclusion* since the Sikh knowledge quiz was about who knew Sikh history and culture best. Proving to know the culture and traditions of the Sikh community and choosing to write the answers in Italian could be seen contradictory. Nonetheless, it is an admission that Sikhs with a mixed background of two different cultures are still considered part of the community; whatever the language they speak at home or at school, if they know about their culture, they are definitely included in this cultural and religious community.

The hybrid representation of identity is fluid and complex, and as quoted earlier, the fact to call oneself both Italian and Sikh would be a way of celebrating one's difference without feeling excluded (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 129), thus the new generation successfully navigate several overlapping and multiple identities to their advantage. To name 'Sikh' within the name of this new generation, as the Italian-Sikh youth, is to take into consideration the connection that they have with their religious and cultural *way of life* and identity. Furthermore, being accepted and included in your parental *culture*, hybrid or not, should be straightforward. However, to be accepted and included within the host country's society, might be slightly more complicated for those hybrid Italian-Sikhs. Then again, "it is considered beneficial for the well-being and growth of Italian society if immigrants are well integrated and equal members of society" (Thapan, 2013, 7). As mentioned already, the researched Sikh community is recognized by the majority as "honest and peaceful people who work and save, whose beliefs and practices are not a threat [...]" (Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011) to a country with a strong catholic tradition of peaceful coexistence. Within this logic, examples of inclusion by the society, and later, of both the society and the community related to those with a hybrid representation of identity. One enlightening and striking example of such inclusion is taken from a new initiative that was a great success both in the communities of different religious groups and with the Italian society.

In a small town of the province of Cremona, a catholic led high school of technology organized a quite unusual multi-faith event. Despite being managed and taught almost exclusively by catholic priests, its student population is quite diversified. This story was interpreted by Harminder, and perfected through the interviews conducted with the teacher in charge of the project, while we were invited into his classroom. The

event itself was attended and most of it was comprehensible at this point in the fieldwork despite the discussion being conducted entirely in Italian. The great lines of the event were repeated in English afterwards so as to connect the dots of observations and what people had told afterwards. The story goes, few weeks before, one young woman in a class conferred with her teacher about the possibility of organizing a multi-faith discussion at the school since other students were sometimes mocking her due to her hijab and she thought that if the information were told to everyone equally, she would stop being bullied. The teacher asked her to come up with a plan and a possible number of students that would like to participate to such event. This young woman along with few Muslim and Sikh friends came up with a strategy and a greater number of possible participants than anticipated, thus the event was organized quickly. The teacher explained that,

“Well my student, yes from my class, which had the desire, much emotions and so on, of helping the other students [such as her] to have no more prejudice. And to stay above those prejudice. Because she is victim of heavy prejudice, she is not here because she is not in this class, but [...] but if she is the victim of prejudice, so I decided to commit myself too [...] and ask if it was possible to look at [it] and say that in diversity, life is better because of difference.”

(Teacher organizing the multi-faith event in the high school)

At this special event, more than a hundred students attended a multi-faith discussion amongst a catholic missionary priest, a protestant pastor, a young man representative of the Muslim community and Harminder, as a young woman representative of the Sikh community. The school amphitheatre was filled with curious students, many teachers, and both asked various important questions. Despite the many technical difficulties and the lower stand of the discussant tables, it was extremely interesting to see the type of questions that the crowd of students and teachers asked while debating about religion and culture. Topics evolved from prayers, rules, types of dress, the role of women to the life they live in Italy.

The fact that the teacher whom organized this event was extremely thrilled of the turn out and was already planning the future year's multi-faith event presented a positive insight of the Italian society and its perspective on migrants from different faiths. It is true that the initiative came from a Muslim girl and not an Italian student, but the reaction of the school and the support given to organize such a grand event in a catholic school simply brings forward the fact that Italian-Sikhs are considered important in the Italian society. It has always been “[a]n important issue for immigrant-receiving countries and for immigrant families, [...] the ways in which children from these families adapt to schools in their new society. School adjustment is generally regarded as the primary sociocultural and developmental task for children and adolescents” (Phinney et al., 2001). Consequently, when the migrant communities' intent on including

themselves in the society and that the society endorses this fact, it compels the idea that they are, or they could easily become included always, as an evident inclusion.

Aspiring to be included through adaptations and being included by the society in which those migrant Sikhs live, is the heart of being and feeling hybrid as a representation of identity. Few operationalized examples of inclusion from both cultures have been observed for this research and showcase how Italian-Sikhs gradually becoming part of their own respective memberships. A second concept of Colombo's view on crossing differences and identities would be mentioned at this point. The concept of 'admittance', were one is simply accepted, without any real exclusion or privileged, within a fair competition surpassing personal differences and even by recognizing differences as assets (Colombo 2010, 466). In this mindset, it becomes important to look at Jazpreet's and Armandeep's view about their membership into the Italian society when we sat down on the porch of the gurdwara after a great meal eaten from the *langar*. Our bellies were full, the sun was shining and the three of us with Jazpreet's brother nearby were having an interesting discussion about how they felt living in Italy, since both were of similar age, but one was born in Italy and the other migrated with her parents at the age of 8.

Jazpreet: There are no problems for me, for us, because we just live like 'them' [...]

Armandeep: [...] We are dressed like 'them' [...]

Jazpreet: But when we talk about, that our parents our brothers have turban, they didn't cut their hair, these are the (*regole* [...] come se dice [...] [Armandeep: rules!]) rules of our community, the Sikh community. And they are like 'what? Really? You have to follow it?' and we are not following it, so we are just suggesting, and they accept us. Because we are like all people. But who, like my brother [pointing at him sitting with us] has a turban and has no problem [now]. But at school first of all, when he was in the first class everyone was like 'what do you wear, what is under your turban?'"

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents &

Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8 &

Gopal [Jazpreet's brother], age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

In this short exchange of opinions, these young women put two important details forward. First, they claim the fact to be 'just like them' meaning that they are simply exactly like Italians, even if they go to the gurdwara on Sundays and so on. They may come from different cultures with different rules, but they do not necessarily feel obliged to follow them completely and it is acceptable since the community includes them even without the complete following of the said rules. Nevertheless, they still think it is important for their Italian friends to know about their traditional code of conduct. Especially since Jazpreet uses Gopal as an example. He is wearing a turban and at school, at first, he used to be asked questions and most probably laughed at, but then, after telling their Italian friends what were the reasons of him wearing a turban, the

laughter stopped, and he was then able to feel accepted within the Italian society. Jazpreet has a very deep emotional connection to her younger brother who is probably facing more rejection than her and thus she emphasizes the *'regole'* to her Italian acquaintances probably more than other young women would. Armandeep and Jazpreet are as much part of their Sikh community as they are of their local Italian society and do not feel rejected or excluded by any side as long as both sides know about their differences, and this ambivalence becomes a potential for resources. Once again, awareness of differences and of roots of both culture is essential for these hybrids to feel included and to foster this inclusion from both cultures.

Another situation sometimes obscure in its circumstance which revealed an interesting inclusion from both cultures is related to the Nagar Kirtan event, previously mentioned in the being Italian rhetoric of identity representation. In this sort of event, the nature and reasons have probably switched in various diasporas, it has now added the role of creating awareness and showcasing their culture to the majority. Some migrant associations in Italy nowadays stress the importance of respect and recognition of their diversity in religious faith and cultural choices. They affirm the full Italianness of all the children of immigrants mainly, by stressing the plurality of being Italian, contesting the argument that a single pattern can summarize the multiplicity of individual experience. "They claim the right to be Italian *and* different, they assert that being Italian *and* children of immigrants are not mutually exclusive options" (Colombo & Rebughini 2012). This confronting angle towards claiming respect and recognition is rarely upheld by the Sikh community because of their fear of losing their 'good migrant' mirror image, instead the Sikh community tries to be visible to the Italian society gradually and at their own pace. One way to do so is by requesting access to perform the traditional Nagar Kirtan in the middle of the town center rather than only around their gurdwaras. Thus, it was mentioned that:

"[t]he second largest Nagar Kirtan that had occurred here in Italy, it was in Brescia. Which is held exactly in the town. And Brescia is much bigger [than Cremona]. So, it started 5-6 years ago. I mean, they started creating an awareness about this march, they took, they talked with the municipality of the town and they said: if you are able to grant us that this is doing peacefully, yes okay. But of course, the municipality is providing you the police, the ambulance."

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

Thus, the talk performed with local authorities about closing the streets of the city center for a few hours and then organizing a massive feast of typical foods, music, prayers, singing and dancing, must have taken time to be organized and accepted by both sides. The Sikhs are starting to see the Nagar Kirtan march as a symbol of their culture and use it for recognition of their presence without disrupting the life of all Italians more than a few hours while inviting them to join in the celebrations. This complete situation seems almost

unreal, according to every respondents asked, how the discussions went, what were the contradictions, or the adoption measures taken, were not clear. The actual manner that this inclusion practice was obtain is not of their concern. They are simply more than excited to be able to walk around the city, to expose their culture to other neighborhoods, and to whether the local society is completely aware of who they are and what Sikhism represents or not. In other words, this may be an interesting inclusion of both groups, without a full understanding of the underlying mechanism which were used to achieve this state, this permission, and thus, the respondents will take full advantage of this opportunity to be respectful, peaceful and thus gain more respect from the Italian society and the local authorities.

A further and similar example, recently, in 2016, it was the first time that the Nagar Kirtan occurred in Milan, the biggest city of the north of Italy. Despite the lack of Sikhs residing in the city, the stakeholders of the community, as explained by the respondents of this research, thought that the impact of this march in the business center of Italy might attract attention and create more discussions in both cultural areas. Apparently, the city of Milan accepted this request and help was provided and observed in the form of police officers escorting the march as well as at the installations at the end of the route since the final feast happened on the newly renovated piazza in front of the Central train station where usually many homeless people find refuge day and night. It became an extremely appreciated idea since the final *langar* fed many refugees and poor people while creating mindfulness of those open minded and openhearted Sikhs. The parading Sikhs present at the Nagar Kirtan ended up showcasing themselves and their different community in the center of Italian life, in the center of Milan. As for the local Italians, there were some people whom attended the final *langar* in awe of so much food being given freely to whoever was hungry, and their reactions were of surprised. They were curious, some were ecstatic, and others were emotionally distressed at the welcoming nature of those migrant Sikhs present on the piazza.

An Italian man sitting on the stairs of the piazza was nearly crying when a turbaned Sikh passed and offered yet another bottle of water to the man sitting under a blazing sun. The man stood up and showed that both his bag and his pockets were already filled with goodies and drinks and that he did not have more space to store those generous donations, and thus thanked the young Sikh for his kindness and refused the bottle. At this point, the general perspective of Italians in Milan was not known, however, the Italians present around the pizza and those observing the march throughout the day portrayed acceptance of this initiative which created a strong double *inclusion* rhetoric that was an incredible example of what multiculturalism could become in this city when driven by hybrid Italians. The Italian-Sikhs with their hyphenated hybridity

establish both the desire to integrate successfully in the society of residence and want to endow the importance of family bonds in achieving social and economic professional status; they do so while gaining respect and recognition through their actions. Moreover, those examples through providing information to both the local Italian society of the north and the researched community with events or simple discussions are great examples of those adaptations to both Italian *way of life* and maintaining the bond with the parental *culture*.

This bond, this connection or this hyphen between the two cultures is an ideal and is often a harder to maintain situation than expected for these young people. In fact, at this point, the different sorts of direct exclusions will be conferred, since if a person can perform and identify in their representation of identity as two quite different cultures, it will inevitably create confusion in both worlds. This double identification or the hybrid identity representation also marks the recognition of the impossibility of being totally and solely 'native' (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 133) and this may be an important impasse. In fact, many would consider to be or to become Italian, one must completely and only be Italian, without hybridity, as a full integration or assimilation in the culture. Others assume that to be Indian Sikh, or simply Sikh, one must remain fully and exclusively Sikh in mind and in behavior. This double *exclusion* is not easy to live and even harder to overcome since individuals become very isolated when they face direct exclusions. Eventually in this analysis, there will be a short recap of already mentioned exclusions that Italians conserve for migrant Sikhs in general, since even if these youth are hybrids, often born and raised in Italy almost as Italians, if they keep their connections to their parental *culture*, they are no more than the exotic 'other' for Italians. Then, some direct exclusions from the community will be uncovered since the older generation do not always see this hybridity in a good eye, and they are either afraid of what may happen if they get disconnected to their parental *culture*, and then the new generation Italian-Sikhs do not feel recognized and accepted in the gurdwara politics of their community.

On the account of the local Italian society, as claimed by respondents, it may in fact discourage the migrants to ever think as themselves, as being hybrid, or even as being Italian as seen previously, if they are not completely fitting in the society with all that is necessary to fit the context. This impossibility has been coined earlier as the 'Italianness' narrative often portraying mainly phenotypic traits, but also the original markers such as kinship and religion. Many migrant Sikhs adopt the representation of identity of being hybrid thus consider themselves as having an obvious Italian lifestyle, routine, freedom, opportunities and *way of life*. They are not necessarily ready or willing to give up or hide other aspects of their lives such as

their parental *culture*, which encompasses their values, traditions and family ties (Colombo, Domaneschi, & Marchetti, 2011); thus they represent rightful Italian-Sikhs, and may thus experience strong and direct exclusions for these same reasons.

The important notion is that if they want to remain hybrids and not solely become Italian, they then chose to perform within their religious and cultural traditions as well as adopting some Italian *way of life*. The fact that they do not want to give up these aspects of life such as religion and their kinship, which connects them to their roots is understandable in this situation. However they indeed face the prejudice of being different physically, not just traditionally; they are visibly different because of their type of dress, their religious symbols and because they are considered non-whites and thus not Italian in physical perspectives. In spite of all this, they still try to live in this society and behave in the rightful Italian-Sikhs manner even if the wearing of any type of cultural clothes or accessory may be seen exotic or ‘ethnic’ in fashion perspective when it is worn by a white person. However, wearing the headscarf from the Muslim religion (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 152), wearing the turban from the Sikh religion and even wearing the traditional clothes from India are generally seen immediately as signs of foreignness, of not being Italian at first, thus making hybrid identity representation more problematic.

“Because you know, in some classes, if there is a person of another country, people don’t see them very good. But in my case, it wasn’t it. So, at first when I put the turban, they also start to watch me and ask: ‘but what you have put it on your head?’ [laugh] my friends also told me[...] we want more our old Amrit[...]”

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Catherine: How about the way you wear your clothes [...] do you wear that when you go to school? [Traditional navy-blue tunic and *pijjani* pants]

Arvinder: No, I wear jeans, I like jeans. I wear these clothes only at the gurdwara. But I am more comfortable in these clothes. It’s too comfortable.

Catherine: So, why don’t you wear those at school?

Arvinder: I don’t know. They don’t like it [...]

Catherine: Who?

Arvinder: My friends, they don’t like it [...]

Catherine: And that is important?

Arvinder: I don’t know, I don’t care [...]

(Arvinder, age 15, born in Libya (9 months) then India, Indian parents, arrived in Italy at age 10)

The way both Amrit and Arvinder, two respondents part of the new generation Sikhs in Italy, describe their experience of life at school, despite very different migrant trajectories and different time spent in Italy, is that they are both liked by others around them even if, as Amrit says, people may not always see foreigners in a

very good light in schools. Arvinder, when asked about his traditional outfit described the comfort of these more traditional cuts but stated his conscious choice of not wearing them at school because of the obvious dislike of his friends. He feels compelled to wear likeable jeans, and not very comfortable clothes, because otherwise it does not fit amidst what his friends know of him, and it would portray the identity representation of a foreign culture. Arvinder also discussed not caring about his friends' opinions, but it highlights the strong influence and (un)conscious weight of this fact upon his wardrobe choices. It is a similar situation for Amrit and her turban, the symbol of her religious life, which she had decided to begin wearing for the code of conduct before taking *amrit*. The influence of her friends may be robust but not strong enough for her to change her mind and counteract her recent decision to change her path towards a more religious outlook and lifestyle.

Many other examples have already been mentioned in previous sections about how the local society does not necessarily always include foreigners into their group or society and there will be other instances further along. However, this condensed analysis in a nutshell aimed at identifying precise situations experienced by new generation Italian-Sikhs and how the influence of exclusion from friends at school—their only concrete connection with their Italian environment at this point—may affect their performance as hybrids in their rhetoric of identity representations. For the Italian society, even if many adaptations have been implemented in the society, for most, unless a person is fully Italian, in body and mind, they may not necessarily be seen as Italians, and at times, not even as half Italian and half another culture.

Granted that the researched group's actual society may not always welcome hybrids, there is also a chaos of opinion within the Sikh community as well and they may be more perplexing. For both the researched Indian Sikh community and the Italian counterparts, as groups, they may refuse or exclude those that are not fully and ultimately only part of one of them. In fact, the studied religious group may disapprove those that are not simply following the parental *culture*, and this may summate to the topic of the religious culture at large. There are members of the community which do not believe in hybridizing their culture and dislike the notion of creating a new identity representation, a hyphenated identity which would support a mixed culture and the Sikh persona combined to an Italian lifestyle since it would lessen the value of their Sikh tradition. As is the example henceforth, where Amrit-Raj discussed his opinion about mixing cultures. It is true that his statement is double sided since at first he states that he has "half of Italian things, half of Indian things. [laugh]"⁵⁴ but then again his vision concerning the tendency of mixing cultures in India is that

⁵⁴ Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13.

it is not worthy. Then for mix of cultures in Italy, he seems to agree with it more theoretically even if he is part of the new generation of migrant Sikhs in Italy.

Catherine: But if you do only Sikh things [...] then you are not in Italy?

Amrit-Raj: No! I take good things of about Italians and I take good things about Sikhs. Now in India there is a mix culture. Some things of Hindus, some things of Sikhs, some things of [...] hybrids that [...] that is not a Sikh.

(Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13)

This confusing statement only shows the ambiguous vision that the Sikhs may have of themselves and of their community. Amrit-Raj states that he takes good things from both cultures, but after questioning him in a small room adjacent to the prayer hall in the Pessina gurdwara, he seemed to refute every suggestion I gave him about different Italian behaviors such as the food, or even the language; he did not adopt any of those behaviors despite having things ‘things’ of each cultures inside him. Overall, his statement suggests that he sees hybridity more as a contamination rather than a middle ground. Amrit-Raj states that being hybrid is not being Sikh, that a Sikh is not supposed to mix the different ‘good or bad things’ together. It is important to clarify that he mentioned that he was not a ‘good Sikh’ because he was indeed mixing some ‘good things’ of Italian culture with the Sikh culture. For him, being hybrid is not being a good Sikh, and his conscious choice is that he is not a good Sikh because he is more hybrid than he would expect to be. In other words, his sort of hybridity makes him an unworthy Sikh in his opinion. Excluding oneself from the identification of Sikhness may be humble or simply representing a misunderstanding of hybridity itself.

In this direct exclusion narrative from the community, the dislike of mixing cultures may be engraved in the mind of many Sikhs, old or young, for many different reasons. This turmoil or struggle of identity echoes the historical statement from Roosevelt discussing the American culture, he stated: “[t]here is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else” (Roosevelt quoted in Kennedy and Bailey 2010, 268). Which after reflection, means that a ‘good’ American is one that takes fully and solely one identity: being American. Hyphenated, or hybrids are not as suitable to be a ‘good’ American. Similarly as the purity of being and remaining only Sikh, to be a ‘good’ Sikh as implied by Amrit-Raj’s statement. However is it worth being only a ‘good’ American or a ‘good’ Sikh, if one loses the opportunity to learn the skills from another culture especially since a person may hold a great deal of importance to more than one culture and feels attached to both in equal levels. Often the possible answer is that it becomes an individual choice, which will be observed in the next section on ‘Pivoting Identity Representations’.

Other than the expectation of being a good Sikh, as being fully and only a Sikh, the researched migrant community also compares the new generation Italian-Sikh hybrids with their family which remained in the homeland in India. Oftentimes, the extensive Indian family does not migrate all at once and rarely all at the same location, and many will stay in Punjab. The ease of communication nowadays in this 'Information Age' (Castells 1996) permits the evidences to travel time and space much faster through social media: Skype, Facetime and reduced priced long-distance cell phone packages. It includes new technologies that "do not altogether create new social patterns but they reinforce pre-existing ones" (Vertovec 2009, 5). The reductions of travel costs, the increase of world charter flights, and the availability of worldwide communication (Ferraris 2012, 87) have strongly influenced migration all over the world and comparative processes with the 'homeland' to the 'new' land. Thus, the situation of those that remained in India are easily known and compared to what the family does in the diasporas and vice-versa. The pressure to perform as if the new generation were still living in India, along with the knowledge of the constant judging and gossiping can be burdensome. The new generation is regularly under scrupulous observation, as their behaviour tends to differ greatly from those cousins living in the homeland. The young Italian-Sikhs will "paint a very nuanced picture [...], always connected but never totally corresponding to the experiences and the expectations of either of their parents, their cousins living in the family country of origin, or their peers with whom they share daily relationships and projects for the future" (Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 91). Further studies of young Sikh students at school have highlighted how "Sikh children engage in daily acts of cultural translation by appropriating the 'multiple (situational) identities' in their own ways to better negotiate contradictions between 'home' and 'world'" (Hall 2002 in Singh and Tatla 2006, 205) since they feel disconnected to their family home, to the friends and to their family in their new country.

The feeling of exclusion or almost rejection from the older generation and the family still in India, is quite difficult to manage for the young Italian-Sikhs. As an example, during a drive-along (Kusenbach 2006) with Parminder⁵⁵ and Baldeep⁵⁶, touring the various gurdwaras in Bergamo, Parminder laughs and tells a story of the last time he had a young woman in his car. He narrates that he was giving a ride to his sister, which for once finished school at the same time as him and was 'caught' by a friend of the family while being alone in a car with a woman. This relative called a friend in India, from the same original town as Parminder's family and asked if Parminder had a girlfriend. This person was in shock at the story of

⁵⁵ Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9.

⁵⁶ Baldeep, age 27, born in Kashmir, arrived in Italy at age 18.

Parminder being alone with a young woman, which is highly discouraged in India, and decided to call Parminder's aunt. The aunt, in total consternation, called Parminder's mother to tell the story and to approve of a punishment for this sort of behavior since he was acting so reckless. When Parminder arrived at home, he was strongly accused of having an affair with an Italian girl and that the whole of their neighborhood—meaning in India—was already aware of the shame. He started to laugh and wanted to explain his behavior when his sister arrived at the door and thanked her brother for the drive home. Hence, at the time of the touring of Bergamo, Parminder made sure that a friend—Baldeep—would be present so that nobody would see him alone in a car with a 'white' young woman. Being with a friend of the opposite sex in a car is nothing to be ashamed of, and both Parminder and Baldeep agreed, however, the perception of their relatives in India is so far from their own, and the opinions of people in India is still present and prevalent over what is going on in Italy through quick technological communication, that both young Italian-Sikhs preferred to be safe rather than being completely rejected from the people they love both in India and in Italy.

But then again, the reason for this comparison from other members of the Sikh community to the hybrids in the Italian community is because of the fear that the cultural transmission of the parental *culture* has not been done successfully to the youngsters growing up outside of the traditional Sikh homeland. These new generation Italian-Sikhs did not freely decide to 'incorporate' themselves in Italy. They are not necessarily migrants like their parents, and not necessarily Italians as their peers, they are 'new Italians' (Antonsich 2017). The older generation may of course, feel uncomfortable from this status and expectations in life from the new generation, and this has become the most intergenerational debate, related to the transmission of the Punjabi Sikh customs and the notion that to integrate the Italian society, the necessity is to adapt. In fact, some members of the old generation, may see the influence of the new society and of the Italian *way of life* as a threat to the transmission and entertainment of their traditions and religious culture. The older generation, the parents of the new generation Italian-Sikhs, are the keeper of the faith and of the traditional Sikh *culture*. In fact, the parents and the grand-parents, or the family, become the nucleus of the Sikh traditions in Italy. Grillo (2008) and Thapan (2015) would both agree that the family is at the heart of the community in which the migrant is embedded and where the influence (Thapan 2015, 52) of the traditional Indian Sikh *way of life* come from.

The family, along with the teachings at the gurdwara are the most direct connections that the new generation Italian-Sikh with a hybrid representation of identity can gain about their ancestral *culture*. In fact,

as mentioned earlier in the evident inclusions, if the hybrid Sikhs maintain and respect their traditions there are more possibilities of being accepted within this narrative than if they do not. However, traditions are not only related to religion or the mundane *culture*, but also to the customs and lifestyle of the people, such as their *way of life*, often developed in accordance to their environment and setting. It may indeed create some sort of intergenerational conflicts, when the older generation expects a certain behavior from their offspring, but that the Italian environment encourages a different performance of their identity representations by adopting a different pattern than what is expected. As an example of family intergenerational conflict, or difference in perspectives, Harminder and her mother Namjot, discuss about their *way of life* and then, on how they see their future. The first quote comes from Harminder's interview alone with myself as she unveils the difficulties she encountered as a new generation Sikh in Italy and the differences with the world her parents lived into. The two next parts are from a dual interview done with mother and daughter where Harminder translated for her mother.

“[N]ot at the beginning [it was not easy for me], because I was on my own alone. And I had my parents obviously, but they didn't really understand the society which I was growing up in. I faced some difficulties but the next generation as we, second generation already faced this kind of difficulty, they won't suffer as we did [...] I think that's that.

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

Catherine: I can ask her where does she see herself in 10 or 15 years from now?

Harminder: Oh, but I already know about this [...] but I can ask her thoughts. [Speaking Punjabi to her mother]

Namjot: [Having a discussion with her daughter in Punjabi.]

Harminder: So, she said that maybe in 10-15 years Harminder's dad will get his retirement. Maybe we would still be here in Italy cuddling with Harminder's children. We could take them to school, cooking for them, or maybe doing some travels outside, or maybe working in community projects, trying to keep our selves busy[...]

(Namjot, age 52, born in India, in Italy since the age of 29 and her daughter Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2 [as translator])

Catherine: Okay this is a very nice way of seeing the future [from your mother's point of view]. Taking care of your future children. Very interesting indeed! What about you? What do you see yourself in 10, 15 or 20 years? [...]

Harminder: Oh, I see myself in, well in 15 years with a good job with a family and happy with my life I mean [...] Being happy of what I'm doing I'm not having any regrets of what I am not doing, or what I am doing, so[...]

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

At first, when Harminder is asked about her future in the single interview, she focuses on her life so far, and about the next generation aside from herself, and then in the dual interview, she adds unto what her mother expected of their somewhat intertwined future. As for her mother, she discusses mainly her husband's

retirement and her desire for her daughter to have a family so that she could enjoy her grandchildren. Then of course, Harminder discusses this notion in a more similar angle, without aiming at having children just for the sake of her mother but for her own happiness and she keeps in mind that her future will be a continuation of how the past has shaped her. She faced many struggles as a young Sikh in a new country and has lived a very different life than what her parents had expected of her and her brother. Namjot hopes for Harminder to follow with the Indian lifestyle, that she would find a husband quickly, marry traditionally and have children at an early age. Yet Harminder only sees herself as having a young professional life, choosing her partner, taking her time to get married and have a family later in life, to make sure that she is satisfied with every steps towards her future.

Deciding upon one's future may not be such a leap into a different culture, but for some of the elders, it is holding on to different values and visions for the community. The new generation Italian-Sikh have a certain individuality and are quite opinionated of what they see the community to become. Often, they will want to get involved in the underlining actions that the researched Sikh community perform in their new country of residence since they become the mediator of two different cultures. However, their peculiar approach to this mix culture narrative may worry the older generation of Sikhs which have had the hold of the community's actions within the gurdwara since they arrived in this country. Letting the Italian-Sikhs perform as leaders in the community is not always simple nor encouraged by all. Foremost, the new generation's perspective on the actual building of the gurdwara the core of their culture outside of their so-called homeland of Punjab, may differ from what the older generation desires. Harminder, while giving me a tour of the premises discussed this largest gurdwara in mainland Europe:

“About the gurdwara, I am very happy about the work that we are doing in the entire community. I have some points on which I criticize them, [old generation] and I would like to work on. And we should work more, but I think that the entire community we are not so united. This is a good thing to work on and like any other communities we are a lot, but slowly we are trying to solve every issue. And I am also happy about the temple that came out because everyone contributed to the construction of the building itself. And I think that everyone is trying to take [(sic) keep] it open. So that we can keep it going on and we can maintain the cost of the big building. Because after all it is the responsibility of the *sangat* and so yeah [...] I'm happy!”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

As Satnam Singh argues in Jacobsen and Myrvold's work, many young Sikhs are indeed quite “critical of the gurdwaras because of the many incidents and mismanagement and conflicts among the elder generation” (2012, 6). In this excerpt, Harminder states a few interesting ideas: she is glad of the result of the building, but then she condemns what the committee of the gurdwara do for the community and the gurdwara as a building and as a social center. She has been disappointed by them for various reasons and would definitely

want to be more involved than she is now. The building has been a success, the money has been well spent for the structure and for the religious ceremonies once a week. On the other hand, the activities, the organisation and what the gurdwara as a community center could do, is not to Harminder's taste. The *Shri Kalgidhar Sahib* gurdwara committee of Pessina Cremonese, *Cultura Sikh*, is still a young committee and Harminder, the only woman, has a lot of ideas for the new generations and needs to find a way to be considered as a major and serious member of this association, although she is a woman and a youngster from the new generation of Italian-Sikhs.

As for Kirat, another young adult with a certain representation of identity as hybrids but technically part of the first generation of Sikhs as he migrated to Italy at the age of 18, is also a member of the gurdwara association *Cultura Sikh*. He discussed the association and the reasons for its existence other than the running of the usual activities within the gurdwara. Kirat explained the reason for the creation of such an organization:

[Spoke in Punjabi to the translator and then switched to Italian]. The other cultures (sic) always demand, and ask who we are, what do we do. All the days we are asked questions, and we need to answer. We are Sikhs, we feel responsible to explain [...] we come to the temple, we have a lot of questions about us. It is a challenge, so we start to explain. But I don't really speak well Italian, so we need to find youngsters who lived here and studied here to give the information in a right way, to tell them our feelings and our visions. We have started to find people such as Harminder, so we have started to push this problem and respond those questions. To enter into the Italian society and live with our own rights our own culture too.

(Kirat, age 30, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 18)

It has been said that young people do claim to hold specific competences as 'cultural mediators', since they attended local schools, speak Italian fluently and know much better the native's mentality (Bertolani 2015, 225), which in fact may energize young adults such as Harminder to become involved. In her own words she would claim: "From the past 3 or 4 years I have been involved in these projects on Sikhism and I have a strong feeling that is my destiny, my future will be related to it"⁵⁷. To this notion, it is clear why the youth also claim the right to be more involved "by the 'elders' in all public occasions during which the Punjabi-Sikh community with Italian society, as well as in the management of gurdwaras" (Bertolani 2015, 225). Their personal view is that things would cleverly happen, and they would attain beneficial results for the future generations as well and not only for the present generation that is not aiming for a hybrid worldview in the future. The fact that the new generation Italian-Sikh looks forward to a more adaptive way of experimenting their culture and religious tradition, may create misperception from the older generation

⁵⁷ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2

which is either afraid doubtful to let them be involved in the organization of the community and of the gurdwara. In the next vignette, there will be a presentation of personal observations of such behaviors, when they new generation of Sikhs do not obtain the recognition that they deserve within the community. This sort of exclusion from within the community is showcased during a *Cultura Sikh* meeting with elders and youngsters from the studied Sikh community in the rural north of Italy.

Vignette #5: Generational conflict in Gurdwara politics

It has been told by a few young men and women from the researched group, that “the ‘elders’ involve them only at their convenience and nobody cares when they propose new ideas” (Bertolani 2015, 225), which makes them less and less interested in working together with the older generation of Sikhs. Especially for young women whom must face the double *exclusion* of being both young—from the new generation of possibly hybrid Sikhs—and a woman, which they are rarely involved in these management associations. As a prominent example, here is a part of my field notes when I shadowed Harminder at one of the *Cultura Sikh* meetings. My limitations about the languages used may have altered my interpretation of the events, thus I mostly focused on the body language, on how the meeting was executed by the different actors, on the few English words said once in a while, and on the summary of the meeting told by Harminder afterwards.

Fieldnotes 013, June 20th, 2015

- It is almost 4 pm; I am at the gurdwara with Harminder. She is having a meeting with Cultura Sikh. It is, as it was in the car before, only in Punjabi. We have been picked up by some of Cultura Sikh members for the ride to the gurdwara. This language is interesting as it has different guttural sounds that we don't have neither in French nor in English. But, Punjabi has now been influenced by English a lot since the colonization of India by the British, and it continues nowadays because of the usual common use of English in all of our lives. I am also in Italy; therefore, the language is slightly tinted with Italian words. Ecco, perché, così, allora, etc... These two facts plus the fact that they are talking about Italian cities, associations, and people, make it easier for me to understand a little of their discussion. So, despite my obvious restrictions about understanding exactly what is going on, I can still note down my observations and impressions based on their body language and what I can comprehend of their meeting.
- They are eight people. Four that I already know [that I probably interviewed during the big group interview: Harminder, Kirat the very religious one, the young one Jagjit [from high school and speaks English], and Harjinder that is not doing his work on time today. And four people that I don't know. The only woman is: Harminder.
- Amongst the eight people of Cultura Sikh there, one of the man is the spoken leader, I don't really know why but he focuses on Harminder and speaks on a specific tone with her—a mix between not so nice and not so angry—the whole time.
- I suspect, as being the only invested women [the only present today at least], she has taken the role of secretary and she is a young leader who has innovative ideas, which the elder man does not necessarily like.
- Therefore, they leave her to fight and find information by herself.
- Later, Harminder told me, the spoken leader was complaining about Harjinder not doing the job he said he would do and Harminder was apparently the only one defending him, that is why she accepted to help him so that he could catch up!

- Now she has to give back some accounts. There are serious talks and some more funny times. But now Harjinder is more supported by the others than she was at the beginning.
- Keywords spoken on that day: Blog presentations, projectors, Tikke, ateha, kia, website, electronic, nee, tousi, facebook/email hoobi, daily updates, computer, translate, websites, live streaming, info from other Sikh groups, Youtube video, recordings.
- Harjinder is the lazy one who did nothing.
- Plan: sikhi camp (website, blog, video), advertisement, calendar, & register Cultura Sikh with the government. The sikhi camp, just a few days on the second full week of August. And the martial art competition near September (euro size), but we will see!

Within this written section of my fieldwork, it is easy to see that the young adults such as Harjinder⁵⁸ and Harjinder are always the aim of the older leaders. It is true that Harjinder did not do his job as he intended to, and Harjinder took the liberty of offering her help so that the many projects they want to bring forward such as a Sikhi camp, the *Gatka* Competition, the registration of their association and the possibility of web content about the gurdwara and their culture—all projects brought forward by the new generation—will come out eventually. In this respect, the organization and its members are often more argumentative to the youth. It may be because of the quality of their work, but there is also the notion of their youth, of their Italianness and, of their peculiar ideas according to the old generation. Bertolani, whom discusses this topic quite thoroughly concludes that “[t]o give more attention to the youth implies accepting their innovative potential within the community (and not only, for example, within families) and this might have some consequences for the processes of identity definition of the Sikh group in the public sphere” (Bertolani 2015, 225). My impression of the situation is similar, and I wish that the new generation would be able to take the reins of their associations for the good of the whole community as well as their identity representation as Italian-Sikhs, especially so that one day they may feel included within their community as fully as any other Sikhs.

The struggle of being accepted on the conditions of fitting in, by forgetting some parts of oneself, is contradictory to what everyone is hoping for in a simple and evident inclusion, when one is of hybrid representation of identity. It has been presented how it has become a struggle to be hybrid in their Italian Sikh society, since they may either be included as part of both cultures, as well as directly excluded from those same cultures due to various experiences. How to fit into the Italian society while still clinging to the ancestral and traditional heritage of the Sikh community may not be for the faint of hearts. The choice is often difficult and nearly impossible to make. To be either evidently included or obviously excluded is not always something that can be changed, however, one may learn to use all the skills gained by this ambiguous status and put it into practice by pivoting their identity representations according to the right situation. Some

⁵⁸ Harjinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10.

may have started to use this practice as a usual change in behavior and performance for the Italian-Sikhs. Thus the next section will indeed present the method of ‘Pivoting Identity Representations’, which will exhibit how and when some of those Italian-Sikhs manage to fit in either category on purpose at different times.

3.3.2. Pivoting Identity Representations

It has been made clear so far in this chapter that a migrant Sikh respondent may adopt a different rhetoric of identity representation than another member of the same community. The two first important representations have been identified as being Indian Sikh and as being Italian. There has been a third option explored in this present section which introduces the notion of being hybrid, as what the new generation of Italian-Sikhs have most likely adopted. This identity representation is disorienting as it makes the person either included or excluded from different groups for varied reasons. However, one of the methods that these hybrid Italian-Sikhs have used to manage between their parental Sikh *culture* and their Italian *way of life*, as the basis of their hybrid representation of identity, is to oscillate purposely or unconsciously more towards one rhetoric at a time, according to the right situation and context. Being hybrid, Anthias mentions in her conclusion, “it must be seen in the context of fluidity, diversity and situational context” (2001, 637). In this case of being hybrid and being able to perform the culture (Butler, 1990) in a fluid and situational context, it means to be more than one representation at the time, so much so that it becomes impossible to precisely define one’s identity and the other’s identity as much as one’s and the other’s differences (Colombo 2010, 457). It means considering ‘aliqueness’ and differences as one and, striking a balance sometimes fragile, between the competing resources and constraints circulating in their lives. The new generation hybrids learn how and when to deploy the alikeness and differences successfully in response to the opportunities and challenges that present themselves. Instead of feeling the pressure to both preserve the parental *culture* of their homeland and to integrate fully into the new destination’s society, they instead create a complex set of practices of their own (Levitt 2009, 1239).

The capacity of adopting the right code to fit the situation and show proper demeanour means that they can match continuity and transformation in an autonomous fashion (Colombo & Rebughini 2012), and therefore pivot from one identity representation to another. The concept of pivoting identity has been coined by Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick-Schiller in their recent scholarships. While discussing the transnational migration experience, they argued that assimilation and enduring transnational ties were in fact neither incompatible nor binary opposite. They suggested that this migration experience could be a kind of

gauge, which while anchored, pivots between a host-land and transnational connections (2004, 1003). The pivot rotates from the new land to the ancestral homeland and would permit quick and effective ways to switch to the right code for each situation. This movement is not necessarily linear nor following a sequence, but simply has the capability to rotate back and forth and naturally change direction over time (Ibid., 1013, Schiller et al., 1992) with a simultaneity of connections. This pivot is palpable situations such as the one described by Jazpreet in this excerpt. After asking a question about if they—Jazpreet’s friend Armandeep⁵⁹ and herself—considered themselves as good Sikhs, Armandeep gave a resounding ‘No!’ and Jazpreet explained:

“No we should follow all the rules but, we just adjust because we want to be part also of the Italian society as like the Sikh community. So, we just follow some of these rules, some not, and we should follow others, actually.”

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents)

These new generation Sikhs representing themselves as Italian-Sikhs consider themselves with some level of guilt, not to be ‘good’ Sikhs because they do not fully follow Sikh code of conduct. They ‘adjust’ as by following some of the rules of both agencies to be part of both cultures. The setting of this interview might have been biased since they were interviewed at the gurdwara, just after the religious service. It might be normal for them to experience guilt about not being ‘good’ Sikh when they are actually in a religious temple. Nonetheless, they know they cannot be ‘good’ or perfect Sikhs if they want to keep this capacity of pivoting into some of the rules of the Italian society as well as keeping an entry way into the Sikh community.

The new generation hybrid Italian-Sikhs will, or already have developed a new type of personality, a cultural hybrid mind, which will make them live and share an intimate cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; “never quite willing to break, even if [they] were permitted to do so, with [their] past and [their] traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the society in which [they] now sought to find a place. [They were] on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused” (Park 1928, 892 in Colombo & Rebughini 2012, 127). Having a cultural hybrid mind, just as Harminder has shown in various examples throughout this research would be well described within this answer which she gave on the BBC interview and thus claimed:

“[at] age 16, I was really confused about my identity. I was researching a lot about my origins. Yes, I am a Sikh, but I am an Italian as well—Italian-Sikh [...] [My prevailing culture?] I am more like a

⁵⁹ Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8

hybrid. I am not really conservative. It is about how to present something in a certain way. *Food* is a must, pasta or pizza [...] talking with my hands! In a way, I am taking the best of each culture.”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2, emphasis original)⁶⁰

According to this excerpt from Harminder’s perception of herself, and of her prevailing culture in a way, she exposes what it means for her; it is a way to ‘cut and mix’ (Anthias 1999), to appreciate and experience various behaviors, interactions and choices according to what she enjoys at a specific time. This has now been embedded in her practices, as she was indeed talking with her hands, when discussing with the Italian journalist. She sincerely mediates these microlevel everyday life actions, by being quite involved in her parental *culture* through the gurdwara committee even if she has taken the role of bringing modernity to this group, as well as being personally enjoying the more westernized and Italian *way of life*, with her likeness of the food and her more forward thinking in relation to the youth and the women in which she advocates for, within her community and with her Italian local society at school and at work. Harminder is indeed embedded in the two cultures everyday of her life and this is not the sole example within this community.

Others such as Ravdeep while discussing her return to her roots by adopting the *gatka* martial art with Amrit, have claimed their cultural hybridity.

“On the other hand, there is my other life, because sometimes I feel that I have two different lives, two different worlds, when I come here [*gatka* classes at the gurdwara], I am totally different than when I am at school or with my friends!”

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6)

This highlights the need to break the fixed categories of ‘either/or’ identity boxes, to go beyond the exclusive logic of binary categories (Beck 2006) or the single perspective of one life. Often this reality may distress them, but this is the world they live in to and their clear reality, which the older generation will have a harder time to comprehend in the truth of this ‘cut and mix’ hybrid life in Italy. Once the cultural hybrid mind of Italian-Sikhs is developed, knowing how and when to use the pivot, is no easy task. The Italian-Sikhs’ parental *culture*, including their traditions, family ties and religion, laid the basis of the individuality, but then so is their *way of life* including customs, day-to-day behaviors and social encounters encouraging certain types of habits. Hence, is their need to learn how to pivot and adjust their rules to fit the situation at hand. The uncertainty of these two clashing worlds with diversified models, values and cultural codes is puzzling. As it is now understood in present day literature, dual languages, cultures, identity representations and belongings do create sources of confusion, but then again provide strength and resources. The increasingly

⁶⁰ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2. Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

flexible modern society puts more value on the skills of overcoming excessively rigid identifications and consider a success to move between various contexts while knowing the rights and rules for each situation. As in Hall's research, the young Sikh respondents skillfully negotiate these different fields, by being very 'performative'. Boundaries between 'Indian' and 'English', in the British Sikhs research, are indeed difficult to cross (1996). Similarly, within the Sikh community in the north of Italy, it is increasingly difficult to see when the boundaries have been crossed from 'Indian Sikh' to 'Italian' as a pivot representation of identity. The Italian-Sikhs from the researched group are more or less hyphenated, national or ethnic individual. In other words, they might not 'be' something different or new, but indeed 'do' something different and new.

The innovative behavior that those hybrid Italian-Sikhs do, is their ability to 'cut and mix' fragmented ways to represent themselves, which is unlike anyone else. This idea is a parallel view of the pivot or gauge mentioned earlier. It helps the youth, through the concept of 'othering', to know which parts of which culture to cut into and mix to the appropriate context in order to define who they are at this moment, or at least it gives them a mechanism to act appropriately. Conceivably as in those two excerpts of the interview conducted with Amrit. In the first answer, she discusses her ownership of the Italian citizenship making her an Italian, an Italian citizen.

"[hmm] So, I am a citizen, I am an Italian citizen because I have the Italian passport, but I don't want [hmm] because I like my culture, I like my religion, I like who I am. So, because I don't want to become another, to [...] seem another with them [...]"

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Then came the importance of her culture and religion, which are the essence of what she is. In her attempt to 'cut and mix' or as pivoting, she provided herself with the tools to be able to rotate in her way of representing herself according to her feelings and to the available situation. She has the resources to be an Italian citizen within her representation of identity yet is also certain that she does not want to alienate herself from her religious culture and does not want to be the 'other' to her community. Those comments were very emotional on her part during our interview and became a vital notion to witness the importance of the pivot within the new generation Italian-Sikhs, especially those as Amrit which were born in Italy but live a noteworthy religious life. The migrant youth in Italy, borrow cultural influences from Indian and European traditions but they also identify themselves with the country where they grew up, and this becomes an extensive influence on their *way of life* (Cloet, Cosemans & Goddeeris 2012, 61). Thus, the conversation continued towards how she believes to be seen by others, which was her concern in the previous statement.

Catherine: And do people consider you Italian or they consider you Indian? Like you speak Italian, you hang out with Italians, you eat pasta [...]

Amrit: No [...] but [...] people consider us Indian, because even if we stay with Italians, we pass more the time of Italian, but our culture is a little different from them and [hmm] I think our family prefers to maintain the culture. Also, if we go out with others[...] I mean to, like the dress. The Indian women they, also if they have Italian friends, some keep putting the Indian dress [...] put the *salwar* in the summer if there is a lot of hot [...] (sic).

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

In this response, Amrit is not conceivably precise. She starts by claiming that she is not seen as an Italian in her opinion, but then begins to explain that the way ‘we’ meaning the whole of her community, and especially women, tend to ‘look’ very Indian due to the maintaining of their mundane *culture*, and that they are thus very different, they are the ‘other’. Amrit’s actual *way of life* could be mistaken for an ‘obvious’ Italian quite regularly if it were not for her turban or for the fact that she may prefer Indian comfortable clothes in the summer rather than Italian more common clothes. Overall, for Amrit, everyday is a ‘cut and mix’ into the two worlds in which she is part of, thus she can choose the way she pivots and represent herself as more Italian or more Indian Sikh in her representation of identity. It is a fact, deciding which kind of identity to be shown in the public is situational and contextual and the construction of the representation is subject to manipulations and internal tensions (Bertolani 2015, 210). She might be part of the ‘us’ and of the ‘other’ and this hold a precarious status, but Amrit is in control of how and when to perform a certain rhetoric by knowing the right codes to apply in each situation.

For a new generation Italian-Sikh to experience pivoting is one thing, though operationalizing these everyday performances in order to investigate and establish its influence on the community’s youth, it necessitates a specific model. One way to explore the Italian-Sikhs’ regular life encounters and to consider these situations as pivoting of the migrant Sikhs with a hybrid identity representation is through Antonsich’s third factor—the cultural factor—the most appropriate and productive to observe the possible interaction of pivoting into the Italian or the Indian Sikh culture. As already defined earlier, the cultural factor includes a particular way of conveying meaning in a semiotic universe such as language and all its components, but it also includes other forms of cultural expressions such as customs and the cultural practices surrounding food production and consumption. Cultural habits of those Italian-Sikhs and the choice to follow them in a pivoting model are all visible manifestations of a person’s hybrid identity representation. Mastering uncertain and persistent changes by the ability to switch codes and languages or even food preferences when moving from one situation to another, in apparently incompatible elements (Colombo & Rebughini 2012) is not only a valuable aptitude, but also a significant way to study the existence of such representation of being

hybrid. Antonsich's cultural factor will be presented subsequently in two different elements; at first with the notion of language and then of the food preferences.

At first, the idea is to observe how the use of language becomes different in changing settings for those being hybrid in identity representation. The concept of a specific language assumes that it stands for a certain way to create and transmit meaning, to understand and feature the world in these people's eyes. May it be through speaking, writing or reading, those who share a common semiotic universe, have always been able to understand each other better, and have thus been included in the group of those sharing this language. As a resistance mechanism, some Sikhs employ themselves in keeping Punjabi as a living language keeping the culture and tradition alive. Not only does this permit the youth to converse with family back home, but it also gives them a closer connection to their faith since the sacred scriptures, hymns and religious services are being uniquely done in Punjabi and written in Gurmukhi. As for the Italian language, it is true that those who master it would often feel much more connected to its culture. In the case of the new generation hybrids that are facing the need to learn and master the Italian language as much as the need to protect the knowledge of both Punjabi and Gurmukhi from loss in their life in Italy, it becomes a complicated endeavour. By being able to manage bilingualism, employing, speaking and understanding the two languages, Punjabi and Italian, it creates a sense of being included in both groups. Understanding and using both languages with the right codes, the Italian-Sikhs could then easily pivot and represent themselves as successful hybrids with this ability.

Nonetheless, nowadays the situations of the new generation Sikh respondents have changed, and the usages or codes of each language may start to blend in an almost modern way. An example of an odd contextual language choice of new generation Sikhs was observed during an Indian wedding at a gurdwara in Brescia taken from the fieldnotes 016 of June 27th, 2015. The British-Sikh groom and the Italian-Sikh bride were already wed and making their way to a local pizzeria for the feast when two little girls started talking with me because I was wearing a traditional Indian outfit in the gurdwara. They dressed in traditional *salvar kameez*⁶¹ as well, and asked in perfect Italian, if I was originally from India. I answered with my best Italian, that I was in fact from Canada. We all laughed and then I asked in Italian if they were from Italy. With a comical face and perfect Italian accent, they both assured me they were Indians from India, and then

⁶¹ The *salvar kameez* is a unisex suit traditionally from South Asia and Central Asia, a combination of loose pants similar to pyjamas and a long shirt or tunic reaching just above the knee with open side seams below the belt offering a great freedom of movement, and often accompanied by a scarf for women.

they left to go play with an old man at the end of the prayer hall, never speaking a word of Punjabi. My personal impression is that these two little girls see themselves as Indians and yet speak mostly a perfect Italian to each other and to everyone around them even in a gurdwara, which was striking. This thought approximates the one made by another respondent presently doing a lab-oriented PhD in four different countries. His opinion came from an interview and fieldnotes 028 of September 27th, 2015, Jasjit, an Indian academic of 27 years had been living in Italy for about one year and was acting as a tour guide of one of the gurdwaras in Bergamo. At some point, he started analyzing his own small community of Sikhs in Bergamo and pointed out that Punjabi language was slowly disappearing at the gurdwara. In the past four years, he had been living in many countries and sought out Sikh communities each time. It was the first time for him to witness young Sikhs, mainly in primary and secondary schools, conversing in Italian or in the local language, at all times, even at the gurdwara.

Jasjit was impressed by this fact, being a strong believer in multiculturalism and seeing the idea of learning many languages as an asset in life, yet he was still quite disturbed by the fact that it was so common here in Italy. However, it is crucial to call attention to the language or more precisely, the mother tongue which is assumed as an ‘essential’ given at birth within the parental *culture*. One of the dynamics that is often seen within migrant communities is the encouraging of the new generations to learn to speak, read and write the homeland traditional language. This pattern is a catalyst and a unifying factor for those of a similar ethnic group scattered all around a new country, sharing the same national origin, common religion and language (Colombo, Leonini, & Rebughini, 2009). The importance in keeping this tradition is stated by Jazpreet, a young Italian-Sikh enjoying the gurdwara on Sundays so she can meet with other Sikh friends since she does not have many at her local school. She explains that “my parents speak Italian, but not at home. They prefer to speak Punjabi because otherwise we will lose also that language.”⁶² Many parents, families and community leaders are worried about the forfeiture of knowledge of their original culture if there is a loss of language. Therefore, this new generation Sikh research group may well use this cultural factor to hold on to their differences and their parental *culture* even if even at the gurdwara it becomes more and more difficult for Jazpreet and many other new generation Sikhs to speak Punjabi.

On the other hand, the studied Sikhs have the opportunity and the skills to learn both languages, and sometimes they have attributed them different value according to which generation of Sikhs they are part of. For some of the young Sikhs “[t]he Italian language, which is often only partially mastered, is the

⁶² Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents.

language of the institutions, of school, of work, and of superficial and instrumental knowledge. The parental language, on the contrary, is used for everyday life, pleasure and ‘warm’ relationships” (Colombo et al., 2009). This explains the struggle of Italian language that needs to be acquired for a purpose, and Punjabi to be learned from childhood, as a ‘warm’ and parental gesture. Whereas, it happens that some youngsters spend much more time at school and with their Italian friends, thus the parental language is not necessarily acquired with competence and needs to be practiced and learned more carefully. All and all, learning the Italian language and using it properly serves as a selective acculturation and an interesting way to be hybrid, since this adoption of the language and of the *way of life* of the majority, takes place simultaneously with the preservation of key elements of the parental *culture* (Colombo & Rebughini 2012).

However true this tendency of ‘cut and mix’ within the language sphere, the loss of the homeland language is something that the old generation rightfully worries about the new generation, since they are not only and uniquely Sikhs, they are and become so much more. This is known in the literature as the phenomenon of a migration *mélange* which regards the idea that the pivot is contextualized through specific fields. Pieterse, while referring to Feddema’s research on the Turkish Muslims as a case study, mentions that the “second-generation immigrants, in the West and elsewhere, display mixed cultural traits—a separation between and, next, a mix of a home culture and language (matching the culture of origin) and an outdoor culture (matching the culture of residence), as in the combination ‘Muslim in the daytime, disco in the evening’ (Pieterse 2015, 79) as a common observation. It has also been observed for the Sikhs in England in Hall’s analysis. He refers to the different setting of either week days/weekends or daytime/evening as different cultural fields. Hall claims that the Sikh youth participate in numerous cultural fields in which they “act Indian” or “act English” (Hall 2002, 171). The various settings that one or the other performance could be enacted varies according to the different cultural fields. They could be ‘highly regulated’ (the gurdwara, home, family life), where expectations of normative behaviour prevail and enforces the “act Indian” conduct, or ‘relatively unregulated’ (school, work, consumption) where youth have the opportunities to “act English” (Hall 2002, Singh and Tatla 2006, 205).

According to the previous example of the two little girls at the wedding and with the confirmation that this is more common than usual from Jasjit, the assumption is that, in Italy it is less severely regulated than in other diasporas. It does not mean that they are unaware of their ‘roots’, or that they are not in touch with their culture and community, or know where they come from (Thapan 2013), it simply means that they have a subtle latitude into their choice of language with friends which they only meet once in a while at the

gurdwara. Thus the ‘highly regulated’ life of the gurdwara is less prevalent, and it gives them some more opportunities to become hybrid in their everyday life, which results in some of the youth deciding on their own, to learn their homeland language at the gurdwara rather than feeling pressured by their surrounding community; a rather positive action towards keeping the culture and the religion. This is the case with Rupi⁶³, even if as explained by Amrit⁶⁴ that Rupi is shy, that her Punjabi is as good as her Italian, but that she uses it only in specific situations. Rupi uses her Punjabi at home only with her parents, or when she feels emotional with her brothers, and of course, since she has started to practise *gatka* at the gurdwara, it brings the need to learn the language thoroughly in order to understand the instructor, thus it has become an indispensable process to not only speak Italian, but also Punjabi and use it in a pivoting method.

After the cultural factor of language and the positive and negative examples of such factors influencing the researched migrant Sikhs’ *way of life*, the next important cultural factor in the hybrid rhetoric of identity representation is related to food consumption. It implies the exhibition of the observed encounters where the typical Italian dishes are more than merely adaptations but part of the everyday events and assumed as a correct and enjoyable behavior from the researched Sikh community as conceptualized within Antonsich’s cultural factor. This is a microlevel behavior or pivot, individually or within the researched community as a purposely changed behavior from one very Indian staple to a very Italian staple. From the 2012 documentary *Sikh Formaggio*, one of the Sikh interviewee was claiming that “[i]n Italy, eating is a tradition, and even in Punjab, so we mix it up. Italian food and Indian Punjabi food” (Duran, Wise & Bison 2012)! From the point of view of a representation of becoming hybrid this hybridization of the cuisines is a most noteworthy claim. All in all, the likeness of both types of food including well-known Italian dishes such as pizza and pasta not exclusive of Italy, but traditional dishes that are quite common to eat at least once a week, as well as the more traditional *dhal*, an Indian dish made from a variety of vegetables and lentils usually with spices, onions, and so on, or curry, may represent an interesting example of pivoting when used simultaneously in the right circumstances.

At this point, hybrids do ‘cut and mix’ various behaviors, pivots according to the cultural fields or simply behave differently in different contexts by either being Sikh or by being Italian; two cultures they are part of as new generation Italian-Sikhs. The ‘cut and mix’ of the two absolutely different cuisines as a performance of hybridity within the researched Sikh community in the rural north of Italy has been observed

⁶³ Rupi, age 16, born in Italy, Indian parents.

⁶⁴ Amrit [as a translator] age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents.

and denoted in some instances. The use of the Italian typical dishes within very Indian Sikh settings are exposed in at least three significant occurrences identified here for the analysis purposes and it became a way to bridge the two cultures which are usually at odds with each other. At first, making pizza/pasta in the gurdwaras and then for the people participating at the Vaisakhi and Nagar Kirtan city processions where the traditional Indian *way of life* is extremely present were the two first encounters of this pivot of the hybrids Sikhs in their community. Finally a brief vignette will highlight how these previous changes within the community's perspective of the Italian food has now resonated even in more cultural and religious ceremonies such as wedding celebrations.

Therefore, the first remarkable instance was investigated because of the apparent nonchalance of serving pizzas and pastas in gurdwaras. It is understandable that with the ease and outstanding manageable ways this Italian dish could be adapted to fit specific diets of the Sikhs who have taken *amrit*, that it has been adopted so sincerely. Literally, the tradition of eating pizza has been so successful with families and the community itself, that pizza and pasta are now served regularly in the free communitarian *langar* kitchen at various gurdwaras. During various discussions with my respondents, a few Sikhs mentioned that they have started to be accustomed to being served pizza and pasta at gurdwaras on specific days. Some gurdwaras in Bergamo are known to have their own pizza ovens and to prepare pizza in an almost traditional Italian way. The typical Italian dishes will only be served on Saturdays instead of the busy Sundays, when only so many volunteers are present to prepare for the next day rather than when the whole community is present. It avoids overt debates from the older generation which will doubt the choice of eating Italian food rather than the typical Indian food. Pastas are also a great hit with children on Saturdays and Sundays, as a side dish to any other typical Indian food; it has been accepted and even rejoiced about by many people in the community.

Since pizzas and pastas are being served in the gurdwaras, it did not take long to see those dishes at very Indian religious events as well. The researched Sikh community did pivot from Indian cuisine to the Italian gastronomy in an outstanding fashion at Vaisakhi celebrations and during the Nagar Kirtan city processions. Adopting a very Italian notable meal in a Sikh festival speaks for itself and for the community in Italy: a way to bridge two cultures. This bridge, and this possible pivot is the essence of being hybrid and the Italian-Sikh community is starting to embrace this adaptable way of seeing the world which is not only remarkable but also quite stunning to witness. It has become a small sort of 'creolization' (Anthias 2001) which highlights the idea of the mix without becoming homogenous in its whole, mixing the contemporary

culture with their religious convictions. Using Italian pizza at Vaisakhi, reaches the point of contact, a construction of social language and rule of exchange (Melucci 1996) for those two different cultures. The first Vaisakhi that I attended in Italy was in Cremona city in 2015. It is expected that food will be served and passed around before, during and after the march, and thus a great deal of different snacks were given freely to people gathering. A few pizza boxes were seen in the hands of children running around to their parents. At this point, it was the first and only instance of seeing this different practice in a Sikh celebration thus, it was assumed as a possible treat given by the parents to keep the children quiet during the whole event which is quite tiring and long for so young ones.

Yet, on the next year, during the Vaisakhi celebration of Cremona and of Milan in 2016—the very first Vaisakhi celebration in Milan—many pizzeria boxes were given. In Cremona, before beginning the march, many people came about with piles of pizza boxes and shared them with families and groups of friends for a hot snack before leaving. One strange notion was that, there was a Sikh *langar* next to the group, with typical Indian food and places to sit, but the majority of people were running after boxes of pizza to satisfy their hunger, in a hybrid creolize fashion. In Milan, before the start of the march, an old man was passing around with a huge box full of nicely tin foiled packaged pizza slices to hand in to people marching along. It was not clear if the pizza was taken from a nearby pizzeria this time or if the old man had made them himself for the community, but the pizza was well liked by all the Sikhs gathered from all over the north of Italy for this historical first Vaisakhi in Milan, the business capital of the north of Italy. My last attended Vaisakhi was in 2016 in Bergamo, and unfortunately, pizza was not in sight. However something else attracted attention; there were egg-free gelato given freely to all people during this very hot day. Gelato is a very typical Italian type ice cream usually made with egg yolks renown all over Italy. It is indeed very common in the north of Italy and it was a very big hit for everyone at this Vaisakhi celebration. Thus, if Italian food is present in gurdwaras and in religious celebrations, it has then surely reached the more cultural and religious affairs as well, as in the next brief vignette.

Vignette #6: Indian Sikh Wedding Feast at a Local Pizzeria

This particular encounter with an example of the mixed cuisine was during the same wedding celebration in Brescia that was discussed previously in the language example of the cultural factor. Once again, the information, observations, facts and empirical data from the even all came from the fieldnotes 016 of June 27th, 2015. However, in this instance it will not be related to language but to the dishes that were served after the traditional ceremony. After the religious ceremony at the nearby Gurdwara, every guest was

invited to join the wedding party to a sizable local pizzeria called Fior di Pizza where the official appetizer was pizza with pineapple. For the British family of the groom, this was said to be delicious, but for the side of the bride, all living in Italy for years, many complained that a pizza with pineapple, was not a real pizza, and as most Italians would do, many refused to eat what they called “a very large *rotti* with mixed vegetables and pineapple”⁶⁵. They all preferred to wait for the main dish, which was offered as a buffet, where Indian typical food was presented this time alongside some real and traditional Italian pizza. Some food that even Italian-Sikhs could consider pizza straightaway and not wonder about it. The choice of pizza, or the shape-like pizza type food appetizer for a starter and then the offer of pizza for the main course were very interesting for an Indian wedding. The whole of the wedding was very religious and typical of a Punjabi cultural wedding, except for the food which was at times very Italian and at times very Punjabi in style and variety. Also, having Italian-Sikhs complaining about the quality or the appropriateness of calling this pizza—rather than discussing its presence at an Indian wedding—was also quite fascinating. After encountering an Italian mix cuisine in this sort of Indian event for the first time, it clarified the idea that ‘cut and mix’ or creolized vision of the cultural factor was already quite present in this community.

As a concluding remark on the Pivoting Identity Representations of Being Hybrid, with the many examples where Sikh respondents felt the need to pivot from one identity representation to another, hybridity or its attempts, were shown and the struggle to decide how and when to use one identity representation at one precise situation, was also highlighted. The last situations may not necessarily be very straightforward, but being hybrid rarely is. The confusion, the personal struggle and the feeling of having a different worldview than the older generation and from the family back in India, may reveal itself quite a challenge. On the other hand, pivoting has been named as being an increasingly helpful ability that will only help in gaining more economic and social success in the future. The situations mentioned throughout this part of the chapter on Identity representations—Being Hybrid—so far, has proven that plural or dual identity representation may change for the same person according to different situations in which they find themselves moving and whom they might interact with. The differences amongst generations in the case of the Sikhs in Italy, can lead to appreciate the ability of the youth to be flexible, changeable and adaptable in various contexts, a talent that was not as enforced in previous generations, except out of necessity. The older generation, now that it has gained more opportunities to readjust to a more sacred way of life is criticizing

⁶⁵ This line was first said by Sukhi, one of Harminder’s friend and the official link with the bride’s side of the family. She mentioned this statement, and thus most of the people around the table strongly agreed with this opinion.

and disapproving the fact that new generation Italian-Sikhs want to adapt their lifestyle to their society as well. However, the new generation must see the possibilities and difficulties ahead. Being hybrid is a new type of practice which is definitely contextual and situational, thus the actual location of the person being hybrid may in fact affect the practice as well, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

3.3. Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was not to specifically identify the representation of every Sikh in Italy, neither to give a very wide answer that would universally represent this group in the whole of the country. Rather the sub-question was investigating the negotiation of the different rhetorics of identity representation in Italy for the researched group. The aim was to demonstrate the various personal practices that an individual may use in a defined context and environment in order to fit into a said 'identity' representation. In other words, the performances that lead the studied Sikh migrants to act upon a rhetoric of identity representation either consciously or unintentionally. Within this chapter a complete analysis of the three main rhetorics of identity representation of the Sikhs in Italy has been achieved. Being Indian (Sikhs), Being Italian or successively Being Hybrid as the Sikhs' performances in Italy, are three rhetorics with their individual situations, performers and, contain their fair share of challenges and struggles.

The last representation, Being Hybrid, has been the most challenging and encompassing of the three. Most of the analysis within this last rhetoric is a result of the analysis achieved beforehand. It reflected on the notion that the new generation Italian-Sikhs' behaviors are in fact originally coming from more than one culture through their parental *culture* and new *way of life* thus, they can pivot easily between the two. This 'cut and mix' method may still bring some perpetual and internal challenges in their hybrid cultural mindset, and make the new generation re-evaluate their own decisions far and wide. Ultimately, the Sikh respondents may include themselves or exclude themselves purposefully, and the local society, as counterparts may exclude or include the Sikh for various reasons. Thus, the choice, despite being an internal struggle, is not always up to them. They may be seen one way and see themselves in another, but they are most of the time aware of this situation and respond to it with ingenuity as presented in this chapter. It is therefore valid to state that performing some sort of representation of Being Indian, Italian or Hybrid is related to where an individual was born, was socialized, lives and where is their home and future, thus the relationship with the space becomes a crucial topic that will be exhaustively analyzed in the next analytical chapter.

Chapter 4: Space Relationships

In this chapter, to elucidate the sub-question ‘How do Sikh migrants experience and consider their spaces and the place of Italy nowadays?’, the researched Sikh community originally from Punjab India, recently locating and dwelling in Italy, will be examined. Thus, the connections that the respondents have with the spaces of both India and Italy additionally at the place of Italy will be investigated. The aim of this chapter is in fact to examine the space relationships as a concept of ‘belonging’ as in the notion of attachments and locatedness which is interconnected and often synthesized within the notion of identity. Yet, it remains a crucial way to analyze the researched migrant Sikhs’ challenges to reside in this European country, away from their homeland. It is acknowledged that the concept of place and identity (representations) are often bound into the notion of ‘sense of place’; a notion that will be discussed extensively in this chapter. Communities and individuals often identify with a place as part of their personal sense of identity; some sense of “geographical locatedness” (Massey & Jess 1995, 3), and would be significant to how they interpret their representation of identity.

The goal of this chapter will not be to use one notion to explain another. The attempt is not to analyse the relationships that the Sikh respondents have with their space in order to reinforce their identity representations. Quite the contrary, these two crucial concepts will be kept separated in full measures unless the connection is either straightforward or simply necessary for the analysis of this chapter. By way of explanation, there will be overlaps with the previous chapter yet; the importance of the notion of space and its relationships will be kept to the foreground since it is an essential component of spatial aspects of culture itself. As Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga point out, “[the] interest in space and place is not accidental, it is necessary for understanding the world we are producing and inserting our discipline into the heat of social and political debate” (2003, 2). As well, the debate of where a migrant community belongs, or where these individuals feel they are at ‘home’ are undeniably important aspects of the society for the Sikh respondents of this Italian place-based research and for many other countries as well.

This complex analysis of the set of relations that the researched Sikh community entertains with their land shall be described henceforth. All in all, the main relationships with the spaces and place will be exposed within four individual parts. At first there will be an examination of the historical and traditional spaces of India, the Sikh homeland and the location where the first settlers originated from. This will lay the foundation of the comparative perspective between the former space of these migrant Sikhs and their new space in Italy. In the next part, the analysis will follow a sequential path, thus shift toward the perception of the space of Italy, the destination that these Sikhs have ended up anchoring as their geographical location. Ultimately, the discussion and observations are presented in an approach which emphasizes the spaces of Italy, especially in the north where this community has congregated, since the research is place-related and conducted exclusively in Italy. However, the constant impressive upgrades in technology, mobility and telecommunications, may permit a person to easily connect to a place that would hold important meaning (Vertovec 2009 *cf.*, Ferraris 2012) such as a ‘homeland’ and thus the spaces of India Punjab become more than relevant for this analysis of space relationships. Hence, the second part will examine the spaces of Italy and the migrant Sikh respondents’ everyday life as well as their migrational course towards this unique country. The spaces from India to Italy will be exposed through history, tradition, memories, life and work opportunities, individual impressions, the everyday life and so on.

The third part will focus on the creation of a sense of place, which relies on the notion that a ‘space’ is understood as a ‘place’ when it is infused with meaning. The place that these Sikh respondents could attach themselves to—counting the fact that some are simply disconnected from a place—is explored geographically and within a social context. The research respondents who participated in interviews and opened their houses and unlocked their feelings for this research are interpreting their life situations sometimes uniquely in relation to India, at times, primarily related to Italy and few times, related to the world in general. Lastly, the fourth part—a continuity to the third part—will bridge the notion that those who conceive of Italy as their place, now have the possibility to then establish their homes in this same country and thus take root. Through some length of residency—long or short— and the proximity to one’s family or social network, as well as the community surrounding their place of living, they have created some place realization and felt rooted in their place-belongingness. Thus, some respondents have managed to discover that they do belong in Italy, and that they definitely want to put down their roots in the Italian land.

4.1. Spaces of India: Historical and Traditional

The topic considered at this point is the relationships that the researched Sikhs of Italy have with their space. It is important to construct a sort of comparative basis originally from the spaces of India to be compared to the spaces of Italy in order to determine how these Sikhs see the spaces where they live now notwithstanding their historical, traditional and social connection to their Indian homeland of Punjab. The analysis will draw upon Antonsich's auto-biographical factor relating to a person's past history mainly the personal experiences, relations, memories from childhood or adulthood and so on, which ties this person to a said place in their mind and in their actuality. These memories and personal experiences will indeed be associated with the time spent and lived in each country, and this could easily explain why most of those portraying evident auto-biographical factors, may they be positive or negative, are those who lived a part of their life in India. The older generation of Sikhs in Italy may have more to say about the spaces of India, related to their memories, as well as the underlying reason of their emigration. As for the studied new generation, their views of the spaces of India may resonated differently since their own childhood memories would have been lived either in both spaces or majorly only in Italy. They may entertain valuable memories from specific visits to India, and thus hold on to specific and strong opinions about this 'homeland' while experiencing their comparative to Italy or to what was told of India from their elders. Their opinions may be less precise than the older generation yet is valuable and sound in order to get a thorough perspective of the spaces of India. Therefore, for the analysis to determine the importance and impressions of the spaces of India, there will be a presentation of the older generations' opinions and reflections first, and then an exhibition of the younger generations' view as well.

4.1.1. The Nostalgia of the Older Generation

The older generation of the researched Sikh migrants in Italy are those that arrived in Italy as adults and did not necessarily go through the process of integration with the Italian school system, but established themselves on their own, with the support of the community, and then worked on finding job opportunities. This means that these individuals lived for a great part of their lives in India and are understandably still very connected to the land they left behind. Their emotional experiences and connections are related to the connection to their family remaining in India and the emotion coming from the land of childhood memories, amplified by the saddening, systematic and instrumental decision to migrate to another country. This decision was probably not because they disliked their previous country as a whole, but more pragmatic, thus they may keep a certain nostalgia of their former land. Conversely it is also possible that some migrants do not feel any nostalgia towards their country of origin, and a 'dream of return' must not be taken for granted. The experiences with the spaces of India may be very conflictual, because of various factors,

including the frustration of the departure, or the afflicting causes of migration. The strong relationships to the homeland and connections to the people who remained in India as mentioned above, may not be so solid or rewarding, thus it is necessary to state that not every member of the Sikh community in the rural north felt nostalgic about Punjab, but that some did in various instances, and others only named the reasons of their migration without expressing much emotions or connections through their migrant trajectory.

The most common influential reason revealed in this research to emigrate from India, according to the greatest part of the sampled group, is the lack of work opportunities in the Indian spaces. The deficiency in job prospects will be analyzed and conceptualized after some investigation into the many voices, observations, and empirical data gathered at the various field sites henceforth. Thus, with the topic of work and life opportunities, a first respondent which throughout the interviews pointed out this issue is Rajdeep, a mature and experienced *amritdhari* Sikh from the Bergamo region. He has been in Italy for the past fifteen years and explained that he is in Italy “because of the employment program. There is no good scope for the job in India. I was a teacher there and my pay was very, very low, so I preferred to shift there [Italy]”⁶⁶. Rajdeep, now aged 43, is working in a factory in the surroundings of Bergamo and is glad to have found employment to provide for his family, but does not express more emotions towards India, moving was a good decision, and India is simply a memory from the past.

Similar stories about migration due to lack of employment could be heard throughout the community mainly by the eldest respondents of the group, such as Namjot⁶⁷, 52 years old and living in Italy for more than 30 years at this point. During a lazy afternoon at Namjot’s house, the occasion for an interview arose, since her daughter was present and ready to translate. Therefore we all sat at the round table in the kitchen, on the highly uncomfortable and worn out chairs so that the questions began. Slowly, this interview became more of a friendly conversation. Namjot’s daughter, pleasantly moved to the nearby couch to be more comfortable while I was fussing with my notebook, questions and recorder. Namjot slowly began by explaining, that her husband is very educated, he was an electrician in India and he also worked the land with his brothers, but he could not continue his work in feasible way, so he decided to go against his family’s wishes and move to another country to find work. Namjot’s daughter translated the essential of what her mother did not say in Italian and encouraged her mother to continue. Since her daughter was not even at the table anymore, Namjot decide to also move to a more comfortable position, leaving me alone at the

⁶⁶ Rajdeep, age 43, born in India, arrived here at age 28.

⁶⁷ Namjot, age 52, born in India, in Italy since the age of 29.

table, hoping for my recorder to have a good microphone. In fact, Namjot went to the other end of the kitchen got a big bowl, some vegetables, a sharp knife and sat down to a very low wooden stool on the ground and began cutting vegetables for the dinner while retelling the story of her husband's migration to Italy. According to Namjot, it took him some time to find something stable as he was amongst the first few Sikhs to settle in the north of Italy. The family was not happy with his actions because he came out of the traditional ways. It is only after he managed to make a name for himself working in the *stalle* and bringing his wife and daughter to Italy that his extended family started accepting his choice, and even saw an opportunity for other members of the family. It was not easy for his family and through her translator, Namjot told that, "[a]ctually, they [Namjot and her husband] could live also in India because they also have a solid background in India. But due to some issues, they moved out in Italy, but the only reason to work here was to *work*. So, they found work and that's all"⁶⁸. Their decision to migrate was related to the opportunity to provide a better life for their growing family, therefore they worked towards finding employment and a decent wage.

Throughout Namjot's statement it is palpable that their emotions towards the spaces of India are still strong and that they are still attached to their traditional country. Gupta and Fergusson in the introductory comment of *Culture, power, place: ethnography at the end of an era*, recognized the fact that "[r]emembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. This has long been true of immigrants, who use memory of place to construct imaginatively their new lived world. "Homeland" in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples, though the relation to homeland may be very differently constructed in different settings" (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 11, *cf.* Leonard 1997, *cf.* Malkki 1997). It may not be clear from Namjot's multiple encounters whether she uses her understanding of the spaces of India to construct her life in the spaces of Italy, but it is certain that it still is an iconic and symbolic anchor for her and her family.

It is true that the situation in India is not necessarily the most economically impressive. A great part of the population of the Punjabi province of India work in the agricultural fields where most of the employments were originally located. However, in the last few decades the situation changed due to the economic decline of the value of specific sorts of food, because of natural phenomena, and then the wages that the workers received became too low to provide for one's family. This has led to migration to more economically active lands and territories. Once again, Namjot recalls this time in order to set her story in time and in context. With a sort of melancholy, and through a translator, she discusses what may have led

⁶⁸ Ibid.

to less opportunities for work for many people in Punjab and ultimately made her husband, Gurnam⁶⁹, decide to move to Europe.

Catherine: I would like you to explain why did you move to Italy and then why did you finally move here in Olmeneta. Can you?

Translator: [Punjabi to Namjot]

Namjot: [mix of Punjabi, Italian and English]

Catherine: If I understood right, for couple of years, almost three, there had been floods so for the agriculture it was not good, so the work here was easier and better.

Translator: Yes because, they owned land in India and they used to work in the old farm. But they were in their family over there.

Namjot: [mix of Punjabi, Italian and English]

Catherine: So, the whole family worked in the country all together and I'm not sure I understood after that.

Translator: Well she said that all the three brothers worked in the same field in agriculture and the last time it wasn't [...] they didn't create profit, so it was good, that one of the three went outside and explore a new way to earn new money.

(Namjot, age 52, born in India, in Italy since the age of 29)

These floods may have caused more than only Namjot's husband's loss of income. There were probably other factors that affected the agricultural field of work, but this one was mentioned and taken into consideration when Gurnam had to make a choice about his future. He was the one amongst the three brothers who decided he wanted more for his family and himself. He had no children at the time, his daughter would be born only two years before his wife would move to Italy, and his son would then be born in Italy. This and the fact that his brothers later on, came to Italy and worked with him, is the main proof that the livings that he found, after many trials in Italy—South to North—and then to the South of France, to finally settle in the north of Italy as a *stalle* worker, proved his bargain of leaving India for Europe, a successful venture.

Other respondents of the new generation Italian-Sikhs have communicated their migration trajectory with their family's oral stories of this time of change. Ravdeep was only 6 years-old when she migrated to Italy and did not necessarily realize the reasons for this change of country at the time. Her father had left India for some time and managed to reunite with his wife and daughter later. The story was lived and told to Ravdeep afterwards,

“But he [Ravdeep's father] was here [Italy] from 96, from 1996 and we came here after, when I was able to leave India. And my dad left India for job, for work, and also for us and for my grandparents

⁶⁹ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30.

[...] for them it was better to come here. So, he decided to come here [Italy]. But for three years he worked in another job because before leaving India he worked as that too.

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6)

Ravdeep's father had his young family in mind, he wanted to better his personal and economic situation for him, for his wife and child, as much as for the grandparents that needed to be taken care of. His decision to move out of India was an economic incompatibility with Indian spaces and the need to take care of his own, it invigorated him out of his country of origin despite his religious attachment to his traditional homeland and the rest of his family.

There had been many successful ventures from the Sikh migrants to Italy related to finding work, nonetheless, many still remember the spaces of India as positive moments in their life and some even regret some parts of their former life. This is the case of Livpreet and Shinder, this young couple of 38 and 36 years old were living in a city when they lived in India, and then once they moved to Italy in the hopes of finding work managed to secure a job in a more rural area than he was used to living in. This may go against the usual rural-to-rural migration perspective, but this couple is amongst the few migrant Sikh respondents which were not originally living in a smaller village but the big city, which may have created a deeper sense of displacement versus other migrant Sikhs of their community. Livpreet's family new location was a lot more rural than where their previous house in India was located. Considering this, Livpreet first arrived illegally in the south of Italy and tried to find work in this location. He enjoyed the people and the place, but he had to move north to find some opportunities since the south was not suitable for his needs of employment. When he did find work in a northern meat factory, he established himself, became a legal migrant in 2002 and sponsored his wife to come and live with him. They are happy with their financial situation for their two sons but as Livpreet claims "the reason is that we were in the city. There is a difference between the rural area and the city"⁷⁰. Overall, they long for their former more urban Indian spaces to live, and experience life as they had always done. Thus despite the lack of employment in India, the spaces of India for this couple, are still desirable and still hold deep meaning, past history and preferences as well as nostalgic memories.

Not only does the auto-biographical factor from Antonsich's concepts discuss memories, but it also includes personal experiences of a space which would influence impressions and possibly attachment to a said place. In a comparative analysis, the deep differences with one's mode of living or personal experiences

⁷⁰ Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002.

from the spaces where one lived in India and the spaces where one lives in Italy have been important and sometimes difficult for some respondents such as Remeet. Thus, she reported that,

“In India, there is [...] we have our culture, so [...] we live with our people that have similar [...], that are same to us. Living here is a little bit different because we live with different people with different culture. So, we have to stay how they stay and not with our culture.”

(Remeet, age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27)

It is understandable that those that lived the longest in their homeland miss the community and the culture that was forever present around them. The hard reality of living as an immigrant in a new country, in a new meaningless space, for only two years in her case now, is a difficult reality. Remeet’s life as a new bride of a migrant Sikh in Italy is far from simple as she has not decided herself to move in Italy, but she agreed in marrying him even if he was earning a living in a foreign country. Their common plan was to earn enough money to go back to India and raise a family there. Thus it is understandable that her relationship with the Indian spaces filled with her culture and with her people hold so much more importance in her life versus the Italian spaces. She has not sincerely left her life in India and wishes to return soon where she feels the most connected to the spaces around her and where she felt happier.

In the intention of looking at the spaces of India, Baldeep represents the other end of the spectrum in a positive perspective from the older generation of Sikhs. He left India less than ten years ago and has been increasingly in contact transnationally speaking with his homeland: India and parts of Kashmir.

Baldeep: Okay because I prefer more and more India because [...] it is my hometown and my family are there. [...] Yes, over there and, I have been there last month, and I enjoyed it there. I saw some differences between India and Italy because nowadays India is also very forward, people are so intelligent and educated people. Roads are good, electricity is good, and I think maybe after 10 or 12 years I will go. I prefer more and more to live there yes.

Catherine: You came here because you [...]

Baldeep: I needed a job, need money.

Catherine: But if you get money, you can go there back again.

Baldeep: Yes exactly!

(Baldeep, age 27, born in Kashmir, arrived in Italy at age 18)

Baldeep travels very often to India, usually at a minimum rate of twice a year and as conveyed by this excerpt, he enjoys this travelling to his hometown to see his family quite a lot. He has perceived, on the contrary to a great deal of respondents from this research group, that India has become better than it has ever been. His only reason to move out of India was to find work and earn enough money to go back to India. Baldeep could be described as ‘mobile but attached’ by Gustafson (2013) since he is definitely a “person who has left their home place for higher education or work elsewhere, but who maintained strong emotional bonds with

their place of origin” (2013, 39). Baldeep is a great example of this sort of individual and one could add, that this attachment may be upheld until his return to his homeland, according to him, in 10 to 12 years. Baldeep has moved to Italy because of work, and Remeet has left India because her groom is employed in Italy, but both maintain deep bonds to their homeland, their spaces of India.

4.1.2. The viewpoint of the New Generation

The data collected from the new generation Sikh migrants’ perspectives within this research came most often from spontaneous discussions of their views of India since they were born in Italy or if they were born in India, they did not live long in this country. There were only a few instances where the researched Italian born Sikhs discussed some of their relationships with Indian spaces during interviews despite many intent questions in bringing more data to this research. Youngsters ranging from the age of 15 to 25 in the researched group often visit the Punjabi homeland of their parents and they also refer to it as the place where the family house is, and where they stay when they go on a visit to India. This family house, and this ‘homeland’ is technically theirs as well, even if it is more an abstract concept than a real vision of India because there is a seeming lack of knowledge of the Indian *way of life*. This loss forbids them to have a real comparative way to look at the life they have in the country of their birth or childhood versus the life of the country of their ethnic and religious origin. This shortcoming is illustrated in the singular feeling from Rupi’s interview excerpt. Rupi, as other young Sikhs born or raised away from the homeland may be deficient in the ability to feel comfortable in the Indian spaces, that they may not fit in quite easily. It is the case for Rupi, when she is asked if there was something that she really enjoyed about India,

Rupi: [...] I prefer here [Italy]. Because in India [...] I am like a stranger since I live here [Italy].

Catherine: You find yourself a stranger when you go there [India]?

Rupi: Because I have done all my life in Italy [...] so if I go there, I don’t know how to read and write in our language, Punjabi [...]

(Rupi, age 16, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Rupi’s clear emotion emanates from this statement, she feels estranged from her traditional ‘homeland’ since she cannot read the Indian writing. She has a perception of a sort of personal inferiority complex due mainly to the inability to read and write in her traditional language. When mentioning this notion about her, she begin by nearly blurring the fact that she was like a stranger in India, then when more information was requested, she lowered her voice and nearly whispered the answer, as if she was shameful of her situation, feeling almost as an alien when in India (Hirvi 2015). This small cry of the heart, to say out loud that she felt like a stranger resounded like she could not believe it herself, that as a Sikh she did not ‘fit’ in India, and then realized that the main reason might be her own inability to properly use the correct language. She went

through a range of emotions while realizing that her length of time out of Punjab may have made her understand that she would not fit in as well in her ancestral country anymore. It has created this dislocation or displacement that has made her an outsider of India consciously or unconsciously. The feeling of being foreign in her parents' country of origin is destabilizing for Rupri and many other new generation respondents of this research. Her coping actions was that she needed translations and thus was dependent on others around her when she needed to read signs and it made her uncomfortable with the spaces of Italy, to the point of preferring not to go to India in the future. This feeling weakens the new generation Sikhs, not only Italian-born Sikhs, but all of those who had their autobiographical memories rooted outside of the 'homeland' of Punjab. In effect, other young Sikhs in Italy claimed their discomfort at going to India for visits, as they all do every few months or years.

There are other points which the respondents advanced as differences between the two spaces according to restricted experiences of Indian spaces and longer experiences of Italian spaces for the young Italian-Sikhs. One of the first connections that they usually have with their homeland is their family and the relationship ties that they have with them. It is the reason why they often go to India during their school or work holidays. India is not really a resort destination for them, even if their perspectives are often very narrow because when they go to India, they go as visitors, almost like tourists (see Ferraris 2012), as Rupri and thus, feel foreign, estranged or on the opposite quite comfortable depending on each individual respondent. But the reason for their trip to India remains to visit friends and families, stay in the family houses and visit the villages where both sides of their family originally came from, in order to meet with the extended family members which stayed in India. This is often through the importance of the family and their location which influences how the studied new generation Sikhs experience and become familiar with elements of the spaces of India. As said by Amrit: "Our entire family is in India, except us and my mother's brother"⁷¹. This wide statement is common and encourages the new generation Sikhs to learn about the spaces of India and their ties in India. Other new generation Sikhs respondents have mentioned the people in the Indian spaces mainly their family, such as Harminder which states that: "My aunt still lives there, and I visited her once in my vacations. And my grand-parents came to Italy, but they did not like it, so they went back"⁷². Similarly Priya often recalls her childhood memories in India by re-telling stories about the childhood friends that she had and the family with who she lived with in the Indian spaces. These

⁷¹ Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents

⁷² Harminder, age 25, born in India and arrived at age 2

relationship ties are vital factors for attachment or interest in a space, even if one has not necessarily lived, or lived long in this actual space.

On the topic of relationship ties, Ravdeep who had only stayed a few instances at their large size family house in the ‘homeland’ of Punjab makes an interesting comparison between the spaces of Italy and the spaces of India. When asked to discuss the place where she lived before migrating to Italy, the assumption was that she was originally from one of the major cities from the province of Punjab was refuted when she discussed her outlook:

“No, [my family is from] a small village but near Jalandhar. Our district is Jalandhar and here houses are also different from India because in India, we have our house and you can stay alone and you know all the people in your village and when I come here, you know only your family or your neighbors [...].”

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6)

Her perspective of the spaces of India are in contradiction with those of Italian spaces, since in her opinion, India has more to offer for relationship ties. The assumption not mentioned but understood in her statement is that in India, near Jalandhar, her family and herself most likely know a great deal of the people living in their district, versus Italy where they only know family and close friends despite living in a small town in the periphery of Bergamo. The low relationship ties in Italy are presumably due to the fact that Ravdeep’s family inhabited her traditional region in India for generations versus the last 13 years they have been living and experiencing Italy. This decrease in one’s social connections may also decrease one’s connection with the spaces of Italy. In other words, the connections or relationships with surrounding people or social attachments to the locals in the Indian or Italian spaces can influence or transform the relationships that one has with the space.

Few more comparisons were made by some new generation Italian-Sikhs and the results are often more nuanced than clear. During the interviews in the north of Italy, some have had more opportunities to discuss or criticize the spaces of India set against the spaces of Italy. Through those instances it happened that their vision changed due to personal reflections at the time of the discussion or for various circumstances; bringing more mixed feelings in the balance. For example, Harminder, the young university academic in the field of international relations, the main informant of this research and the gatekeeper of the Sikh community in the Cremona province has had to answer similar questions both from the BBC journalist and for this research’s interview questions. Here are two short excerpts describing her memories or reflections of the Indian spaces.

“India is good, but Italy is the place to live. I remember in India to wake up in the morning and run through the fields with my brother at my uncle’s. They have fields here [Italy], but they don’t do it here anywhere [run in the fields].”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)⁷³

“I’m happy to be here in Italy as a Sikh and not in India as a Sikh because maybe that the other youngsters have lost some values. But I can tell them that here it’s better because I lived in Punjab for me it wasn’t so much important if there are difference of Sikh or not. I am just talking as a person because we are living in far away from our motherland so[...] Maybe for us there is more stress and I am happy that I have grown up here in a different environment than with different values which are not necessarily contradictory from the Sikh values but also from living abroad. If you live abroad obviously you have an open mentality, a different way to see things [...] you know, so yeah I’m glad to be here.”

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

These two excerpts are not apparently related, but for each circumstance, the inquiry was directed towards her impressions about living in Italy as a Sikh versus living in India. In the former instance, she explained to the journalist that she liked India, but preferred Italy even though she only lived in India until the age of two. It is a classic example of auto-biographical childhood memory affecting the person’s ties to a particular space. Her recollection of running in the field when she was fairly young was the most symbolic and deepest thought that came to her mind when she was asked about India and Italy, and after answering that Italy was her choice, it all came back to her. Despite her conscious claim that Italy was better, as she analytically described the reasons why in the second excerpt, taken from an interview which was conducted some time before. Depending on the interlocutor and the setting, her vision and childhood memories became either joyful or deeper in negative aspects related to the traditional values of her religious community. She still felt the rightful duty to uphold the notion that India, more precisely Punjab is the ‘motherland’ but compares it to her life in these Italian spaces and realizes that from abroad she can have a different perspective and feels as though she can connect more with Sikhism, with the values she learnt mainly from the Italian shores.

This mixed feeling impression from Harminder’s double and diverging answers related to her memories of the Indian space is also comparable to Amrit-Raj’s confusing outsets. Contrary to Harminder, Amrit-Raj arrived in Italy later in his childhood. He was also automatically integrated in the Italian school system and thus received a formal education in Italy, but he had spent the first twelve years of his life in India studying Hindi and Gurmukhi. On two specific occasions Amrit-Raj discusses his relationships with the spaces of Italy and of India. When conversing about his views of the life in India he said that “[there is] more liberty of [...] because, [...] It is more free (sic.) to be in India than here [Italy] because in India I have

⁷³ Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

more chances to do something than here. Here in Italy I am limited. To wear the dagger here it is illegal”⁷⁴. Thus his first reflection is about the constraints related to the wearing of his kirpan, an important religious symbol, in the Italian spaces which impedes his liking of Italy. Further along he explains,

Amrit-Raj: I would prefer to live in India [...] there is a temple, I would like to spend the rest of my life there, doing *seva*, doing [...]

Catherine: Temples like Amritsar or others?

Amrit-Raj: Yes Amritsar, [...] ideally, I want to be in any [...] all temples, also in Pakistan, I'd like to see it. I would like to see Pakistan as well[...] when I choose, in Italy or India [...] I prefer the temples of India, not India [...] not India [...]

Catherine: temples of India somewhere else?

Amrit-Raj: Yes exactly! Because India I don't like. I like Italy because here all things are good. In India, there are corruption, and all people is corruption and I don't like that things.

(Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13)

Amrit-Raj's creative mind interprets both the spaces of Italy and the spaces of India in a critical style. Italy does not have the spaces for his religion, for its temples and for its religious symbols to be worn legally. As for India, even if it is more permissive and has the original and magnificent gurdwaras, the life and spaces are corrupted, a notion claimed and duly disliked by many. On another note, in those two instances, Amrit-Raj begins by purposely choosing his traditional homeland, in which he has a deep attachment, before even arguing against the spaces of India. This desired attachment to the homeland overall could be explained by the notion of “diaspora [which] always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire of attachment” (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1989, i; *cf.* Vertovec 2009, 6). In fact, this ‘trail of collective memory’ has influenced Amrit-Raj's view of India. He can surely see the negative points of Indian spaces but his desire to be connected to his family's homeland and the traditional country of Sikhism that he rationalizes that India remains a good place to spend his life, as his first claim of the last excerpt denotes.

This rationalization has not been similar throughout the respondent group. In fact a plurality of voices had been recorded about the personal impressions of the spaces of India. In fact, many do not have such a positive stance towards India, even despite its centrality as the ‘homeland’ or ‘motherland’ amongst those that migrated to Italy in their youth. Some have recounted, such as Satnam⁷⁵, a young woman who arrived in Italy at 13 years-old, that after visiting India in the last years, that everything changed from her early childhood memories. Her auto-biographical factors were no longer in tune with the reality surrounding

⁷⁴ Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13

⁷⁵ Satnam, age 21, born in India, in Italy since age 13

her in the spaces of India. In reality, and in her opinion, everything changed, from the people she knew to the house where she used to live with her family, and this deeply affected her and her attachment to this homeland. As for Priya, another young woman whom migrated as a pre-adolescent and lived through central memories and personal experiences in India, she also defines India in a dreadful manner right after a recent trip to her 'homeland'. She describes her latest visit to India and her visions of life in those spaces.

“Because in India, in India, you can survive only if you are a millionaire, if you have a big business, or if you do something, or you are a politician. The middle class, it is a bit difficult for the middle class there. There is too much costly(sic), [hmm] the salary is not high, the salary is not equivalent to your qualifications. Okay? So, that is why the people, always, not only now, always for the 20, 30, 40 last years, people tried to go out of India. Because of the work, because of the salary of the jobs. [...] And now I saw a thing, there is nothing pure [...] even the food! You can't have the food pure, they have mixed some things to make one food. You eat that kind of food and you are sick. Now in India, even the fruits. They are modified genetically. Yea [...] I was sick in India this time, so I thought [...] 'okay I'm sick I can try to eat some fruits'. I felt bad because I couldn't eat nothing. So, I ate the fruits, I ate watermelon, melons, but after to eat it, I feel sick again. And my aunt told me that here [India] you can't find nothing pure. Even the fruits, and all the things are modified. I don't know how the people can survive there. I think that if they are used to them, to live there [...] the water is not pure, it is dirty water, so in the home I always boil the water for me to drink it. There is (sic) many things, many causes, many reasons that why people try to move from India.”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

In this exposé, it is palpable that Priya's views of the country have changed over the years. In this instance she relates to some eloquent and dramatic experiences lived in India lately. Mentioning of course the lack of work opportunities but also of the impossibility to live in India due to the 'impurity' of the food and the high cost of life. The bad quality of the food has also been noted by other older generation respondents such as Suneeta which complains about India she says: “[t]he food also, in India it isn't right, like it seems. It contains a lot of chemical things”⁷⁶. After a short historical note on the emigration development in India by Priya, her opinion is that it is still relevant nowadays. It is interesting for an individual which lived half their life in India, that the first thing to say when asked about this homeland that she just visited, was to be highly critical and negative about the space she visited. It may have been a biased interpretation on the grounds that she was discussing this with a researcher of her community in Italy and not in Indian spaces. Nonetheless, she may also have taken a step back and was examining Indian spaces and sincerely concluded that it had changed from her memories and this, for the worst. Further on in the interview, she duly noted that she was happy to come back to Italy after her trip. She was not necessarily missing her Italian spaces, since she enjoyed travelling and visiting family and friends in India. But then again, she unraveled her deep

⁷⁶ Translator for Suneeta, age 35, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 25

dislike of some elements of the place, such as the temperature, the way people are, and of course, again, the food.

As shown throughout this section laying the basis for a comparison between the spaces of India to the spaces of Italy, the impressions of the spaces of the historical 'homeland' has certainly not been similar throughout the respondent group. In fact a number of voices and experiences were conferred, having specific notions of Indian spaces through personal experiences, relationship ties, childhood memories and the issues of this space. Presently, the relationships that one may have with the spaces of India can change for various reasons including the time spent—in any—in India before emigrating and the time spent away from the homeland. Analyzing one's former country's spaces is often done by comparing its spaces with the spaces of the new host country; Italy. Therefore, it is very intriguing to look at the group of respondents from the older generation and from the younger new generation of Sikh migrant respondents in Italy determining similar aspects of the Indian spaces such as lack of opportunities or the quality of the life, etc. Some idealize their homeland, either through their memories, their family, and their family's memories or by comparison to the spaces of Italy through the auto-biographical factor. Others dislike India and do not keep such strong relationships with their former spaces because of India's reputation of corruption and misfortunes which led to bold emigration for so many years. Within this framework now laid of the comparable view of the spaces of India, it is now important to analyze the Italian spaces and the everyday life in this location which now marks the researched community. All of the respondents in this research have lived in Italy for at least two years, or for their whole life and could now remark on their new spaces and their relationships with it.

4.2. Spaces of Italy: Location and Everyday Life

To pursue with the concept of space in general, the next important space to discuss is the Italian space and the experiences, impressions and relationships that Sikh respondents have with this space in their everyday life. With a broad view of the research Sikh community's spaces of settlement, the analysis will begin by defining the rural-to-rural migration that has occurred for the researched community and then it will uncover the everyday life that those members of the community have experienced in the space of Italy. It is compelling to look at their sense of place in the world by focusing on their life and relationships acquired and developed in Italy alone. It is done, mainly in order to further the analysis towards how those spaces can then become places of emotional connections for the respondents. By investigating into Antonsich's

auto-biographical factor, it could easily be understood that amongst the respondents, the Sikhs that were born, or spent most of their childhood in Italy, may feel foremost connected to Italy and that the central place in their life is not a 'lost' homeland, as it may be for their parents. Be that as it may, within the researched group, from one end of the spectrum, those of the older generation and the first Sikh settlers in Italy, up to the other end of the spectrum, those born and socialized in Italy who have never lived elsewhere, many have a say in their current space and their relationships with it.

4.2.1. The Migrational Path to Italy

One of the main assumptions related to the relationships that the researched community has with the spaces of Italy is their supposed connection to the land, as a rural land. In fact, the term of rural-to-rural migration could be used for the Sikh migrant community in the Po Valley. Some of the migrant Sikhs respondents in this research have in fact connections to the Indian spaces which could potentially have helped them once they or their family arrived in Italy. This assumption also leads to the statement that this is probably one of the reasons how this community in less than forty years, has reached such a strong connection with the spaces of Italy, related to their migration from one rural space to another. Truly, the Indian Sikhs originally come from the Punjabi province of India, which has been considered the bread-basket of India or even the 'granary of India' because of its multiple agricultural fertile lands which feed almost the entire population of India. This concentration of fruitful lands causes a great deal of the work available in this province to be connected to the agricultural economy from near or from far. However, not every Punjabi resident works in the rural lands, though after the economic situation of India changed, either due to flooding, sickness or splitting of farmlands to the offspring into non-viable portions in order to maintain a living, many of those that were usually working on the farms, were the first to migrate away from India. From the side of Italian spaces, it is also important to note that within the phenomenon of migration in Italy, in the past twenty years, "the country has changed its status from a place of emigration to one of immigration" (Ambrosini 2013a, 176), quite rapidly. In fact, all Southern Europe has developed into preferred destinations for migrants. This has thus rendered the multicultural situation somewhat of a recent singularity for Italians.

The Punjabi Sikhs from the research group are thus part of this new circumstance. The main difference in the Italian settlement compared to many other Sikh settlements in the world is that in the case of Italy, their community has not established itself near the urban centers naturally but primarily in the rural areas for the Sikhs in the northern provinces. The Sikhs are economic migrants, they usually move towards

where they may find economic opportunities, which usually leads them to move to a major city such as London, Birmingham, Toronto, Vancouver, etc. Yet, in Italy, the Punjabi Sikhs have settled in the rural lands of the Po' Valley in the north of Italy, where the agricultural lands, and dairy farms are located. The peculiar situation of this rural-to-rural migration of the Sikhs in Italy is the result of specific aspects that challenged the respondent Sikhs, as stated in their interviews previously, to move abroad. These aspects have become important factors which were compensated in the Italian spaces once some of the migrants arrived in Italy. In other words, in the previous section, the spaces of India were interpreted along with the causes of the respondents' decision or their family's decision to leave India. In this section, the aspects of Italy—or the lack thereof—which in consequence compels the same respondents to remain in Italy, or to long for another space to live, will be presented as counterbalance of the spaces of India in a comparative manner. Those observable and analyzed elements of the life in the Italian spaces are necessarily related to the possible opportunities that the researched migrant Sikhs in the north of Italy can encounter.

Mentioned over and over so far in this chapter, the issues with the Indian spaces, is that they cannot provide much opportunities in terms of work, life, education and wellbeing according to the respondent Sikhs in Italy. Therefore, one of the most valued factors which kept them and their family in the spaces of Italy is the possibility of gaining a good job, a decent life, a good European education and possibly happiness in a new home. Accordingly, the most discussed notion of the spaces of Italy which retains the migrants and even attracts more migrants, is the possibility to find decent work opportunities. This tale has been told oftentimes and Jasjit also learned it from his acquaintances when he moved to Italy to study a few years ago.

“[...] here, our Sikh people came around [...] [less than 40 years ago,] -Yes, a bit less than 40 years ago, they were working in farming, dairy farming. [...] So, the Italian like their work, so they adopt Indian peoples and up to now there are a lot of peoples (sic) here. And for example, I think it is the third generation here, second or third. So, for example, my friend is born in India but their fathers or their family moved here, so they moved to Italy with their fathers.”

(Jasjit, age 27, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 23, travels every year for a few months to Italy, North America and China for work)

This is a similar process to what was observed by La Brack about the Sikh rural community in California. Bruce Wilfred La Brack named it the 'chain employment'. “Like 'chain migration,' 'chain employment' means that one person gains employment, generally through kin or referral networks, bringing others into that work scene” (La Brack 1988, 104). This mechanism is acknowledged and mentioned amongst this research's respondents. For Baldeep⁷⁷, it is also what led him to stay in Italy, as he explained his trajectory

⁷⁷ Baldeep, age 27, born in Kashmir, arrived in Italy at age 18

since he came to Italy because his uncle was already in Italy and that he could offer him the chance of getting a well-paid job. This was enough to convince Baldeep to migrate to Italy and there he has been for almost ten years now. The invitation from his uncle was a small example of ‘chain employment’ which left him a proper opportunity to establish himself in Italy; as he has done since he was referred for this research by many of his friends.

It has been established that the local Italian employers appreciate the work that Indian Sikhs accomplished, and this has led them to encourage other members of their community or family to come and work with them (Duran, Wise & Bison 2012, Thapan 2013). Many of those in the researched group were farmers in India and thus the work that they had to accomplish was not far from what they were used to, similarly as in La Brack’s work with the *Sikhs of Northern California*. This chain migration and chain employment led the community to increase in very large sizes in California, and in this present case in the agricultural land of the provinces of Cremona, Mantua, Brescia, Bergamo and more. The Cremona countryside as a matter of fact is where Harminder’s family is located, one train stop away from Cremona city center, and thus only twenty minutes drive for her father Gurnam, to get to work at the *stalle* in the very early morning. Gurnam’s⁷⁸ migrant trajectory, as told by his wife and daughter—Namjot⁷⁹ and Harminder⁸⁰—began in India, he arrived in the north of Italy and as many other Indian migrants at the time, he settled in working in the circus and amusement parks (Lum 2012, 8 *cf.* Bertolani 2005) travelling between Italy and France. He was amongst the first waves of Sikh migrants and he did not succeed in leaving the south of Europe to go towards the more northern and economically developing countries. Since it was difficult for him to travel about in Europe, he thus settled in trying some different sorts of work in the local farming areas. Following on her mother’s story of her father’s migration during the kitchen discussion, Harminder adds:

“[My father] needed work, [but] with a language gap, he first did the stock and then ended up working in agricultural sector in the Po’ Valle. Plus, the Sikhs arrived here at the right time, there was a need for workers, labour, it was available, good benefits, a home near the workplace, it was very rare.

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)⁸¹

He finally found a job, agricultural employment is recognized as an easier field for lower-skilled migrants, and since Gurnam was used to work in the field with his brothers in India, he was slightly more skilled than

⁷⁸ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30

⁷⁹ Namjot, age 52, born in India, in Italy since the age of 29

⁸⁰ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2

⁸¹ Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

other migrants. This employment gave him a decently good wage for a migrant, a place to reside on a farm and thus the possibility to sponsor his family to come and join him through family reunification. This personal change in perspective offered a strong economic factor (Antonsich 2010), which created a safe, stable and material perspective into the future of his family and himself.

Amrit, another young respondent, was born in Italy, but has heard the story of her father's migration to Italy. Her father had also moved in the hopes of finding opportunities and establish his family. In the same way as Harminder's father, Amrit's father tried several employments before finding one that would suit him and his expectations.

Catherine: Did your father started to be a farmer here as well [...] I mean, when he arrived was he?

Amrit: No at the beginning, he worked with a lot of other Indian people, but they worked in the fields, like taking the potatoes and some work like that, and then after [...] at the beginning he worked in Rome. Then he moved to Cremona, he knows here *that* family, *that* farm, so he started here and here we are!

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Her father did not arrive in the north of Italy but in its capital, where there is another important Sikh community with different fields of work and different processes at play (see Bertolani, Ferraris & Perocco 2011). However, his trajectory brought him to the north, to Cremona, where he seemed to have created some ties with the workers or family at a specific farm. He thus brought his family in Cremona and established himself into farming in the north of Italy—Cremona or the Po' Valle. Another respondent recollected a similar story, in which Parminder's⁸² father also worked at first worked in agriculture and then other sorts of farming before bringing his wife and children to Italy. These life decisions were probably not done easily, but they ended up being the right ones for their family, as have all these youngsters conceded about their fathers.

Beyond agriculture nowadays, there are a great deal of migrant Sikhs, including some of the respondents which found employment in industry, factories and the service sector (Lum 2012, 8). These jobs are also very manual, and low-skilled, but for those which do not have any interest in farming neither with vegetables nor animals, and those that do not necessarily possess the skills to work in such an environment, this becomes a good choice. The work opportunities in the various factories surrounding the northern region are decently good employments offering easier schedules than farming and less inconvenience with work conditions as opposed to working in the many dairy farms of the region. A few

⁸² Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9

respondents met during the visit of the countryside of Bergamo were factory workers themselves or had someone in their family with similar jobs.

Catherine: Okay and what are you working in, here? Are you also a teacher?

Rajdeep: No[...] I have normal work here in a factory.

Catherine: Okay you also work in a factory [...] is it the same factory as Satnam's?

Rajdeep: No, there are many factories around here [Bergamo]

Satnam: It is an industrial area!

Rajdeep: Every village has a small industrial area.

(Rajdeep, age 43, born in India, arrived here at age 28 & Satnam, age 21, born in India, in Italy since age 13)

Catherine: So, your father came here because he had a job or he was looking for a job?

Rupi: He was looking for a job,

Catherine: And now what does he do?

Rupi: He cuts the pieces of pig [...] [helped for translation from her friend]

Catherine: So he works in a meat shop.

Rupi: At first in the stables, dairy farm [...]

Catherine: Okay in the dairy farms.

Rupi: And then in meat shop.

Catherine: He was then in charge of meat?

Rupi: In a factory [...] very big one.

(Rupi, age 16, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Nowadays, it is not necessarily easy to obtain work in those factories, but since there are other interesting work opportunities for both men and women, since Satnam, a young educated Italian-Sikh woman worked during her studies in another factory than the one of Rajdeep as an example, there remains other obvious choices for the Sikh researched community to establish itself in Italy and become interested in the spaces around them. The main point to retain from those statements is that there are plenty of options for skilled or low skilled workers that want to earn a good living for their future in the north of Italy, which has rendered the Italian spaces as attractive for those moving to Italy, or those willing to continue their life in Italy.

There are other factors which affect the Sikh migrant community in the research to come: to stay or to remain in the Italian spaces. It is often discussed informally amongst the respondents or slightly through the interviews but goes on to be a crucial factor which has a lot more implications. Within the spaces of India, it was mentioned that the relationship ties through personal experiences in India were strong factors for those remembering positively their life in India and on the contrary, the life in Italian spaces have seemed gloomy and devoid of relationship ties. On the other hand, in the past few decades, a great deal of migrant Sikhs have moved to Italy, often in the northern regions, and many have reconnected with family members, friends and old acquaintances from their former Italian villages. Others have in fact moved to the Italian

spaces in order to rejoin those that they love, and thus it has created a whole new set of relationship ties to the spaces of Italy. Though the direct examples may be scarce within the researched group, Remeet is one of those who the only thing which is keeping her attached to the spaces of Italy is her groom. Remeet's groom story is reminiscent of many previous migrant men. In fact, many young men came to Italy in their prime, in order to gain more economical means for their family and decided to establish themselves in Italy instead of coming back to India. In this process they sponsored their family through the family reunification policies and brought their wives, children, brothers, sisters, parents etc., to Italy and then built up their community from these earliest steps. Thus Remeet's situation, although from more recent years is similar.

Catherine: okay but why coming to Italy?

Remeet: [In Punjabi to the Translator]

Translator: because her groom is working in Italy.

(Remeet, age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27)

Catherine: And you two [Remeet and her groom] want to make your life in Italy or you are thinking to go back to India.

Remeet: [Punjabi to translator]

Translator: No, she is thinking to stay here [...] only for 1 or 2 years and then she wants to go back.

Catherine: Okay so you like better India than Italia? [laughter]

Remeet: Yes!!!

(Remeet, age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27)

As perceived within this translated comment, and throughout other claims within this research, the decision to stay in Italy is not Remeet's choice. However, her choice is to follow her groom in his country of residence and the connection she has with him is the reason for her stay in this country. Remeet's goal is that after spending a few years in this country she would manage to go back to India with her groom. However, it is also possible that within the next two years she would learn to appreciate Italy, but for the moment, what she appreciates is the feeling that she is with her family. This sort of feeling, whether being voluntarily in Italian spaces or involuntarily will be defined later as one of the basis components to transform a simple space in a meaningful place though a profound social context. Even if Remeet's situation does not bring this conclusion yet, this conceptual idea will still be examined with other examples in the further section.

Now that a short explanation of rural-to-rural migration has been presented, that the numerous work opportunities either in farming or in factory have been laid out as valuable economic factor (Antonsich 2010) of interest creating a protected and balanced life within the spaces of Italy, it may be important to notice that work opportunities alone do not necessarily offer happiness and wellbeing on their own, even more if the work is not as prolific as it was. A few respondents mentioned negative points about the spaces of Italy and

they must be taken into consideration at this point; Italy is not necessarily a dream come true for those migrant Sikhs from the research group. Seeing that the Sikh migrant community has arrived in Italy less than forty years ago, it is understandable that they would have gone through some hardship and challenges related with the work opportunities which are “relatively well-paid (indeed many cow milkers earn more than researchers), secure, provide a range of monetary and non-monetary benefits, and offer scope (albeit limited) for job mobility” (Lum 2015, 13) despite the characteristics of the job that are demanding and insalubrious (Compiani & Quassoli 2005, 16)⁸³. Therefore, it may be expected that some of the respondents discussed the possibility of their family to leave the jobs that they have, both because of the characteristics of the employment as described above, but also in order to look for steadier opportunities and security which are less and less evident to find in the passing years.

The attractiveness of the space of Italy for economic migrants is hard to resist, although on the other hand, one must question the actual ‘space’ that has been allowed to the migrants such as the Sikhs in the Italian society at large. It is true that the Sikhs as from the respondents’ families may have had successful experiences, the Sikh migrants are often wanted for work, even needed in some places, but rarely welcomed or encouraged to stay in any concrete way. The increasing size of the Indian and Sikh population in Italy and their important presence in agricultural employment has been presented previously, and it is thus an “undisputed fact that immigrants are essential to the survival of the Italian economy primarily due to the low birth rates and the apprehensions about meeting the social security demands of a rapidly ageing population” (Thapan 2015, 54; see Calavita 2005, Ambrosini 2012). Therefore, as documented migrants the first generation of Sikhs migrated for employment and life opportunities. They were often seen as ‘welcome but not wanted’ (Zolberg 1987) and were probably thought as disposable. It may be true that the employment opportunities in the agricultural fields might be important and remain a strong reason for migration towards Italy and mainly the north of Italy, as Livpreet⁸⁴ mentioned about his friends and family that “they move up here for job opportunities yes [...]”, and if one wants to find opportunities for life success, they have to focus on where they are living now or move forward. As for the sufficient space given to migrants and the possibility to be welcomed within the spaces of Italy, with or without participating in the agricultural work or dairying as well as agro-processing, for example, Parmesan cheese production in Italy (Thandi 2012), the only

⁸³ For a more thorough analysis of working conditions for Indians in Italy, see Lum 2015, Sahai & Lum 2013 or Compiani & Quassoli 2005.

⁸⁴ Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002.

certainty is that the migrant Sikhs remain valuable to the Italian economy and thus the Sikh respondents may still expect positive changes in how they have been perceived in this country.

In fact, what transpired in the overall fieldwork of this researched Sikh community established in the north of Italy is that their connection with the spaces of Italy are related, greatly but not only, to the job market. Migrant Sikhs, as they portrayed in the interviews present a certain attachment to the Italian spaces when the desired opportunities of employment are present, and thus they want to remain in this country. However, when because of the economic events of the last few years have impeded onto the job market, the same Sikhs begin to feel disconnected, or unattached to the Italian spaces and consider moving abroad to another location, another space. Surely, more than only the respondents of this research have doubted their interest in staying in Italy if there was no more employment or if their businesses were slowing down. When migrating out of India and into Italy, the researched Sikhs or their family were looking for a better quality of life, improved opportunities of work, security, academic possibilities, and so on, and for many years, those objectives were reached. Nevertheless, this did not endure, especially for the new generation whom just began to find their place, economic stability of their own and security. Slowly, despite the length of time and a possible strong place-belongingness, as will be examined shortly, many are mentioning their intention to move out of Italy since they are no longer committed to staying put. Even in 2015, Thapan observed this possible migrant trajectory by stating that “[t]he uncertainty over their employment is the main factor influencing their decision to use Italy as a stepping-stone to secondary migration” (Thapan 2015, 57). The situation has been described in various instances, and the most eloquent outlined it as such:

“[Italy] better than India, yesss! But now the situation of Italy is not too much good (sic), right now! 10 years ago, it was good for us [...] even 5 years ago. But 5 years, 4 years [...] everyone wants to move from here[...] because the same story again, the jobs, the salary.”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

“Because of what we know a lot of things are moving around. I even know some families in Cremona, the destiny of those families [...] some that have stayed here for more than 20 years even with work, without any security of the situation, they are moving, migrating to England [...] and then it is not easy to go there. It is a system completely different.”

(Harinder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

It is natural for Sikhs to analyze their own state and conditions of living when they come from those families that are well established and are not yet pressed by the situation to move out of the country. Neither Harinder nor Priya are thinking that their family would benefit from a move to another country just yet. They may observe possibilities for themselves outside of Italy since they are both educated young women

coming from open-minded families, but their view of other countries would have been the same with or without a crisis in the Italian economy.

According to the situation depicted by both Harminder and Priya things could go fast in a positive or negative mode within the economic sphere of the country. Italy is still facing a certain economic downside felt primarily by migrants working in low-skilled jobs. Even if the main production of Italian cheese will never completely fail, it is not necessarily in the best economical position at the moment. The new generation of Italian-Sikhs, now at an age to try to find work on their own, have to make the decision about which process they wish to use. Some would simply follow their fathers' footsteps, others would use their education for a different sort of work, but the difficulty is that in both options, the economic situation of Italy is underpinning their effort. This is the reason why many members of the Sikh community within the research have been openly discussing the option of moving out of Italy.

Amrit: In fact, my father is thinking to change the country.

Catherine: He wants to move? Where, do you know?

Amrit: Because [hmmm] like you know in Italy, there is a crisis, and there are only few jobs and also the money that you receive, the salary is also less. So [...] there are a lot of people who are moving in Australia, in England or in Canada. So, my father was thinking to going in one of those countries (sic). Because we know a lot of families that are going to Australia and they work very well, so he thinks that there are a lot of opportunities also for my brothers who haven't studied a lot.

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

“Now also in Italy, there are a lot of family that are moving, in Canada, in England, in our gurdwara, the families that I know, there are 5 or 6 that are moving to England. That or also other family that I don't know move to Canada, Australia like them [...] and so [...] in India too.

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Amrit in multiple occasions mentions the movement of population that she had observed or was told about within her community at the gurdwara or within her family acquaintances. During the interview and during common chitchat, she expressed her family's intentions to move out of Italy. Other countries begin to appear healthy in employment markets and more welcoming for those without a formal education. The official statistics are not necessarily present to support those claims of a Sikh population movement, or that work opportunities are better abroad for low-skilled migrants, however, the impression alone, the wild fire notion and gossip that this illustration of families leaving is enough for Amrit's family and probably others to reflect on this possibility.

Provided that Harminder and Priya are less worried about their family and their move to another country, besides Amrit's family envisaging the possibility to move abroad, it opens up to a complete other

array of thoughts and perspectives on the situation. This has indeed been stated by other respondents which find this situation accurate and alerting such as Kirat through a translator: “Well he said, it is a good place where to live, but it is also a little bit blurred for the moment. Because due to the moment of the crisis and so it is not clear yet, what is going to happen next”⁸⁵. Through Kirat’s comment, he would be considered to have a low perspective towards the spaces of Italy. Kirat worries about the future of his family and of himself if the situation persists and the uncertainty or distress is noticeable in his body language. He remains calm but keeps on staring at his infant daughter dressed in small and colorful traditional Indian outfit, playing on the carpeted floor next to us. His actions, even if they went unnoticed by his translator when she related the content of his statement while being busy playing with the child, were perceived. The time it took for the translator to recollect the sentiment and frame it in English, permitted a small window of analysis of Karat’s movements.

Working and possibly studying abroad especially in countries such as United Kingdom, Canada, United-States and so on, are standouts and usual destinations for Sikhs who wish to leave their country either India or other diasporic location, in search of more opportunities in life. Cloet, Coseman and Goddeeris mentioned about the Sikhs of Belgium willing to move to any Anglo-Saxon country that “[a]side from the advantage of being English-speaking nations, many Sikhs have the impression that these countries are more multicultural and open to immigrants and economic profit-seekers” (2012, 58). It may be true of the more open-minded nature of Anglo-Saxon countries; however, the challenge is with the same Anglo-Saxon nature featured in these countries which may impair the possibility of the Sikh respondents from Italy to gain better opportunities. As stated by Thapan, for Italian-Sikhs, “Italian is not a problem” (2015, 57), but English is, if they want to interact in the English-speaking countries they need to be able to converse in the English language as well. The incongruity of not speaking a good English is not necessarily related to the Indian Sikh background. More often it is due to the Italian school system, which according to observations within the researched group and the locals in Italy, is not rigorously enforcing English education, and this may lead to problematic experiences when considering a move to another country.

“No but, for example, if I go to England, its [...] [complicated], here I have something, I have a diploma. In another country this diploma is zero. For the language [...] [I am] zero. [...] And there is a lot of competition in England [...] so there, I am zero!

(Harjinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10)

⁸⁵ Kirat, age 30, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 18.

Rupi: No because I am Italian, and if I go to a place where they speak English I'll spend all my life without [...]

Catherine: So because you speak Italian or because you feel [...]

Rupi: Yes feel, and then because, it's been 16 years that I live here right, so I prefer to stay here, than changing everything and going to another place or country. I find myself better here.

(Rupi, age 16, born in Italy, Indian parents)

The fear of not speaking English well enough, and even the fear of not having his degree recognized abroad because it was accomplished in Italy made Harjinder decide not to move away for job opportunities. His anxiety related to the foreign language is founded in the internationality of the English language which he does not master enough to concede on working elsewhere than Italy even if his opportunities are not necessarily more promising if he stays. Within this context at the moment it may make for a poor presentation of the spaces of Italy for those seeking employment but as Priya, Harminder and others have mentioned, the situation may yet still change and improve especially for those already embedded within the Italian everyday life. As for Rupi, the simple thought of going to a country where they will only speak English to her makes her uneasy, and thus she prefers not to move to another country, and rather stay where she feels good, in Italy.

4.2.2. The Day-to-Day Italian Life

Thereafter, the second part of the Italian Spaces and Everyday Life will examine some instances of the day-to-day experiences of the respondents from the Sikh migrant community in the north of Italy. The relationships that they have acquired towards the spaces of Italy are intriguing and demonstrate the next step towards affirming that a meaningless space has potential to become much more evocative and turn into a place of importance. Once again through Antonsich's auto-biographical factor combining memories of every age, personal experiences and relations, it can tie a person quite deeply to a specific space or subsequently a place. In fact, many Sikhs from the respondents' group born and or socialized in Italy, do consider their best childhood memories and connections or relationship with their space agreeably with Italy. A first review which needs to reflect on the spaces of Italy, unrelatedly to the migration patterns is about the location of one's house. Some such as Livpreet and Shinder, the former urban residents in India, are deploring the lack of an outdoor space, as explained by Livpreet, "[in] India, we are used to live on the ground floor. The second thing in India we could have a garden, here I have just the balconies, you can see on the side there [pointing at the door]. But when I bought this house, this was all I could buy"⁸⁶. It is compelling to understand that in Indian spaces, Livpreet and Shinder lived in a house with an outdoor space and a garden, while in

⁸⁶ Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002

the Italian space they live in a second floor flat in the rural countryside. This may lead to a better understanding of their situation since their lifestyle in India was probably quite different, and that their situation at the moment may not be perfect, but they manage essentially as they could.

Some other respondents are homesick of their former village house's tranquility, and this, despite a strong resemblance in size and the open-mindedness of the people living in the Italian villages. Arvinder explains that "I lived in the same kind of town [small and quiet], but it is not the same. The traffic is different. There is more traffic here, but I find it better. Because I like it here, I like the people who are the [...] who want to be friends with you. People are nice"⁸⁷. But many have put these reasons aside, the possible lack of outdoor space or the strong noise of traffic, because this would not be a contender set against the safety that the Sikhs feel in Italy compared to India. It is not just safer for the researched Sikh members in general, it is safer for young women, and they are aware of this.

Armandeep: But [hmm], I think that India, when I go last time, it isn't a safe place. 'Cause (sic) I can't give, I go and can't go out [...]

Jazpreet: [...] alone [...]!

Armandeep: [...] alone! while here [in Italy] [...] you can!

Catherine: So, you go out alone all the time?

Armandeep: With the permission of my parents!

Jazpreet: It is more safer (sic) [...] more safe Italy, but is not the safest!

Armandeep: Yea but [hmm], in India [...] I would not get the permission ever

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents & Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8)

Which for many parents, this fact it is a benediction to live in a place where they can let their youngsters go outside more frequently and not necessarily worry about any danger or needing someone to accompany them all the time. It may not be the safest place, as Jazpreet mentioned, but it is definitely a change from the conceivable danger of India for young women walking alone outside even during day time. These very concrete factors of divergences with their house in India and their house in Italy are just some of the components of the spaces of Italy. Additionally, one must also take into consideration the social relationships that one may develop in the Italian spaces in order to further create meaning.

The social ties connecting the migrant Sikhs to the space of Italy will be further analyzed in the Space to Place part of the chapter, however at this point, it is significant to introduce some social context attributed to the creation of connections to the space of Italy, which will in fact create emotions and deeper connections

⁸⁷ Arvinder, age 15, born in Libya (9 months) then India, Indian parents, arrived in Italy at age 10

which will render the space into place. Thus, within the daily routines or localized creation of memories of 'here'—the spaces of Italy—some aspects of life already discussed have also become observable manifestation of the social existence reinforced by a specific location that is Italy. In fact, through the discerning of the 'time-space routines' By Seamon (1980) which are daily routines performed in specific places, that are the basis for the relationship between people and places and it may generate a sense of place. Those manifestations of daily 'time-space routines' are easily seen and operationalized since it has been an important topic so far and once again with the food culture and the language comprehension are showcased although being utilized differently than in the previous chapter. Satnam summarized this idea in a very striking claim: "If I lived only here in Italy and I did not take no customs of them, why am I living here?"⁸⁸ This quote simply frames the essence of learning, discovering and of creating relationships with the spaces of Italy. It only reinforces the notion that both chapters, Identity Representations and Space Relationships are intertwined and interconnected at many different levels.

Therefore, as already frequently mentioned, the possibility to learn and adapt to the food preferences of another's culture is a good indication that the everyday routine of this researched migrant community has been cohesive of the space of Italy. The cooking diet, along with the language have been prevalent examples of the adaptability and perceivability of the Sikhs in their entourage through many excerpts and fieldwork observations. Indeed, the actual languages spoken along with the places the different individuals were born, grew up and lived, are interacting factors that influence one's identity and attachment to a land in a way that linguistic interactions and communications became important means of relationships with the space. As stated earlier, the challenge to learn a new language especially for those that were not born in a foreign land is arduous. For example, many new generation Italian-Sikhs amongst the respondents and faced difficulty to learn the Italian language, but then once they did, they were proud to finally feel comfortable and have the impression that within this Italian space, they would be 'living' memories that will tint their life forever. Jagjit explained briefly that: "The difficulty was to learn Italian, only this. Then it was normal [to live in Italy]", this normality was the connection that the language gave him with the space and the people surrounding him, giving him possibilities to create relationships that would permit him to adapt and experience a certain sense of place.

This is exactly the case since language has been deemed one of the important factor of boundaries between different groups, and now that he spoke Italian, he was thus part of the group, and at the right place.

⁸⁸ Satnam, age 21, born in India, in Italy since age 13

As in a small discussion that Amrit⁸⁹ evoked when approaching the topic of the language: she explained that her father spoke Italian more than her mother since he had lived in Italy far longer than her, and because he knew the language he could then create more networks to the spaces, the places and the people; create a precise everyday life that made him attached to where he was, much more than how her mother experienced it. It is said that communication is inherently linked to physical and social spaces both in the sense of language areas, where the language came from, and in the sense of everyday interactions, in localized spaces. By choosing a particular language or regional variety—in this case, the Italian language of the north—these individuals connect with those that live in this space and speak their dialect. The linguistic community can then be mapped linguistically speaking, to an actual landscape or interactional space, which results in an everyday routine and space relationships.

The two elements part of the daily routines mentioned briefly are engaging small examples of the relationships that the members of the research Sikh community have cited as everyday action or challenges eventually leading to a sense of place. However, it is relevant to state that for the Sikh migrant respondents, to reach a point where they feel and generate a sense of place, they must also have the space to grow, to be who they are from any of their rhetorics of representation. Thus it becomes vital to observe what sort of space has been allocated for this researched Sikh migrant community not just in the matters of work, but also of life. As examined in the previous chapter, the Sikh respondents as a migrant community have faced situations of difficulties related to the acceptance or understanding of to their foreign customs and religious characters as such.

Few members have discussed those issues which could be, though intertwined quite deeply with the previous chapter, seen as relationships with the spaces of Italy and not only at the level of identity representation. In fact, respondents such as Arvinder⁹⁰ still thinks that living in the Italian spaces is difficult because he cannot wear the religious symbols such as the kirpan, which had been banned from his school by the principal. He confided during the interview that he is still wearing a very small one hidden under his clothes, but that it is not the same, as he is forced to hide his religious behavior in public spaces as is dictated by the local society and the educational institution. Arvinder does not have the authority to act upon his religious code of conduct within the public spaces of Italy and this burdens his liking of the spaces around

⁸⁹ Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents.

⁹⁰ Arvinder, age 15, born in Libya (9 months) then India, Indian parents, arrived in Italy at age 10

him. In a similar fashion, Parminder also explains in his perspectives, what happened in Italy since his arrival in 1999 discussing the local Italians the space of Italy.

“All of these questions, like ‘where does he come from?’ ‘I come from India’ [...] and more and more questions. And then they started to understand. But then to tell the truth in 1999, there were not that many people who would accept a different mode of living. But now that we are many, but not everyone is equal. Many Indians would say we are equal, we are all different with diversity. And then the people, we are all Punjabi, we are all Indians, we are all equal! Which is good [...] but not everyone is good, they made some mistakes! But we all pay for it, for the conditions that we all have. Secondly, we are accepted, but in sometimes, I mean there are people who are not well accepted, who have many problems. Which is the story.”

(Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9)

This is not an easy topic to venture into which explains why Parminder is describing his impressions in every angle at once without a direct thought. The key point in his claim is the fact that when he arrived in Italy, in 1999, it was difficult for the local society to accept a foreign mode of living because foreign Indian migrants were scarce in Bolgare, the first town where he resided at the age of 9-years-old, according to his impression. In addition, Gurnam also mentioned that when he arrived in Europe, long before 1999, “at first, no one knew [about the Sikh presence in Italy], now, people are now more aware, so that has changed”⁹¹. There were not many spaces where a migrant group could generate relationships to or feel comfortable with, but it has changed for the best, as described here by Baldeep’s claim: “because when I came here in this country in 2007, there were Sikhs, and everyone knew about religion and I did not face the same type of problems”⁹², the same problems that both Parminder and of course Gurnam noted on. Therefore, he considered himself lucky, the earlier waves of migrants had to explain their religious traditions to the majority of society and thus broke the ice for all future migrants coming onto the subsequent waves.

Nowadays, things have indeed changed, and the migrant Sikhs are in greater numbers, ‘we are accepted’, as Parminder puts it, despite the common debate on this subject. This also echoes Remeet’s statement explaining that “Italian people already know how the Sikhs are, so they don’t react, no”⁹³, and even Priya which mentions that “[i]n Cremona, there are a lot of foreigners and now a lot of people has got the knowledge about this”⁹⁴, which leaves a certain space of recognition and acceptance of the older and the new generation of migrant Sikhs, a space to grow and to be known. Hence proximity to the researched Sikh

⁹¹ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30. Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

⁹² Baldeep, age 27, born in Kashmir, arrived in Italy at age 18.

⁹³ Remeet, age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27.

⁹⁴ Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12.

community may in fact have made the people that migrated to Italy, more easily included in the local Italian society since their own community was growing larger and offered comfort and serenity to their members and knowledge by their presence to the locals. Harjinder can attest to this fact.

Catherine: Were you the only one? At your school, did you have a lot of Indians as well or not?

Harjinder: [hmm] Yes but, a lot that we can say 10 Indians and 8 are Sikhs with turbans and beards.

Catherine: So that is why everyone knew about Sikhism within one month!

Harjinder: No [...] when I started, we were only 2!

Catherine: Oh, so you were amongst the first! Okay so you gave the knowledge!

Harjinder: No [...] there was another one before me, but every year there is 1 or 2, 1 or 2 [...] after this year, when I left [...] they were then only 8!

(Harjinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10)

This increase in the size of the community in the past 11 years, represented through the diversity increase at Harjinder's school is impressive. Truly, due to the decent size of his migrant community, he encountered less obstacles in presenting himself as a Sikh with a beard and a turban, as an *amritdhari*, since the community was already implanted even in his school. The fluctuation may change the outcomes of the next generations but so far, there have always been Sikhs pupils at his school and even some with all distinctive religious features of those baptised Sikhs. The everyday life moments which they all live in Italy are instances where the space of Italy have become natural encounters of relationships for those Sikh migrant respondents, and possibly those spaces may have started to mean something more than a singular and innocent space.

Vignette #7: Market Place

In the interest of fully understanding the Spaces of Italy and the relationships that the Sikh migrants from this research have built within the spaces of Italy during their everyday life, one of the memorable instance is the market place; a fascinating case study. It is noteworthy to present how people have adapted from both the local Italian society within the market, as observed on this day, and the Sikh community respondents of this research, in order to create some space available for each to 'live' some memories and experience relationships with others in a localized environment. Perkins and Thorns in their introduction to the book *Place, Identity & Everyday Life in a Globalizing World*, describe a manner of thinking about the phenomenon in the way people live day to day in places and the influence that places have on people is "to say that social-spatial interactions of everyday life help people create a sense of place, themselves and others. This is a complex process and there is much debate about the relative importance and contribution of local and global social, cultural and environmental influences in the creation of a sense of place and identity in people's everyday lives" (2012, 13). Consequently, the two authors have started to emphasize and

stress the importance of “the ways people create a sense of home in their everyday lives” (2012, 73). In ‘spaces’, as a location that may not necessarily hold its full meaning and emotional spectrum as a ‘place’ yet, but that its presence in everyday life, allows the Sikhs respondents to feel that they ‘have’ some spaces for themselves in Italy, and not just in India. It is readily possible to see that the contribution of the local, and the cultural in the market-place vignette presented thereon have given an opportunity for the establishment of a sense of place for the individuals in the instance described during this reflexive narrative account of the market place.

Fieldnotes 021, July 22nd, 2015

I took the train this morning, as I was going to meet Priya at the train station of Cremona. I am not sure where we will go, since I do not think she wants to go to the Gurdwara, but I will see. --I arrived at the train stop slightly early. It is a beautiful Wednesday morning in July, the sun is already pretty warm and shining, and we are not mid day yet. Finally, Priya arrives with her mother. They told me they have a few things to do in town and that we could go have tea at their place afterwards, if I was okay with this. This sounds like a great plan, so I accept. After going to the driving licence office where Priya’s mum is having her classes to get her driving licence, we head towards the market. In Cremona, apparently, Wednesday is the market day. So, we roam around the different vending tables, while discussing almost every item we see. Sweets, fruits and veggies, but mainly shoes, summer clothes and tables after tables of jewellery and hair stuff. It was a fun and easy day, filled with buzzing streets, delicious food smells invading our nostrils while strolling around the market place and so much more. The market was filled with people, and everybody was rushing to do their shopping before noon, since that was ringing the end of the market, and the piazza would return to its original state of beautiful empty space for pigeons just in front of the main old church of Cremona town. Priya and her mother found a cute dress for Priya and are looking around for a textile table with possible materials to make a ‘chunnee’ (*ciunni*)—traditional Indian word for scarf which is a main part of womanly apparel—and of some material to transform an older Indian outfit into a long dress.

We walk towards an alley abundant in textile tables, with fabric, yards and yards of fabric, hanging from every pole which supported the frame of the temporary roof of those booths. And table filled with colorful, patterned or textually different textile exposed in various designs to encourage artistic interest as well as baskets of buttons, zippers and colorful twines. Everywhere I look in this particular alley and all what I could see are Muslim women wearing hijabs or Indian women in their traditional outfits, shopping for material. Priya met a Muslim friend and presented her to me and they spoke for a moment quote joyfully. Next, her mother found two types of materials that could easily help in the projects that she wants to accomplish with Priya’s clothes. Her mother shows them to her and discusses if the color would fit. Priya then spoke in Punjabi to her mother with a little frown on her face. I could not understand exactly what she was talking about, but I realized that her mother asked a question in Punjabi to Priya. Suddenly the Italian man standing the other side of the textile table and organizing the materials in orderly fashion, looks at Priya’s mum and said something that sounded like ‘tinn’. Priya looked surprised and laughed with her mother before turning to me and explained. She said that this man just spoke Punjabi to her and her mother, told them the price, even if this man working at the textile table was definitely Italian, all this, while her mother kept

asking questions to this man, in Punjabi, and him struggling to keep up. What an interesting event! I am guessing that many Punjabi speaking customers have found their way to his table to buy material in the last few years! And he will not be tricked into the bargaining games without knowing a basis of Punjabi language. Well, this is my assumption.

In this anecdote and integrative fieldnote and vignette, it is understood by the reaction of dismay and surprise from Priya and her mother that they had faced a strange situation where the Italian vendor could easily speak to them about his merchandise in their very own language of Punjabi. As understood this was a moment that had never happened before for these two ladies. The market is a negotiated place between buyers and sellers, which could become a shared space between cultures which is helpful for the understanding of the transactions to be made. Through this example, one can see how the Sikh community, especially these two women, have obtained the usage of space that they can also claim as being part of their everyday life since it may be assumed that they would go back again to this table and chat with the Italian vendor, one that can understand their semiotic universe and thus probably benefit them in appropriating the space. The Indian community is very diversified in the north of Italy, but they are also a great part of the customers of those markets, hence the vendor's ambition to be able to converse with the communities around, the shoppers of his textile.

This encounter at the market place could be defined as a place-ballet (Lewicka 2013), another term describing the time-space routine (Seamon 1980) which connects daily routines performed in specific spaces and the people in a relationship combining people and places generating living memories and in turn more connection to the space. Thus the localized event of the market place did connect people from a similar area in the province. Colombo and Rebughini content that “[n]eighborhood can be defined by the physical space for everyday life and mundane interactions. It constitutes the environment for actions and it is increasingly characterized by difference and changes rather than by uniformity and routines” (2012, 63). The diversity of culture existing at the Cremona market, plus the change in behavior and language from the vendors could not be a truer example of everyday life. This sort of example takes from a “place-based experience, is a defining characteristic of everyday life for most people, notwithstanding the fact that they are influenced by, and contribute to, wider social, economic and cultural currents” (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 23). Thus, this place-base analysis continues towards the deeper emotional connection that a person may have with a space and transforming it into an Italian place of importance in one's everyday life.

To conclude this first half of the chapter, the Sikh respondents do have many childhood and adulthood memories, individual or family experiences and histories as in auto-biographical factors, in both

the spaces of India and of Italy. This may have changed their visions of their space relationships because of the various reasons these same Sikh migrants or their family living in Italy decided to move out of India, chose to find opportunities in Italy and then decided to remain in Italy and establish themselves in this space. These processes were examined throughout the first part of the chapter producing a comparative analysis of both spaces of India and of Italy from the respondents in order to give rise to an understanding of how casual 'spaces' could become 'places' of significance. This whole chapter is attempts to present the complex relationships that the researched Sikh community entertain with their land and where they consider their personal place to be. After analyzing the spaces of the Italian Sikh community respondents, the next section will address how a space can be remodeled into a place which is a direct process of the sense of place for those Sikhs and as a direct connection to the aim of this chapter.

4.3. Creating a Sense of Place

In the first two parts of this chapter, the relationships which the researched group experienced with various spaces both from India, and from Italy were reviewed and used as an introductory assessment of the connections that remain or have been created since migration. Along with the relationships of those spaces, a simple understanding of the mechanism for some of the migrant's trajectories was highlighted. The goal within this ongoing part of the chapter is to emphasize the possible deeper connection that the researched group of Italian Sikhs have with Italian spaces, and how, through relationships, emotions, feeling of being at the right place, a sense of place has been created through the transformation of 'space' into 'place' and thus, ultimately—as will be illustrated in the next part—the establishment of a 'home' can be accomplished. Their sense of place could only be deciphered if one understands how 'space' can become 'place' for migrants such those Sikh respondents living in the north of Italy.

Therefore, in this part of the chapter, the discussion will begin by first mentioning that even if this notion of a sense of place may sound enticing, it is not universal. In fact, several respondents have communicated different types of connections to Italy, to India or sometimes to elsewhere which does not lead to the feeling of being at the right place. Some respondent Sikhs have also voiced contradicting opinions or acted upon connected differently to Italy. Hence, the beginning of this analysis of the creation of a sense of place must reveal the variety of possibilities in relation to the meaning that these Sikhs entertain with Italy. Henceforth, the remainder of the chapter will be devoted to those migrant Sikhs from the respondent group

entertaining this deep and emotional connection to Italy, leading to a possible sense of place, and subsequently, a probable 'homey' feeling. In this perspective, the description of how a 'space', as described within the Spaces of Italy, can change to a 'place' of meaning through the social landscapes, geographically or physically speaking, as well as the social context in which it has been cultivated. This so-called 'place', this geographic location which may hold so much meaning for an individual can be defined as a "landscape [which] is the visible and invisible meeting ground of culture, place and space—where identities are exchanged, performed and constructed" (Berberich, Campbell & Hudson 2012, 21). Finally a combining notion of those two previous types of landscapes—visible and invisible, as well as material and social—will be exemplified through the description and the means of the religious structure of a Sikh gurdwara.

The purpose of studying the sense of place of the community inquired here, is related to the impressive development of this Sikh community after less than 40 years of settlement in Italy. It is not easy for migrant Sikhs to transform a simple geographical location, the space of Italy, into a meaningful place and even carry out the establishment of a home with one's family, especially since some did not make the decision to migrate, they simply had to follow their family. The constant connection with the homeland and the circumstance of being part of a 'diaspora' community could lead to the feeling of being away from 'home'. Similarly, as in the section on the hybrid identity representation when one may feel as being both, one may also feel to be both 'here and there', or 'here and away from home' (Vertovec 2009, 6), thus some did not create much sense of place to Italy, some have more nuanced perspective, and some do not emanate any sense of place thus far.

4.3.1. Absence of the Sense of Place: Placeless

This is perhaps impractical to assume that the respondents portraying a lack of connection to Italy, an absence of deep emotions to the country of Italy are placeless, however it has an impact towards the analysis of the sense of place categorization of this chapter. In fact, within the researched group some have stronger connections to possibly India or other countries, some have multiple attachments, and some are simply disconnected from a country at the moment. The emotional baggage which comes with migrating to another country is so heavy sometimes, it can easily leave trails of lost life and of regrets or nostalgia—homesickness. In other words, it is understandable that some respondents amongst this Sikh migrant community feel tugged between both 'here and there' (Vertovec 2009) and thus settle into not feeling at the right place anywhere for now. It could be seen as a counter approach, a balancing of data of the more normative discourse highlighted throughout most of the thesis. Truly, not every respondent felt the same

towards their sense of belonging to a place, despite the common trend mentioned most often in remainder of the research. Therefore, for the purpose of this brief exposé of the various observations of the respondents' connection to Italy or lack thereof, create a new classification for those that are 'placeless' similar to Gustafson's (2013) typology but slightly different in order to tailor the analysis of this sample in an adequate fashion.

The migrants that have no sense of place would thus be 'unattached'—claiming that they are not yet entirely attached to a new place. Others could very well be 'disconnected'—claiming that they are not connected to their former homeland anymore. Finally some could be having 'multiple attachments'—where they may feel connected to more than one place and thus cannot think through where their place is. The important difference between 'unattached' and 'disconnected' is that the former has not felt attached to any other land after leaving their homeland, without claiming their complete disconnection to Punjab but logically knowing that they are not living in India at the moment. The latter, the 'disconnected', clearly assumes that India is not part of their sense of place without knowing exactly where their particular place in the world is, and where they feel at home. These three types of placeless people that have no complete comprehensive sense of place where one would establish a home, these statuses may be triggered for many reasons and have been observed repeatedly in this case study. Similarly, for King in 1995 when discussing the shifting meaning of 'place' for migrants, he claimed that "[m]igration is a dislocation from one place and a physical attachment to another—although the emotional attachment may well remain with the place of origin" (1995, 7). Correspondingly the dislocation from the homeland is comparable to the disconnection of people from their home place within the placeless classification, the physical attachment may not clearly be defined yet, and it may be true that some are still attached to Punjab in either multiple attachments or sometimes because they are not feeling attached to their new place, they may feel unattached as well.

For the first category, those who manifest some unattachment amongst the community researched could easily be defined by Thapan's statement about the Sikhs in Italy mentioning that there is "a certain ambivalence towards Italy which they identify as their home where at the same time, they experience the inability to completely integrate" (Thapan 2015, 57). It may be true that some have indeed established their home or the heart of their family, yet remain ambivalent, some are unable to fully be part of the local society, as if they were not immersed in the new country where they migrated and lived the past years. In fact, few examples of the situation of not being immersed and thus not creating a deep connection to Italy could be

named but the member of the Sikh researched group presented and described as an outlier throughout the research is probably the most suited example of an unattached Sikh migrant: Remeet.

As portrayed previously in this research, Remeet arrived in Italy less than two years ago to reunite with her groom which had been established in Italy for many years. Remeet⁹⁵, a devoted Sikh, which arrived in Italy at the age of 27 and is openly stating her wish to return to her homeland. Her stay had been relatively short—slightly over two years—and it has not created this place realization emotion which may be necessary to create any sense of place. It has thus resulted in her clear intention to leave in the near future. Often older migrants manage to adopt the Italian *way of life*, and then, it creates a sense of attachment to the people in a new country when they begin to work, and thus the contact with the local society and the sense of purpose provided by work may all influence the sense of being at the right place. Unfortunately, Remeet does not work in her trade. During her interview, the translator explained Remeet's situation in life situation by stating "because she is from India and she wants to remain from India (sic.)"⁹⁶, and even if this short excerpt was already used to express the fact that Remeet portrays a behavior of 'un-Italian' she also in parallel reveals her unattachment to Italy in general. In Remeet's mind, by adapting and by integrating in the Italian society, she would become 'from' Italy and she categorically refuses to become or to belong as such. In her case, the break from India was not conclusive so to begin feeling attached to any other place than India.

Another person which mentioned his desire to go back to the homeland despite being in Italy for so many years, is Kaaptan. He lived and earned a living in Italy for the past 10 years; thus he might have experienced a certain sense of place, or not, yet, his personal feeling is that he wants to go back to India.

Catherine: Is it all the same for you? Do you all feel that Italy is better than India?

Kaaptan: No [...]

Catherine: So where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Kaaptan: To go back to India [...]

Catherine: Yea [hmm] back with your family or?

Kaaptan: It depends[...] but I want to go back [...]

Catherine: Do you have a reason, or it is just a feeling?

Kaaptan: It's a feeling[...]

(Kaaptan, age 23, born in India arrived in Italy at age 14)

It may be true that the classification of 'unattached' defines those which are not attached to Italy, the new host country, but who realize that they are not in India anymore. Thus, this realization, accompanied by the

⁹⁵ Remeet, age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27

⁹⁶ Translator for Remeet, age 29, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 27

dream, the feeling or the impression of the need to go back, are still significant elements to be included in this categorization. Some questions about the vision of their own future was asked in a group of researched Sikhs, mainly to observe the intention of the five men which usually gathered at the gurdwara on Sundays. In Kaaptan's view, with or without his family, he sees himself moving back to India in the future. He is categorical about the fact that his life will not be fully lived and attached to a place anywhere else than India. In other words, despite arriving in Italy during teenager years, attending the Italian schools, to have his earliest auto-biographical personal experiences, relations, memories and more in India have made him cling to his homeland; he sees India as better than Italy.

For others, the break with India has been sufficient, it sometimes makes it easier for those that left India for long enough to feel disconnected with it, as will be explained when discussing the precursor element of the 'length of time' in an upcoming part. In other words, these respondents left India for another country such as Italy, have lived in this country for some years, long enough to disengage their sense of place from the homeland and may possibly, connect or attached themselves to another country. This is a delicate situation since it happens at times that migrants disconnect from the homeland but then are unattached to any other land in a definite fashion afterwards. The disconnection from the homeland does not, in fact, create a sense of place to the new location, it is not a certainty: these phenomena are separate in the lives of migrants. The distance away from the homeland, or a lengthy residency in a new land may create this particular disconnection from the homeland of Punjab, however, living in a new society does not necessarily assure a sense of attachment if the conditions that made them move to this country are not met anymore or if the feeling of being at the right place was never achieved. As well, nonetheless, it is conceivable that being disconnected is the first step for some migrant Sikhs in order to then connect to Italy and thus create a sense of place.

To begin, this is possibly the case with the next example, this young new generation Italian Sikh woman describe her disconnection to the homeland of Punjab. She explained how her life has changed since she moved to Italy and thus her memory of another life in India slowly vanishes. Priya may in fact, have experienced a certain place attachment to Italy, however in this short excerpt, the strong feeling that she express are related to this disconnection from Punjab. She recites "Yea! Yes, now I spend 12 [...]12 years of my life here [Italy] yes. So, I don't remember too much of my childhood memories in India"⁹⁷. Priya is claiming that despite experiencing her complete childhood in India, this is not what she remembers

⁹⁷ Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12.

the most and it is not a crucial part of her sense of place. Throughout the fieldwork, she usually clearly states her deep attachment to Italy; her heart is usually set towards Italy. Thus, her statement about India in this case is one of those rare occasions where she discusses her past and her feelings of India, of her strong disconnection to her traditional homeland which is quite different from her usual speech.

Furthermore, another respondent of the researched community which claims not to be connected, or at least not interested in India as an example of disconnection, is the *amritdhari* woman interviewed in one of the joint-interviews conducted in Bergamo, in the second gurdwara visited, the smallest but also the coziest of them all. In Satnam's case, this excerpt expresses all of her claims that she was satisfied of her life in Italy before, that India does not mean much for her, and that Italy does not hold much more meaning to her nowadays, when discussing her perspectives of possibly moving back to the Punjabi homeland.

“I just went one time [back to India] [...]. No [...] everything has changed. Everything [...] the people the house [...]. No, I don't want to go back to India, because I studied here [...] when you are a teenager you got everything here. I did only my childhood in India, I don't remember anything about India so [...] It is pretty hard to live there nowadays in India for me. But I prefer to go somewhere else. And in Italy it is all house or job problem, if you get anything at all [...] I studied here in marketing and I didn't get anything.”

(Satnam, age 21, born in India, in Italy since age 13)

As described beforehand, those studied members of the community who can fit in the 'disconnected' categorisation undoubtedly claim their disregard or indifference to India as a possible place to live, but who did not settle in one precise location as their possible sense of place. In fact, Satnam is undoubtedly disconnected from India as she slowly repeats 'no' to the thought of moving back to India while naming few reasons for such a clear statement against something that other have probably expressed around her. Furthermore she portrays feelings of privation of any suitable possibilities of employment or of academic opportunities in Italy. She is an educated young woman with a forward-thinking mind and a strong belief in Sikhism which follows a strict code of conduct. Once her mind is set on decision, she does not deviate. In her perspective, remaining even in Italy is counterproductive, and is thus already planning to move to another country by herself. She becomes a rather placeless person as she does not feel attached to India, does not feel attached to Italy anymore, and does not feel attached to any other countries yet. She has no real sense of place yet, she only wishes to move so to feel this strong and emotional sense of place. In fact, she has already planned her desired migrant trajectory, she visited many websites and made her choice towards a specific program at a university in Vancouver, Canada. She has family over there and is already dreaming about the available opportunities which will be uncovered once she leaves Italy. Therefore, not

only did Satnam exemplify the notion of being disconnected to India, but her sense of where her place is, is yet to be rooted in her future and in the ground.

Finally the third category of those experiencing a different kind of sense of place, is the multiple attachment typology. It is thus quite possible that those experiencing the two last categories, disconnection and unattachment, have relationships with multiple attachments to many different places. Hence the feeling of placelessness, when one would want to be and to connect with more than one country at a time. As mentioned by Appadurai “many people face increasing difficulties of relating to, or indeed producing, ‘locality’ (‘as a structure of feeling, a property of life and an ideology of situated community’)” (1995, 213), which may lead to a sense of being isolated from the world and never feeling integrated in a new society. Another common way to look at multiple attachments in migration studies has been to look at the dichotomy between the ‘here and there’ the transnational view of belonging or at least experiencing this sense of place to be both from India and from Italy.

In Steven Vertovec’s impressive work he describes migrants in various ways as “some people continue to regard their land of birth as ‘home’, while others come to identify primarily with their land of settlement. Others may feel at home in neither place. And—perhaps in most case—there may also be multiple, co-existing identities” (2009, 141-142). Vertovec brings a conclusion that some people retain their connection to the so-called homeland, others feel their sense of place shift to their new land, but that others may—according to him, most cases—attach to both the motherland and the new settlement. This analysis is similar as Gustafson’s perspective on residential mobility which “[...] may give rise to attachment to both old and new home places. This has received considerable attention in the context of international migration and immigrant integration” (Gustafson 2013, 40, *cf.*, Castle & Miller 1983; Freeman 2004). Despite being quite prevalent in migration studies, during this research rare are the occasions where a migrant was clear about feeling the importance of both India and Italy in their sense of place. The only occasion was when discussing with young Ravdeep:

Ravdeep: I would like to [...] I think that with this I could go to India and do something like this, to help the economy, and I want to become something in my life, something that will help my culture and help other people! And I propose to go to India, because they need the help!

Catherine: So, you would like to go back to India?

Ravdeep: Not only there, but many place [...]

Catherine: So where would you live? In Italy?

Ravdeep: Yes!

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6)

Ravdeep has moved with her family from India at the age of six and probably does not remember much of her former homeland yet, she still feels an important connection with her origin, her culture and thus she wants to help other people in India more than anywhere else for now. This is not a striking example of transnational belonging but a definite interest in both the future of Italy and of India and her deep and real intent to be present and connected to in both places, thus to more than just one country. She therefore probably fits the multiple attachments narrative even if her inclination towards India may only be driven by a utopic view of what India could be rather than the reality of her own view of this country. All in all, even if Ravdeep is not uniquely having an emotional connection to Italy, and an evident sense of place, she, as many other respondents in this research, is deeply connected to Italy as a 'place'.

4.3.2. Connected to Italy and the Place-Making

According to Rodman's research (2003), the concept of social landscapes is a broad perspective that is established on the idea of lived spaces. These lived spaces are fabricated from how an individual experiences their world in a place, such as what they all see and live through their varied adventures according to the landscapes, and the meanings attributed to them. The social landscapes, a binary concept which could be described as 'topophilia' which defines "the relationships people establish with places, and [...] about 'place-making', the ways everyday involvement with particular settings forms close connections with landscape" (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 15). This concept of 'place' constituting a part of the landscape is describing this physical and geographical location, a building, a village, a town or a city. Places such as these, are simply chunks of space that have been soaked with individual or collective meaning (Kusenbach 2006), and these 'place realizations' (Seamon 2013, 17) or in this case 'place meanings' or 'place-makings' are most likely infused with emotions, either negative or positive and in turn convey meaning for the individual or the collective group which goes well beyond usual reasoning.

On top of this, the supposition is that the personal value put on an actual location in the geographical landscape does hold meaning and emotion, but it is also accentuated by the social aspect of the place which is inclusive of embodied practices and everyday life actions. As explained by Hall: "[o]ur sense of place is really part of our cultural systems of meaning. We usually think about or imagine cultures as 'placed'—landscaped, even if only in the mind" (1995, 186). This idea of the social landscapes integrates both the geographical locatedness of the people and the social and meaningful connection of where a person is and thus begins to determine the common perspective of the 'placed' culture for these migrant Sikhs from the research group. The social landscapes, the transformation of space into place through lived places, place

meanings, place realizations, place-makings and so on, will then be presented and used as assumption to understand the importance of space and the now emotional connection that renders space into place as a personal creation of the sense of place.

The problematic at this point is to state to the possibility that Italy in all simplicity could mean more as a geographic location than India for some of the respondents, especially those who enjoyed its many physical and geographic aspects by living in them. The concept of 'lived space' refers to the palpable presence of place, not just its simple indication or its comprehension, but more about its being, its existing and thus about what physically makes a *place* (Rodman 2003). Thusly, there are specific components which create a specific palpable presence of a lived place. Those many components of a meaningful place help in creating this sense of being at the right place, or at least in a place where one is happy to be. David Crouch, in 2012 considered 'landscape' as a word that has considerable popular grip. He stated that "[t]he 'stuff' that is often substituted for what is meant by landscape tends to be more in terms of countryside, but it can also include broadly the assemblage of landforms, concrete shapes, fields, gutters, designed spaces, and serendipitous collections of things" (2012, 44).

Within this general vision of a landscape, the physical elements include material objects, land and geographic features or human-made structures as well as the more abstract, the feelings, impressions and ambiance given by this same 'stuff'. To define categorically this angle of the geographical landscape, according to Berberich, Campbell and Hudson, it is important to understand that "[t]he word *land* is, however, inevitably, most commonly bound up with landscape that is, with what we do with land; how we shape it, construct, imagine, transform and destroy it" (2012, 19, emphasis original). The shape of the land and the human-made constructions within the research will be analyzed through the form of various different villages which connect the many farms of the north of Italy. These villages and their facilities are the means of living and create the social connections of a lived space, besides being central for the Sikh migrant respondents. In fact, everything concrete in the landscape which affects the Italian Sikhs researched community as discussed in the field research, along with their understanding of the place, is examined in this section.

The individual's perspectives of their locatedness is considerable and will definitely affect the person's enjoyment of the place. One of the main factor mentioned unexpectedly often by the many respondents was the serenity of the northern Italian towns and villages. It was made clear that the tranquility of the place and the fact that there are not a lot of people residing in the small villages, was quite appreciated

by the members of the community. Some respondents expressed this perspective thinking of Cremona as a great place to live. Priya lives on the edge of this large town, and she enjoys this particular town versus others in the vicinity. She explains that: “I want to stay here in Cremona. I was also in Brescia, in Milano, and Mantua, Reggio-Emilia. But I like the most my own town”⁹⁸. Jazpreet⁹⁹, another young woman living in Cremona explained that it was a nice place for the conveniences around the town, and as for Armandeep, her very close friend claimed about her own village slightly outside of Cremona that “I like to live there, but I know that living in Cremona is more, [...] you have a lot of facilities, but it’s okay”¹⁰⁰.

All in all, Priya, Jazpreet and Armandeep consider the town to be admirable and accessible which are great features to sense and to live in a meaningful geographical landscape. In Priya’s perspective, she sees Cremona as a perfect fusion between the more natural surroundings of the rural areas and the facilities and proximity of work, schools and train stations. Many respondents have simply she claimed that it has a good dose of the Italian charm and history, and it is still fairly quiet when the touristic and noisy travelers visit around, which is well liked by the locals including her family and herself. Not only the northern Italian towns—other towns and Cremona, as described by the respondents—are serene, relaxed, joyful and reachable, but they are also considered safe. For the young women Italian-Sikhs, living in a host country surrounded by people whom do not always comprehend their culture, an open-minded and secured neighborhood gives them an opportunity to be who they want to be risk-free, night and day.

“[hmm] I don’t know. I don’t like to live in so crowded place, like in the city. I like this place, my village, because it is too quiet. You can go everywhere also in the evening. It is safe. You can’t have any ‘oh my god, I can’t go out in the evening because there are too much people like, not too good people’. But here I am always free, I am always safe. I can go also in the midnight, there is no problem [...]”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

For Priya, the fact that there are not as many people living in their vicinity as in major cities, is comforting and it equals safety. The freedom to act without constraint of time, of regions and so on, is enjoyable for young adults such as Priya and other respondents of this research. Especially when compared to the spaces of India, these young women can feel the advantage that this permits them. Parminder discusses some of his own perspective on the safety of the place of Italy.

⁹⁸ Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12.

⁹⁹ Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents.

¹⁰⁰ Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8.

“And here in Italy, a woman is much freer. She can work by her own, she can drive by herself, there are no problems. Neither with the schedule because at the end of the day, she doesn’t have risks, [...] and you don’t look for the wrong person, there is no problem. So, I, here, we live with people and do it good/right. A world that is created good, with values.”

(Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9)

Parminder’s vision is definitely tinted by his experiences and memories of the Indian spaces, and thus creates a parallel view of what the geographic place of Italy is versus India. On top of criticizing the lack of opportunities, the bureaucratic organization, the issues with trust and values, the non-existent fair policy towards women is probably one of the main reasons which prevents him from imagining his life in India. Therefore, the safety and the construction of the town and neighborhoods in Italy, provide feelings of happiness to Priya, and also to Parminder when he considers the life that women can have in Italy versus India. On top of this, a moment of wandering around the town of Cremona was experienced with Priya which proved her interest and love of this lived town and she has a fascinating emotional attachment to the place. Living in those small, slightly remote towns in the north of Italy has given a chance to Priya to grow from within and from without beyond their house, and more into the society. The migrant Sikh respondents’ presence on the streets of Cremona may be noted by the locals and create some understanding of the multiculturalism of Italian towns and thus shapes a cycle of even safer place for their community to create this sense of place in the Italian landscapes.

On the other hand, some of the respondents consider the town of Cremona as not being such a perfect mixture of rural and urban, as others have hinted on previously. For example Amrit considers it to be already too urban for her liking. She claims that the town of Cremona is not sufficiently fitting for her taste, she prefers her small village which is almost a rural neighborhood of Cremona itself. Nevertheless she is missing something that this town cannot give her.

“In fact, sometimes I think that if I would live in the city [Cremona], I would be very bored. Because I don’t like the city, it is very noisy, you can’t go out, there aren’t a lot of [...] and another thing that I like very much is the green, the landscape, and the city, there aren’t much green [...] So I am happy to live there [her village of Capella de’ Picenardi]!”

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Catherine: [Talking about her village] is it rural? Is it surrounded by farms?

Amrit: Yes, like a farm, fields, farms, rural area. It is a very small village, but I like it because there are not a lot of people. It’s not a noisy village, there are a lot of animals like cats, and now there are two farms of cows. Before it was 5 cow farms!

(Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

All in all, the harmonious and tranquil atmosphere of Amrit's small rural village is all that she could be hoping for in her opinion. As mentioned, she considers that Cremona—a city in her perspective—is dreary and uninteresting because of the lack of green space mainly. She is most accustomed to being surrounded by nature, the fields and small forests that are about her house in one of the municipalities of Cappella de' Picenardi. In her case, the possible facilities of Cremona as a bigger town, are not as important as the rural space, free space and landscapes, that becomes her place. Once again, this only leads to the understanding that place and the understanding of landscape as a geographic location is individually constructed.

The relationships that one may experience with the place of Italy as a new country could be reshaped by many aspects. Some merely compare the two places and conclude that they are similar without much attention but with great meaning. It was the case for Shinder and her banal but thoughtful comment that she mentioned during her interview at a family house. She said that “the climate is good, just like India”¹⁰¹ when discussing the weather in Italy which was earlier described by herself as cold winters and very hot summers. She purely notes this fact as an acceptance that her reality is not so far from her former home country. If the weather could be felt as different than India, as the same as in India, it could also be considered better than in India.

“Because I was studying in India! [...] Italy, it's a bit good, it is better than India. [Punjabi]. I don't know why, but I like it. The weather is nicer.

(Arvinder, age 15, born in Libya (9 months) then India, Indian parents, arrived in Italy at age 10)

“It was too hot [in India], all the hot days I spent in the home. It was 47-50 degrees. I can't [...] I couldn't go everywhere in the day because it was too hot. I could only go in the morning. Or in the evening. But ideally, I wanted to come back to Italy. Because of the hot (sic)”

(Priya, age 23, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 12)

Altogether, it seems that the notion of weather, connected precisely with Italy in comparison with India is a subject that is easily identifiable of the landscape or yet the geographic location on the globe, but that the reality of it comes down to the fact that individuals experience it differently and thus claim it is either very different, the same or nicer. This component of the landscape is probably a very elementary approach to analyze the sense of place in a geographic location, but it also introduces the element that everyone has an opinion on the subject and that they may all differ from one person to another. This enhances the elements of understanding of a place for everyone when it comes to the point of either similarity or comfortability, it is a feeling or sentiment that is perceived contextually and individually for each person and can hardly be

¹⁰¹ Shinder, age 36, born in India, in Italy since the age of 26.

understood as a universal truth. It only reinforces the goal of this piece to unravel the possibility of the research migrant Sikhs to feel this sense of place and not to confirm that they in fact always do. It simply creates the option or the rhetoric for them to choose from, rather than the express intent to put them in an enclosed decisional group.

Elements of the landscape affecting a person's perspective do include the weather, but they also include the general ambiance or feeling that a singular place can give you. This strong emotion was conveyed by one of the respondents during a drive-along (Kusenbach 2006, 285) which was noted down in the field notes as a striking moment which was agreed by everyone in the mini-van. Concretely, while Livpreet was giving a ride to his family and to myself through the rural fields of Cremona, arguably directing his claim to myself, Livpreet was looking outside the window and suddenly at an intersection, turned his head to look at the back seat and said: "Here you see? [pointing at the fields] This is *just like* India"¹⁰²! I thus looked outside at the late afternoon backdrop manifesting itself under my eyes. The windows of the mini-van were open, so we could hear the low sound of cars on the rural road, and of the wind blowing through the golden wheat fields extending out of sight surrounding the roundabout intersection in the middle of the countryside. Since the tinted windows were down for once, we could easily stare at the splendour of vibrant golds of the wheat spikes and of the nature glowing around us, versus the concrete and light grey color of the winding gravel country roads. The weather was warm, the sky was a light blue accompanied by some dusty clouds, and the slow wind was welcomed in the car as well as the smell of the fresh and slightly damped wheat being cut in a nearby crop. This picture or this snapshot was what Livpreet had in mind when he compared the outside view to his country of origin.

This sort of data is then used in this research to investigate this "naturally occurring" encounter as this moment of truth from Livpreet in his own viewpoint, from the perspective of his everyday life claiming the resemblance from his home country and his country of residence. Thus, in this natural occurrence of Livpreet willingly claiming the fact that rural Italy is 'just like India' together with the approbation of the others in the car, reinforces the notion that place as a geographic location may very well be connected with the view of the previous location of an individual. This claim was surprising, as Livpreet was known throughout the research to have a strong preference towards the more urban landscapes of India and of Italy, however, once he paid attention to the rural areas of Italy, he may have realized the resemblance of both and of the brilliance of this fact. He thus claimed similarity and revealed a sort of comfortability of the

¹⁰² Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002 (emphasis added to clarify intensity in the speech).

place as if it was the equivalent. Livpreet felt connected and perceived meaning in this resemblance of the environment and the actual type of location which created this deep connection and relationship with this place in Italy, as an important geographic location in his world and a step towards the creation of a sense of place.

Another member of the researched community which spoke about the similarity of Italy and India, and which created some sort of positive connection with the landscape as a geographic location is Harjinder. At first, during the interview, he was clearly explaining that he lived at the border of the rural farms and the village in Italy, and after investigation of the comparative nature of both landscapes he claimed: “No [...] it is very similar from here. And I like it”¹⁰³. The particularity to be next to the fields as much as the services of the village was something he really enjoyed, and he felt that it was not different from what he experienced in India. Further on, during his interview, he continued explaining that living in India and living in Italy was the same, as for the comfortability that he felt living in Italy since he spent half of his life in each place he said: “It has been 11 years that I am here, and I am good, and I have never had any problems here”¹⁰⁴. The idea of not having any problems is Harjinder’s way to affirm his being contented in Italy and thus could be assumed that Italy has offered him a place to be. He still sees Italy and India as the same and does not discriminate between both; he simply states that you can live the same in both places, and that he has never felt uncomfortable in this actual geographic location.

In the context of a space becoming a place through the binary concept of social landscape, the social context component remains quite valid. Place-belongingness as described and coined in John Eyles’ 1985 study includes few senses recognizing the elements defining the feeling to be at the right place. Therefore, one of the senses is the ‘Social sense of place’, which logically outlines place as socially significant and connecting the social relationship with the place relationships (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 19). It leads to the understanding that a simple space may develop into a place when this location has become more important due to its emotional connections which convey deep meaning for specific individuals or a community in general. Now that the place as a geographic location—the land on which people live—has been documented as such,

“[t]he word land is suggesting it is physical and tangible, but it is always more than this, it may indeed connect emotions, imagination, nationalism, identity and more. The piece of land where one is

¹⁰³ Harjinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

standing is already bound up with an array of meaning that take it beyond itself to connect with a host of other discourses around landscapes, place, dwelling as well as region, nation and territory (Berberich, Campbell & Hudson 2012, 18-19).

In other words, it is crucial to assume the emotions within the place formed by memories, experiences, stories, habits and so on, similar to the auto-biographical factor discussed in the previous part of the chapter but related to the adulthood memories for the respondents of this research. It is important to understand that the place as a social context is the foundation on which the action of creating one's place and then the feeling of being at 'home' comes from. Thus, this section will surface the necessary implements and data to explain this next component of the social landscape, so that it might be developed more thoroughly in the further part of this chapter related to *Establishing One's Home*.

Therefore, the analysis of the social context will begin by exploring the topic of family ties on the surface. It has been presented earlier and declared an intricate factor since most of the respondents' families (mostly extended family) are almost all living abroad. Some have family and close friends nearby and it has helped them in engaging with the Spaces of Italy, but for the others, casual social ties can still be created. This is only an introductory perspective on the subject as it will become much more significant in the next part of the chapter. As a matter of fact, Harminder experienced positive social relationships with the locals established around their lived place. Harminder may be one of the respondents discussing her family in Italy the most, however when she was in her youth, no one from her family lived in Italy; her father being part of the first settlers in the north of Italy, he was also amongst the few to be able to reunite with his family and to provide possible work opportunities to other family members, but only in the later years.

Therefore when Harminder was very young, she and her parents had to find innovative ways to navigate the Italian place and the Italian everyday life. This may have helped Harminder and her family to improve their social perception of a 'space' becoming a 'place' within the social landscape of an individual or a community, through entertaining relationships with the people in this specific place. This local view of Antonsich's relational factor referring to the personal and social ties enriching the life of this family, through creating 'weak ties' with local Italians and neighbors, thus creating relations between groups (Granovetter 1973). Indeed, the relationships that are created and held throughout the years or the time lived in a place, improve the meaning conveyed within this particular space, slowly becoming a place. Those instances bore great memories, stories, habits and routines which impacted their lives and their ways of seeing their place in this social sense of place.

“[S]ince my mom does not speak very well [Italian] language so he [Harminder’s father] had to, maybe if she need any help to go to the doctor, he had to be free to take her, to take care for her, or take her to the doctor. Because she didn’t know how to talk in Italian. But she was lucky to find an Italian lady who became her friend and taught her Italian, so she was very present in our life. We are still in contact.

(Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2)

This welcoming gesture was really important for the whole family and helped in creating social associations to the place and the people where they had happened to establish their family in Italy. Harminder’s mother was learning the Italian ways and started to appreciate the people and the place some more, which gave a positive example to her children. Establishing the connection between the relationships with the people and the relationships with the place of Italy, their place in Italy.

One compelling example of a physical staple in the landscape combined to a social context favouring the creation of a sense of place is the gurdwara as a building and as a means to transmit traditional and religious culture for and from the migrants’ new location. Through this structure, the Sikh migrants from the researched community of the north of Italy do have a connection to the landscape of Italy. Some of the respondents still have profound relationships with the Indian spaces, however, they are also slowly connecting to Italy, and gradually seeing it as a valuable place. The creation of places of worship in the diaspora has been receiving considerable attention in social sciences. It has been recognized how temples, churches, mosques or *gurdwaras* constitute important migratory places *in* which a sense of community is reproduced away from home, and *through* which ‘a confident assertion of negotiated belonging’ to the new context is promoted (Gallo 2012). One of the reasons why the general view of the community may have progressively transformed is because both the new generation Italian-Sikhs and the older generation of Sikhs from the research have expressed their connection to their religious sites, their gurdwaras in Italy, as a valuable step towards feeling more connected and thus, it creates a sense of place within this new country. As a matter of fact, Thandi compares this phase of development with the situation of “1960s and 1970s Britain or Canada where institution building—with gurdwara-based activities at the forefront—played a pivotal role in promoting community interests” (2012, 22).

The gurdwara, a definite central and essential location for the researched Sikh community, is the form of the traditional and religious focus point of the community from ‘here’. The many gurdwaras in Italy, as in many other countries, have become part of the social landscape of both the migrant Sikh community and of the locals in their own country as perceived through the research. This building—the gurdwara—fits the requirements of the ‘environmental ensemble’, described by Seamon since it is a fixed ‘realized’ place,

a building with continuous human activities which create meaning, emotions and evokes a distinct ambiance associated with the people recognizing the worth of the place itself (2014, 17). This religious Sikh structure built on the Italian landscape is a building which has reached the encompassing status of geographical and the contextually social importance of a space becoming an influential and paramount place for the Sikh respondents.

These religious temples represent the soul of the community away from its traditional homeland; they are a physical and social imprint on the landscape and on the Italian land. They are places to meet, exchange and understand each other in a time when one may need the support of his or her traditional and cultural community in a new land. Geographically speaking it is a mark on the land, a sacred building on the common environment that has affected both the researched Sikh community and the local Italian society. Socially speaking, this place is now full of memories or will be, and for many, it represents the Sikh culture, the place where weddings and coming of age ceremonies are being performed. The greater part of the surrounding community and the family of many, gather to pray, to celebrate and to eat together. For others, it is a meeting point for people from the same age group, facing the same challenges of coming from a different culture and living in Italy. Gurdwaras are magnificent examples of concrete creations of the social landscapes for the Sikhs and of this 'environmental ensemble'. Nonetheless, this notion of the combination of both social context and geographical locatedness for the Sikh respondents of this research needs to be deepened in analysis.

All in all the gurdwaras are certainly holding much influence for the migrant Sikhs in various diasporas¹⁰⁵ around the world, and this place of worship is highly valued by the older generation of Sikhs in order to negotiate, and transmit the Sikhs' culture, customs and religious beliefs to the new generation and entertain a connection to the homeland and their historical traditions (Gallo 2012, *cf.* Hirvi 2010). As Thapan exclaims, "[t]he temple was started as the community felt it is important for the children to be in touch with their culture and community: 'they should know where they come from'" (2013, 11). In this short observation by Thapan of the community's ultimate view of the need to have a temple, it is clear that usually the older generation, observed in the respondent group as well, claim the mandate to assist the new generation to identify properly with their culture and religion thanks to the religious temple. In fact, the

¹⁰⁵ For more information on the importance of the gurdwaras in diasporic communities, see for example Jacobsen 2012 for the continental European Sikhs, Jacobsen 2011 for the Norwegian Sikh community, Hirvi 2010 for the Finnish Sikh community, Singh & Tala 2006 for the British Sikh community and for a complete overview of the gurdwara importance in Italy see Gallo 2012.

gurdwaras, as simple as they may be, are meant to be much more than that, they provide “social spaces and “comfort zones,” in which individuals residing at different places can gather to speak Punjabi, build social networks, gain information, and retain links with the homeland and Sikhs in other countries” (Myrvold 2011, *cf.* Chafetz & Ebaugh 2000). In this case, the new generation Italian-Sikh respondents will often rely on the elders and more recently on the environmental ensemble of the gurdwara, built on the Italian landscape, a place that they are slowly seeing as their ‘home’, to be themselves, feel comfortable about who they are, where they are actually living.

Therefore, one of the most important task of the older generation, according to their own perspective is to transmit the knowledge of their Sikh culture which they have the impression is slowly losing its strength with the newer generation of Sikhs since they may not have experienced it in the Indian spaces much. It may be true that according to migration trajectories, the new generation may not feel connected or even bound to associate themselves with India and the Indian, Punjabi or Sikh culture at all. This is a fact which has had some truth in many other diasporas of Sikh in the world. In fact, Myrvold describes the similar situation from the standpoint of the Sikhs in Sweden,

“When the pioneering migrants explain the reasons for constructing gurdwaras, transmitting religion, language, and culture to their children are frequently presented as the motivation force. The religious congregation is considered to constitute an important space in which young people can gain social and cultural capital for maintaining a Sikh identity and a linguistic and cultural heritage. Different collective practices that have been created within these religious settings are perceived as more timeless cultural forms which offer historical continuity between generations and geographical settings” (Myrvold 2011, 75).

Thus, cultural transmission and maintenance of religious identities in new adopted homes are part of the recent discourses and major challenges for mainland Europe Sikhs (Thandi 2012). The multipurpose use of the gurdwara as a cultural center, the headquarter of the tradition and the place to learn about the history, the language, the martial art, the music and so on, have become essential tools for the older generation to maintain the Sikh culture from abroad. They are trying to enforce some sort of method to maintain the cultural heritage in the Italian adopted country and one of the ways to do so is through the religious institutions. As claimed with confidence by Gurnam during one of the interviews:

Catherine: How is this building [Sikh temple] important for you?

Gurnam: The gurdwara is important to keep the roots of the younger who were brought up here.

(Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30)¹⁰⁶

Once again, this man of few words sums up the situation in a short and noteworthy statement. In his opinion, the young new generation Sikhs which were not brought up in India, need the gurdwara to ‘keep the roots’ and learn about their community’s history and culture. “It is possible to identify different interrelated social dimensions of religious places in the diaspora. The first, as already mentioned, refers to the importance of places of worship in negotiating and transmitting migrants’ culture and identity and in providing new generations with a link to their homeland traditions” (Gallo 2012, cf. Chavetz & Ebaugh 2000, Hirvi 2010, Nesbitt 2012)”. These religious institutions have become essential to transmit the Sikh culture, they “have gained an important function by providing social spaces in which Sikh individuals at different places can build local social networks and simultaneously create and maintain links with the homeland and Sikhs in other countries” (Jacobsen & Myrvold 2012, 2). It is then unnecessary to restate the tremendous importance of the many places of worship in negotiating and transmitting migrants’ culture and in providing new generations with a link to their homeland traditions (Hirvi 2010).

As an illustration of the need and necessity of this cultural and religious center, during an interview at the Torre de’ Picenardi Gurdwara—Gurdwara Shri Kalgidhar Sahib—in Cremona’s country side, one of the young woman part of the new generation Italian-Sikhs explained why she was glad to have lived all her life in Cremona rather than in a further, more isolated town:

“I just live in Cremona, I was born in Cremona, but for me the community is important, also for my parents. But also for me! Because this is something in which I can identify *myself*, because I am part of this community, and I think this is one of the best thing to know that, yes, I am part of this community, I am that person, it is important for me.”

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents. Respondent’s emphasis)

This excerpt was already displayed in the Theoretical Framework as an example of the importance of ‘community’ as a term and as a concept within this thesis. However, no further analysis were provided at that point, therefore, there will stronger reasoning towards Jazpreet’s comment and the place-making accomplished in Italy through the community as a factor of importance. Oftentimes, the people which are part of a community, as are the respondent Sikhs, Italian-Sikhs or from the older generation, will share an identity rhetoric, a religious behavior as well as a place to gather and learn about one’s culture in an all-encompassing location: the gurdwara. The importance of the community as a whole, as an anchor into one’s natural identity representation is clearly realized in this environment for this young woman; she is

¹⁰⁶ Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

surrounded by her community. It gives her the moral support to understand who she is and how to represent her rhetoric of identity in a proper manner. Living in Cremona, nearer to one of the largest gurdwaras in Europe has given her the opportunity to be surrounded by her own people, her culture and her place. In the end, it helps the new generation as Jazpreet to learn about their culture and it helps the older generation to make sure that the culture is negotiated and transmitted to the new generation. This generates a recognition of shared culture and origin, which leads to solidarity and allegiance to a group and creates a much stronger Sikh representation of identity, in a conceptual intertwined perspective.

The most impressive and most attended gurdwara in the area of the place-based study which has the largest physical space for the *sangat* according to the respondents, is also where most of the participant-observations and interviews were conducted. As mentioned, the principal gurdwara in Lombardy is the one situated in Pessina Cremonese, featuring every usual element of a gurdwara, as it was designed, planned and constructed fully in this very rural and industrial zone compared to other smaller gurdwaras. Conversing more about the building itself in subsequent visits to the temple, some details about the structure and the location were investigated. Two respondents answered few questions about this religious sacred temple.

Catherine: It is a nice gurdwara, it is a big gurdwara.

Gopal: Yes!

Amrit-Raj: Yes [...] it is the most big (sic) in Europe.

Catherine: Yes, I heard, it is great! The only thing is that it is far from Cremona or the train station.

Amrit-Raj: Yea yea, because of the people which live in there, they are not near Cremona, they are there near gurdwara for this reason [...]

Gopal: Because in Cremona there are not many people, Punjabis, and here there are a lot of people and they can come. For that we made it here.

Amrit-Raj: There are a lot of them [...] and the center of the community is in here.

(Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13 & Gopal, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents)

The location of this gurdwara is situated in a place where it is easily reachable for the many families scattered around the rural lands in this province; unless a person does not own a car. It is central to all the small settlements and thus makes it the best location. This greatest gurdwara of mainland Europe is also one of the few gurdwaras that have been built completely from scratch and not simply converted, and it is not finished yet. One of the popular features of the gurdwara buildings everywhere in the world nowadays is the dome which is shaped as a ribbed lotus topped by an ornamental pinnacle, and the one in Pessina Cremonese is designed to receive one, as seen through the original plan of the building and told by some of the respondents, but it has not been added to this day. Thus, it is still not so visible yet in the Italian landscape

as a religious temple without this more rounded foreign feature on top of a more squared and white structure.

This major size gurdwara was not converted from an existing building, thus the various elements were planned and not simply fitted within the structure. In fact the Gurdwara Shri Kalgidhar Sahib is wide enough to fit a great deal of the community, the larger amount being on Sunday morning. There is also a smaller room for the sacred scriptures to be stored laying down in a pure environment. Then it has a decent size kitchen and a *langar* hall to cook for this *sangat* or congregation, and to allow them to sit comfortably on the floor enjoying their meal and have *chai* tea. It also has a tiny office for the management team to organize events and the schedule of the activities at the gurdwara. Optionally in many smaller gurdwaras but present in this one, is a classroom to teach culture and language lessons doubling as a bedroom for when visitors come or if the *Granthi*¹⁰⁷, the religious leader, needs a rest but cannot leave the gurdwara. Not every gurdwara is physically organized the same, neither are identical. It is common for the Sikh community to acquire another building and convert it into their religious temple in a cost-effective manner. For example, the first visited gurdwara in Bergamo was organized in a way which was new to this research. In reality the *langar* hall was not an inner part of the structure, it was formed by a tent and attached to the original building, a concept which would definitely not work in more northern countries. It is true that the exterior may not resemble the common idea of a Sikh religious site because it was formerly a factory, it is still an amazing use of the space, and still conveys deep meaning for the people attending the usual Sunday event such as Rajdeep¹⁰⁸ and Satnam¹⁰⁹, the tour guides of this impressively innovative gurdwara for the scope of this research. Their personal opinions of their Bergamo gurdwara and the importance that it has for them were echoing many other respondent's comments during random discussions. They feel the need to attend the Sunday visits, and communicate with the people from their faith and culture while still living in Italy.

This environmental ensemble may not necessarily create a sense of place for the migrant Sikhs of the researched community, but it may very well reinforce their connection to the landscape of Italy and the to place where they live, where they realize their life and where they have meaning. The building of the gurdwara may then be one of the many sources of the sense of place, including strong connection to their religious identity as well as a social sense of place, by being connected to their community. Nonetheless, the

¹⁰⁷ A religious leader who acts as custodian and reader of the sacred scripture of the Sikhs whose function is to lead worship services in Sikh temples and Gurdwaras.

¹⁰⁸ Rajdeep, age 43, born in India, arrived here at age 28.

¹⁰⁹ Satnam, age 21, born in India, in Italy since age 13.

strong connection that a person may have with the community, is not only part of the social context of the landscape but will later be examined as part of the important social ties, making a sense of place to the establishment of a 'home'.

Lastly, to conclude this part of the Space Relationships chapter on the Creating a Sense of Place, it is significant to state that not everyone encountered in the research has experienced such connection. Either they did not easily attach any meaning to living in Italy, or they felt disconnected to any place yet, as well as feeling connected to too many places at once. The possibility to feel connected and thus having a sense of being at the right place is not something that can happen over night, a place can only be noteworthy if emotions, impressions and meanings have been drawn to it, geographically or socially, into a sort of realizations, through living in those places. In other words, some have reached this point, others did not, and others are only slowly getting to this point. Nonetheless for those who reached a certain sense of place in Italy, the next logical step is often to establish one's own home in this new land, which would then become simply and naturally *their* land or home, as though they were rooted in this landscape.

4.4. Establishing One's Home

Being in the right place, feeling that the location where your feet touch the ground on the earth is the right place to be and that you can call it your *owzi*, is more than many people can say. This is especially true of migrant communities who arrived to a strange new land where they need to face the perspective of leaving one's home—or the parents and grandparents' home—to start their life in a new country and hope to establish their home there. The time of adaptation, this possible intimate connection infused with emotions or when people think as though they belong to a place as a sense of place, is how people can experience this feeling of being 'at home' (Antonsich 2010, Yuval-Davis 2006). Once a person has experienced the feeling of the sense of place, and then through the concept of length of time living in a certain place, the proximity factor from friends, family, community and faith, one can then see a direct line towards the establishment of one's home with this feeling of attachment of being 'rooted' into Italy as a place. Therefore this last part of the chapter follows the probable natural progression since the previous parts depicted both the spaces of India and then of Italy, then the feeling of the sense of place, and finally, in this ultimate part it will present the analysis of a 'home' away from the traditional 'homeland'. It will be examined in the goal of positively answering the subject matter of the feeling of rootedness of being *chez soi* or "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness)" (Antonsich 2010, c.f. Yuval-Davis

2006), as explained by the Sikh respondents in Italy. The idea is to follow the usual path towards the formation of a 'home' and how has the researched community advanced in doing so, or what were the reasons if it did not.

Heretofore in this chapter, the analysis has stressed the importance of space relationships, both the relationships with the space or place, and for the relationships with the people and resources to create a sense of place and ultimately founding ones' home. This part of the chapter will continue the focus on the connection with the people, the community and deepen the approach to the place where a person lives, as well as the notion of 'home', and the meaning or purpose that it has for an individual. Thusly, proximity to the community as a whole, their network and their religious traditions have been deemed important in creating the sense of place-belongingness of being at home. In effect, strongly felt senses of place and dwelling may indeed result in interconnected social and spatial aspects of house and home and may even influence who people are and where they feel they belong (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 89), in a way that is rather meaningful for the migrants. To understand what a home may mean for the respondents, one needs to understand the many subtleties:

“The notion of 'home' is ambiguous and carries with it a great amount of shifting meanings, which are often deeply entangled with each other. On the one hand, home may refer to a concrete, physical and intimate space of daily dwelling. However, on the other hand home can also refer to a symbolic, imagined and intangible entity such as the 'homeland'. The notion of home is in many ways also tied to the emotionally but also politically meaningful question of belonging.” (Hirvi 2015, 35).

A few points are important in this quote. Home is indeed a physical building that a person can call 'home' and where people reside. It may also be very symbolic as the historical and religious homeland that the Sikhs often view in Punjab, India. And then, home is connected to the question of belonging or place-belongingness. Thus, at this moment it is important to see home as a site where people feel that they belong in what they feel rooted to their place in this world.

As for the more concrete and intimate notion of home, it needs to be alleged that usually a house or a home is a relatively simple building, “[i]t is a place, however for many reasons. It provides shelter; its hierarchy of spaces answers social needs; it is a field of care, a repository of memories and dreams [...] For personal selfhood that world is the house” (Tuan 1977, 164). This feeling of care, these creations of memories and this catalyzer of dream is all that a house should bring as personal feelings. Again, following Perkins and Thorns, the “physical and symbolic nature of house and home is also produced by variation in

cultural factors—life course trajectory, family form, gender relations, social class, consumption patterns, leisure, work, employment practices, building methods and interpretations of locally appropriate uses of land” (2012, 75).

Further on, the view of a home can also be explained by Perkins and Thornes in their analysis which denotes that, “[i]t is common in scholarly sources to see home interpreted nostalgically and characterized as a secure and peaceful place where individuals and families can escape the pressures of everyday life, express their individuality and autonomy, and create a secure physical base from which to venture into the wider world, whether it be for work, leisure or other social engagement” (2012, 77). In this view, the older generation indeed see their homes as a nostalgic place where the family can be secured and peaceful in a place that has a much more traditionally cultural setting; which pleases the older generation immensely and often less the newer generation. Thus, home can be founded on many aspects, which may indeed take time to establish.

For this home to be established properly, for the dwelling to be built, for the sentiment of security to be reinforced, for the feeling of being *chez soi* to be present, it must take some time, place-making necessitates to make a ‘pause’ in a specific place in order to have a home. Length of residence or length of time in a place is one of the most common predictors of attachment to the place since it presumes the perspective of wanting to stay, and thus the precursor to the possibility of having a home. The time spent in a country—Italy in this case—has allowed them to experience the relationships with the people, with the landscape, with the culture through the Sikh respondents’ everyday life. Therefore, length of time or of residence in Italy, created a place-belongingness which in turn reinforced the will to stay longer. This perspective is only a precursor as a lengthy stay does not assure a sense of place, and some experience short ‘pauses’ which are plenty to create a deep connection to a place.

In fact, the positive influence of the time spent in Italy, short or long, has made some of the Sikh respondents see that this country could become their home, it may well be adequate for their life, and thus has obtained their place-belongingness feeling or their feeling to be at home. Along length of time, it is also understood that “[...] place attachment implies ‘anchoring’ of emotions in the object of attachment, feeling of belonging, willingness to stay close, and wish to return when away” (Lewicka 2013, 49) which could simply explain the feeling of many Sikh respondents in Italy especially amongst the new generation, as for example in this part of interview from the encounter with Parminder:

Parminder: Well it is better here [Italy] to live. But if I go to India I will go for a week or two weeks to visit yes, and to change a bit your life but not more.

Catherine: Okay but not to live there?

Parminder: No no I would not live in India, no no definitely never. Never never, [...] I would come back!

(Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9)

Parminder has lived his childhood in India, and despite this fact, the length of time spent in Italy, this ‘pause’ as mentioned by Tuan (1977), during the next 15 years have been stronger in his sense of place-belongingness. Parminder agrees in visiting India, but simply for short stays and he definitely wishes to come back to Italy once he is away, as an anchoring of his emotion and decision despite the fact that India is his cultural homeland. Correspondingly, Jazpreet felt the same way when she visited India in turn.

“I was born here [Italy], but I went a lot of times in India, more than 2, many times [...] [hmm] and I have grand-parents there so, we went [...] but like her [her friend Armandeep], I just think that this [Italy] is my home and that [India] is a place that is just vacations and not [...] it is just a holiday trip, I don’t know. After 3 months, if we stay there, I am like ‘hmm no, now I want to go back, because it is not the right place there’. I want to leave, but it is very, we are very excited when we go there because there are a lot of things that you don’t know about our culture here because there are no, there aren’t the possibility to know it and there our temple, and more [...]”

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Was it the length of time that Parminder resided in Italy, or the fact that Jazpreet was born and socialized in Italy which made them want to absolutely return to Italy or other factors; the only assumption is that length of time or residence in Italy remains a precursor of this ‘wish’ to return to their new land rather than their homeland. For them, Italy is their home and where they belong through a deep emotional connection.

4.4.1. Community and Family Ties

In many previous parts of this study, the topic of family and its strength related to connecting, influencing and attaching a person to a space or a place was already introduced several times. Indeed, family is an extremely steady attachment factor towards a country. Although, family is not only a compelling way to connect to a place, it is also a very substantial emotional and social anchor into Italian lands. Family and friends work as a social glue, it fortifies the already existing resources for migrants by surrounding them with the people who cherish them, and this social glue can help prevent the feeling of homesickness that may come from migrating to a new country. Jasjit expressed himself on the topic by stating: “[...] why I like Italy, because there are a lot of community of mine. So, I never feel the homesickness here”¹¹⁰. Similarly, in Rupi’s case, for example, it was the family and friends of her father that were ever present. She explained in her

¹¹⁰ Jasjit, age 27, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 23, travels every year for a few months to Italy, North America and China for work.

interview: “And I have a lot of family here [...] and the whole ‘*paese*’ of my father [the father’s Indian village] is in Italy!”¹¹¹. Thus, not only is her family present in Italy where she was born, where her mother and father established their home, but also a lot of their friends and network from before in India and this anchored everyone emotionally speaking in the Italian landscape. In fact, the proximity of the family network would be termed as ‘Family sense of place’ from Eyles’ 1985 study, which place is where the family interactions and attachments reside (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 19) and thus become a social and emotional anchor into the Italian landscape. The only certainty in discussing this family’s sense of place, is that the network of family and friends has made the migrant Sikh respondents who establish their home in Italy, more comfortable which encouraged them to stay longer and have their future and their offspring in Italy. This is also another example of Antonsich’s relational ties, while emphasizing a ‘stronger ties’ with the community and the family. Emotionally dense and enriching relationships between close friends, family of important relatives have indeed created a specific network, a ‘family sense of place’ for some of the respondents in Italy.

Another youngster of the new generation Italian-Sikh who encountered this sort of personal experience of relational factor with his family is Amrit-Raj. For all that, for Amrit-Raj’s family, they in fact became the social glue to others migrating in Italy; truly his family was present in Italy amongst the firsts and more friends of the family and extended family members came to join them afterwards. They ended up being the emotional bond for others as well as bonding with those already there: “No, my, I have family here because I come here, my father came to be near to the family (sic.) [...] he wants to stay wherever the family is. And now we are here!”¹¹². This proximity was thus very important for him and his family in their intention to stay in Italy as explained in his short statement. They were the social anchor of other families, as much as they had social anchors in Italy themselves, and this had created enough place attachment for them to want to stay and plan their life in Italy, as an endless cycle of friendly ties. There has been plenty of examples of the family, community or social ties within this research analysis. Every respondent can feel, entertain and experience those differently, but in this part of the analysis, the goal is to state with examples that the family connections on a new land will indeed help in establishing one’s home in Italy. Many personal experiences were recalled during interviews, and many interesting stories were highlighted, but none so

¹¹¹ Rupi, age 16, born in Italy, Indian parents.

¹¹² Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13.

transparent as with the many interviews with Livpreet and his wife Shinder, as in the next vignette of Livpreet's view of home.

Vignette #8: Livpreet's View of 'Home'

Livpreet is a good-hearted, good-humoured and easy-going father of two sons. When he first heard about the research on his community of Sikhs in the north of Italy, he was curious but also apprehensive of the sort of questions and information that would be needed of him. So he requested the right to attend a larger group interview, as a gate-crasher at the last moment, so that he could have a feeling of the research perspectives. He meant to observe and decide if he would be interested to participate but did not manage to remain quiet. Livpreet began to translate some of the Punjabi comments and then started adding his own views to the group interview. He is in fact a cousin of Harminder¹¹³ which was the official translator at the time, but who was too distracted to help. She was the one presenting Livpreet as in a snowball sampling, and it started being a friendlier relation after that.

Livpreet, after answering most of the questions during the group interview, insured to plan another meeting to discuss more at his house, to present his wife Shinder and his two young sons. Thus Harminder one day organized a trip to Livpreet's and Shinder's home, a second-floor simple apartment, just before going to a family gathering to celebrate Harminder's grand-father's birthday where we were all invited to join in. At Livpreet's house, an individual interview was recorded with Livpreet, then he assisted his wife with translating from Punjabi to English, even if her English was remarkable, while Harminder kept an eye on the little active and dynamic duo of sons. Aside from the formal and recorded interviews, many various discussions were noted down during the day, at the home, at the family gathering, while walking around and driving-along. From those talks and many other encounters, Livpreet's perspectives on a home became apparent, and even if not unique, quite engaging.

In fact, for Harminder, his family and especially his uncle Gurnam¹¹⁴, Harminder's father, later during his migration, became his social anchor and role model for his family. Therefore, Livpreet migrated to Italy in order to find work, starting in the south, and then because of a family tip from his uncle, decided to move north in search of better work opportunities. The possibility of work, of closeness to family and to his regular network, became essential reasons for his internal migration to the region of Cremona. Then

¹¹³ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2.

¹¹⁴ Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30.

Livpreet decided to establish himself in the north and start the proper administrative documentation to sponsor his wife to come to Italy with him.

Catherine: When you came here to buy a house, why did you choose this place?

Livpreet: Because my uncle is here you know Harminder' father. They told me there was a nice house, so I just bought it. But as soon as I bought this house my uncle started working in another part of the province. But maybe 2-3 years ago they were living near to me.

Catherine: Okay so your uncle lived right here before. So, in other words you were living here, you had a job, you were preparing the house to welcome her [Livpreet's wife]

Livpreet: I thought it would be easier for her to live near family members.

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

His thoughtful interest in having a network of family and friends for his wife, some relational factors enriching her life when she would migrate to Italy, came directly from his intention of making it easier for her to establish herself, to settle in, and to want to stay with him in this new and strange land. They also wanted children and having the family nearby would be a good way for her to have the resources and advice of other family members about raising children in Italy, with a Sikh cultural background.

During the interview with the couple, a few interesting notions were discussed about the setting of the house. Livpreet had in fact made sure that he owned a place for Shinder to live in with him, but the house was in bad shape at first. So Livpreet renovated a lot of the house, hoping to please his young wife. At first, Livpreet describes how he wanted to make his nest ready for his wife when she came to reunite with him.

Livpreet: Then I bought this house, and then I waited for her [...]

Catherine: For the reunification policy, does it take a certain time? How long does it take between the moment that you apply and, [...]

Livpreet: About four [...] It takes a long time, about four years [...] A lot was changed before [before Shinder arrived in Italy]. And then she came here, and she suggested [more changes to the house]. She said she didn't want this or that [...] now many things are chained up to us.

Catherine: And a bit like you said, this has made you both attached to this house a lot.

Livpreet: Yes, a lot [...]

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002)

Livpreet did not know in which situation he was getting himself in when he took over the project of transforming this house into a home which would be liked and befitting to his wife's taste. Now that they are both happy with the place, that Livpreet has a better job, they are both pleased, and it gives them opportunities for joyful memories to set into this new home and thus gives value and meaning to this piece of land on which they have settled. The value put on a place is indeed related to the histories that one may write into this place, through actions, habits and practices. People do read places as acting in them. The

importance of the family nearby and of his family in the home is palpable for Livpreet as he states that: “[the] home is where the wife is! [...] The husband and the wife, they both make a house, not a single person”¹¹⁵. For Livpreet, the house has memories because of the presence of his wife with him. Thus, where the wife is, it is where he is and where his home is, since he has history and strong meaning attached to that place.

Even if the home is not located in a more urban area, as hinted by both Livpreet and Shinder as the only drawback of their life in Italy compared to their previous life chapter in India. On the other hand, many memories were created and lived through the walls of this home because of the life changing events that took place in this home of theirs.

Catherine: So all your children, all your pregnancies, you had them in Italy?

Shinder: Oh yes!

Catherine: In this house?

Livpreet: Yes in this house. That's also why I love this house so much [...]

(Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002 & Shinder, age 36, born in India, in Italy since the age of 26)

In their house, according to personal observations, there is an expressive and meaningful assemblage of items that create this ‘homey’ feeling. Shinder is a sort of artist decorating massive clay pots and then displaying them in their flat filled with flowers and such or giving them to friends and family. There are also a great deal of photographs of their two sons on nearly every wall. There was also a quite old photos, assumed to be family possibly in India due to the backdrop, in a metallic frame put on a piece of furniture in the living room right next to the leather couches. These decorations of objects and artworks with some sort of emotional connection and attachment or display of status and identity (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 78) as much as memorabilia in the form of ornaments, photographs, paintings which can hold great sentimental value and memories of family members, of past enjoyable events that either happened here or in distant places (Ibid., 82) such as pictures of their children and of other people all over their walls. Livpreet and Shinder, even if one day would want to move away, they would still consider this house in the north of Italy as their home and this is related to their network of family and their family sense place which so intensively forged the establishment of their growing family in their Italian home.

Leaving aside the previous vignette, other important social networks have been at play for the Sikh respondents of the north of Italy. The gurdwara as a source of historical and cultural transmission has been

¹¹⁵ Livpreet, age 38, born in India, became a legal migrant in 2002

declared as such previously in the *Creating a Sense of Place*, but in the goal of establishing one's home, another facet related to the gurdwara—the environmental ensemble—will be exposed. In fact, the religious congregation, the *sangat* formed by the old generation and of the new generation Italian-Sikhs both need the gurdwaras for holding on to their culture, and in succession, the community thus gathers at the gurdwara and then proximity to the gurdwara thus creates the consequence of the proximity of the community, of the *panthi*¹¹⁶, and of the other Sikh migrants, respondents of this research and more. Essentially, the community becomes the real home, not the landscape or the soil that one was born into, as an imagined community (Anderson 1983).

In today's Sikh researched community of the north, the gurdwara has become a central, meaningful and lived place for the whole of the community, according to observations and comments from the respondents. These unique buildings are the essence of Sikhism away from India and have sprung all over the north of Italy in the past few years. Their purpose as the head quarter of cultural heritage, keeper of history, traditions, memories and culture for the new generation Sikhs have been apparent for many respondents of this research mainly in the previous section of this chapter. The gurdwaras are the receptacle of cultural factor of traditions and religions drawing upon Antonsich's concepts (2010) for many of the Sikh respondents of this research. Since religious culture is a vital factor for spiritual people in order for them to nurture deep meaning in a specific place as a home, living nearby a gurdwara for those young Sikhs becoming the preeminent voice of the community is a must. Literally, during the fieldwork, Parminder¹¹⁷ and his girlfriend were in fact shopping for a house and one of the most important factors for them, was that it needed to be nearby a great gurdwara without leaving their province in Italy. The religious temple is simply an essential part of their current life individually, as a couple and, soon as a family, since they wanted their future geographic location to be close enough for their growing family to be in touch with their Sikh culture as well as creating needed and important ties to the Sikh network, housed primarily in these Sikh temples.

The consequence of the proximity of the community is truly about the importance to be surrounded by your cultural traditions, religious worldviews and culturally alike social network even though the Sikh respondents live outside of the original homeland. This support coming from inside the country, rather than from outside is indeed very central for young Italian-Sikhs. Armandeep, helped by her close friend Jazpreet, explain her evident preference to live closer to Cremona rather than in Brevento for this exact reason; the

¹¹⁶ *Panthi*: a word used commonly to describe the Sikh community.

¹¹⁷ Parminder, age 26, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 9

community and the network around the culture which is provided nearby, thanks to the community centralizing around the gurdwara.

Armandeep: No, because in Brevento there aren't Indian families, and while here, we are [...] a lot. There is a community that can help [...]

Jazpreet: [...] each other [...]

Armandeep: Yes.

Jazpreet: [...] better [...]

Catherine: So, it's better? It is a lot more fun to have more people that you know?

Armandeep: Yes, and you, you can [...]

Jazpreet: [...] you can ask for a help if you need, if [...]

Armandeep: [...] and you don't forget your culture!

Catherine: Okay and that is something important for you?

Armandeep: For my parents!

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents & Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8)

Not forgetting one's culture is both related to the religious building as being the central hub of religious transmission, and related to the community which emanates the cultural, social and religious vibes in which these young women feel deeply connected and comfortable with. The influence from the community, existing at the Cremona gurdwara, and simply not in Brevento is important for the new generation as well as to their parents who see it as a fortunate means for them to transmit their culture to their offspring. Living in Cremona or in nearby towns made them live closer to the great gurdwara of Pessina Cremonese *Gurdwara Shri Kalgidhar Sahib* and living closer to the gurdwara means to be immersed in the religious and cultural habits from the Sikh culture.

Then again, home is also seen as a place with a certain sort of security or at least a routine that provides security by its predictability. The topic of physical safety has already been mentioned, but this point intends in focusing on feeling at ease, and comfortable in a place, thus secured. This feeling of being in your comfort zone and where you can be yourself, is often as important as having memories in the place. Stability, security and routine create this comfort zone, sought by the members of the community in this research. Home has been described previously as a peaceful and protected place where a Sikh respondent can evacuate the stress of the day and be themselves without any fear (Perkins & Thornes 2012). In fact, Amrit sees security in routine and in reliable experiences of life, thus in her point of view she articulates:

“I would like to stay here because I am born here, I have friends here, I like the Gurdwara [...] the people that I know in the gurdwara. So, I would like to live my whole life here [...]”.

Amrit, age 18, born in Italy, Indian parents.

The many consistent elements in Amrit's life create this notion of security that a well-known place can only grant her. A home has to come "with familiarity and ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smells, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time" (Tuan 1977, 159). To feel at home, one must have a good relationship with the place they want to call their own, and thus establish themselves in this country, Italy, as clearly stated by Amrit in this loud statement about her future. The very deep and crucial elements of Amrit's life mentioned in her comment clearly exemplified her connection to Italy, to her Sikh culture in the Italian landscape, of her sense of place as well as her will to establish a future, in other words, Amrit is definitely rooted to Italy.

4.4.2. *L'Enracinement* or Rootedness

Enracinement or rootedness is the ultimate understanding of place-belongingness. Within the chapter of space relationship, it is the deepest relation that one can have. It is the feeling, the impression of being attached to the land as the roots of a tree embedded deep into the ground. This feeling which comes after some time when a migrant has felt the sense of place and establish one's home is also related to the decisive emotion of being at the right place and willing to remain in this country for good, or at least remain attach to this country. It is necessary for a person to grow, and to become the best of themselves, to be rooted in the ground, it is necessary physically as well as for the human soul (Weil 1949). Within John Eyles' 1985 study about the feeling of 'home' an interesting sense may very well combine 'home' feeling and a deep-rooted place-belongingness through the 'Way-of-life sense of place' when the research participants' whole *way of life* is bound up with a specific place (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 19). This sense becomes more and more important as the time goes by, as the people living in their homes become increasingly familiarised to the particularities of their locality and thus profess the fondness of their home in this exact location.

Throughout this research, in the overall exhaustively complicated question of 'where is home' for the migrant Sikh respondents, it may result in a complicated and difficult answer to give due to the many different levels of attachment and various disconnection possible to Italy. As defined earlier, this question has multiple answers since it is an individual perspective on their lives which has been affected by a great deal of factors such as the period in their lives or the future laid out ahead of them, all directed towards each respondent's personal experiences. Therefore, the actual situations in which the migrant Sikh respondents are, may or may not reflect the general situation of every Sikhs in the north of Italy; it would be an unnecessary generalization as an all-encompassing answer about the community's future, and thus will not be attempted here. Only individual perspectives will lead the analysis towards the possible feeling of rootedness for the migrant Sikh respondents as Harminder, a well-known new generation Italian-Sikh with

a mixed background of modernity and religious constancy has claimed about her situation during a BBC interview: “Home is Italy for me!”¹¹⁸. Thus, there is no universal truth for the whole of the community, this was Harminder’s own thoughts about her roots, and no one else, although as presented here, some Sikh respondents could be named as those that identify Italy as their homes and see their future on these shores.

One angle that has yet to be discussed in this chapter in relation to the connection to the land of Italy as well as belonging, is the question of gaining citizenship for the migrants establishing themselves in Italy. As Thapan claim, “[c]itizenship is a feeling of belonging, which all youth, children of immigrants or otherwise, aspire to through social and cultural acceptance, friendship and support. Above all, they desire and seek admittance into, and equal treatment in, a social universe that is defined by emotions as much as by legal forms of acceptance and belonging” (2015, 67). Citizenship in its essence does not change who a person is, legal admittance and acceptance of similar rights does not affect identity per se, but it might create a sort of deeper connection with a place or with a group. This may in fact be understood as positively as it may be seen as negatively because gaining citizenship insures legal admittance but since it does not affect one’s identity in a definite fashion, it does not insure social admittance, as explained by Amrit-Raj: “[e]ven when I get the [Italian] citizenship, when people look at me they will know I am Indian. You can’t change everything; you can’t change who you are. [...] And that is true!”¹¹⁹. The main notion that changes with this legal document is the status in Italy and the rights and duties of being an Italian citizen¹²⁰.

In a more political undertone within the inquiry towards place-belongingness and rootedness, the legal factor from Antonsich characterizes this search for a legal form of acceptance as “an essential component in producing security, which is regarded by many as a vital dimension of belonging” (2010, 10). Some of the respondents in this research have mentioned the struggle or ambition from themselves or members of their family to obtain this privileged official document. The possibility of getting some form of comfort, to feel secure and non-threatened in one’s own home is an indispensable dimension of rootedness and is often possible through the application for the citizenship and the residence permit or by gaining full legal access to the country. Thus, this very crucial piece of paper could simply be a means to an end for all

¹¹⁸ Harminder, age 25, born in India, in Italy since the age of 2—Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

¹¹⁹ Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13.

¹²⁰ For an accurate understanding of the relationship between citizenship and belonging in the experience of immigrant youth in Italy, see Colombo, Domaneshi and Marchetti (2011) and Thapan (2015).

the new generation Italian-Sikhs as well as the older generation feeling themselves at home in Italy, feeling rooted in this landscape.

Other than citizenship, as an *enracinement* element, the social construction of the place and the meaning attributed to it, are in fact the other obvious elements. The lived places, where relations are made with the experiences in living in these places (Rodman 2003, 205), which create ‘place meanings’ and ‘place realizations’ have a “unique reality for each inhabitant, and while the meaning may be shared with others, the views of place are often likely to be competing and contested in practice” (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 15, cf. Rodman 2003). Thus again, it is appropriate to claim the fact that place-belongingness is more than simply individual, it is becoming and lived different for everyone. It is thus highlighted that for each respondent independently of their generation, length of stay or family migrational trajectory, may see the ‘meaning’ in a place, differently than someone else.

“[hmm] it is that here[...] now here, I know the language. I study here, and I have my parents here and my life is all here now. So, it is [...] but here the house here is okay. But family members, my aunts and uncles are in India and only through them I like and prefer India. And also, maybe for Sikh culture, here we don’t have a lot. And for my family members if I want to visit them, I have to go to India. So yes, for this I prefer India. But for my life and me, I prefer here in Italy and maybe for holidays I prefer India.”

(Ravdeep, age 19, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 6)

Ravdeep begins by enumerating every element of her everyday life which makes sense in her Italian home place; she has her life ‘here’ and now. She then assumes the notion that for other members of her family, their home place, or the place where they hold most of their meaning may not be Italy. She agrees in the standing of India as a great place to see extended family members, but that aside from that, she would contest the locality of India as her place-belongingness. She has her life in Italy, knows exactly what makes this life so remarkable for her, and thus claim her rootedness by dividing India as a vacation destination, and Italy as her final locality.

Other new generation Italian-Sikhs have professed their decision in having Italy as their ultimate place, their root and their place to be, and India or other countries simply as places to see, visit, and then to return home.

“I just think that this [Italy] is my home and that [India] is a place that is just vacations and not [...] it is just a holiday trip, [...]”

(Jazpreet, age 20, born in Italy, Indian parents)

Catherine: [...] do you want to live all your life in Italy?

Armandeep: yes of course! [Discussing her friend's suggestion to live in Canada] I visit Canada, it is a very beautiful place, but [...] here is my home Italy I want to live here.

(Armandeep, age 21, born in India, in Italy since the age of 8)

“Campi [the fields surrounding his small Italian village] it is my habitat!!!”

(Harjinder, age 21, born in India, arrived in Italy at age 10)

For those two young women, and this young man, of similar age but different background, place of living and migrant trajectory, still are all very connected to where they are living at the moment. They were all discussing in separate instances, about the possibility of establishing their home someplace else, and they all chose otherwise, they chose to stay in Italy, and plan their future life in this country. Answering that Italy is their home, or even, their habitat proves that Italy has become an emotional and societal anchor into their lives.

A lasting element is missing in order to fully understand this place-belongingness into the Italian landscape and it could be described as the feeling to have a purpose in this land. Home as much as rootedness is not only where your family is, or where you have shared memories with others, it also entails much of the perfect location, as could be explained by the emotional quality of home and how it is linked to the understanding of others and themselves “home is generally seen as an arrangement that provides people with a sense of permanence, continuity, routine and security” (Dupuis & Thorns 1998 in Perkins & Thorns 2012, 74, *cf.* Hirvi 2015, 47). This could be translated in a feeling of purpose for Gurnam,

Maurizio: Do you miss India, and do you think you will return to live there one day?

Gurnam: No?! I have a role in the cheese industry and I am proud to have worked there for many years!

(Gurnam, age 54, born in India, arrived in Italy at the age of 30)¹²¹

Gurnam has always been very proud of his achievements in his life, for his family and for his home place of Italy. The purpose he has with his role with the cheese industry gives him the opportunity of being worthy and providing for this family at home. This in itself, could even be considered as one of the most important criteria of feeling at the right place, or feeling at home in one's place.

When defining the rooting place of a person, the emphasis has to be put on “[t]he important argument here [which] is that we all live somewhere, and a place to live allows us to connect with people, the wider community and natural environment, and for many of the world's people, the source of their livelihood” (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 74). The sources of the livelihood or the economic factor (Antonsich

¹²¹ Interview done by Maurizio for a BBC podcast. The interview was only attended, not recorded.

2010) and job opportunities have already been stressed over and over again in this chapter, but these also offer an honorable sense of purpose for those people establishing themselves in Italy, as shown through another example of purpose through work by Amrit-Raj:

“For now, I would like to stay in Italy. Because I love my work, I love my friends here, I love my [...] because I really like to work in now [...] in what I work now. Because the atmosphere [...] the ambiance of the work is a more very nice place. That is, I like this [...] as my home. I find myself at home at my workplace! It is because that, that right now, I want to stay in Italy (sic.)”

(Amrit-Raj, age 22, born in India, arrived at age 13)

In this excerpt, Amrit-Raj explains his deep feeling in staying in Italy for the work opportunities and because he has always worked in this environment, it has become his ‘home’, his ‘homeing desire’ remain with Italy because this is where he feels good, and where he feels he wants to lay down his roots for the future. Amrit-Raj sees potential in the Italian landscapes and in the life opportunities which makes him feel as though he belongs, he has a purpose in life and this drives him further in this new local Italian society. Ultimately alike the few other respondents mentioned previously, Italy is now where Amrit-Raj’s rootedness is located, and he has then befittingly established his *own* home in this country where he wants to stay.

3.3. Conclusion

“In its simplest form, sense of place therefore encompasses the idea that people, in the course of their everyday lives, form close relationships with the spaces in which they live. As they work, play, spend time with their families and friends, travel in their neighborhoods and immediate environments individuals have positive and negative experiences in, and of, places and as a result ascribe meaning to them, themselves and other people with whom they interact (Perkins & Thorns 2012, 14-15).

This statement powerfully and thoroughly summarizes the goal of this chapter which was to analyze how the Sikh migrants experience and perceive their spaces and the place of Italy nowadays. It aimed at discussing the space relationships that the researched Sikh community, the Sikh migrants from the new or the old generation entertain with their environment and whether or not it could lead to the feeling of being at home. In order to feel at home for a migrant, one must first leave their former space behind, migrate to a strange new world, experience the new space through everyday encounters, develop a sense of being at the right place through transforming space into meaningful, lived and realized places of interest. Ultimately the feeling of being at the right place could become the keystone to establish a home and through the social, family and community ties, take root and reach a certain place-belongingness.

Therefore, to conclude the chapter on the concept of belonging, of having a sense of place, it provides an interesting start in presenting the crucial elements for the attainment of this feeling which was framed through Antonsich's key factors of belonging. Primarily and most importantly the auto-biographical factor pointing at one's past history such as personal experiences, relations, and memories both from childhood to adulthood which connects an individual to a specific place. Then through the reason for migration, for remaining in Italy and even to feel a sense of purpose which roots a person to Italy, is the economic factor contributing to create a safe and stable material condition for the individual and her/his family. Follows the relational factors of both types of weak and strong ties were observed with different groups as well as between groups. Further along, the cultural factor encompassing the cultural habits of traditions and religions of the individual in his or her everyday life centralized at the religious temple structures or the environmental ensemble of gurdwaras. Then finally, briefly mentioned was the legal factor as an essential component in producing security, which is regarded by many as a vital dimension of belonging (Antonsich 2010, 10). Combining these factors to the importance of the community, often centralized around the gurdwara, an important Sikh staple on the Italian landscape and the viewpoints of the Sikhs in today's Italian society, about their space and place has been disclosed. For many of the respondents, Italy has become a place of meaning while some are still rather attached to their former lands, others are looking forward, either to Italy and a hopeful future or to the rest of the world with sometimes eagerness and sometimes apprehension. Leaving one's country, being born and socialized in another country than their traditional and cultural homeland or even consider to possibly stay, root themselves in Italy or leave for other life opportunities, are all creating important challenges which will always influence those Sikhs' perspective on life, and on their belongingness.

Concluding Remarks

According to Jacobsen and Myrvold, the “Sikhs constitute a growing and visible religious community in Europe. The global Sikh population is today estimated at between 23 and 25 million individuals and the European Sikhs comprise about half a million people” (2012, 1) furthermore, as mentioned throughout this dissertation, the second largest settlement of Sikhs in Europe is located in Italy, more precisely in the northern provinces, the location of this research. In the preceding chapters was analyzed, an initial examination of the processes whereby migrant Sikhs from the rural north community in Italy negotiated their identity representations along with suggesting various ways to map the relationships they entertain with different spaces nearby or further away, as well as meaningful places for everyday life actions in Italy leading to place-belongingness. In an intertwined and interconnected perspective, one can argue that in the case of some respondents of the Sikh community which have become spatially rooted, the spaces and place of Italy have achieved “a distinctive *identity* as a place” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 8), where it creates deeper connections and belonging to the place and to the majority group: the local Italian society.

This dissertation has attempted to present a slice of life and expectations of those Sikhs recently settled in the northern rural provinces of Italy. The very peculiar and changing situation of this community has been analyzed in various angles. Within the situated setting of the Sikh migrants in Italy, the aim of this dissertation has been to define **How the northern Sikh community perceives their identity representations within their experiences of spaces and the place of Italy in this contemporary context.** Given the current economic and political context in Italy towards the migrants, this was not necessarily a straightforward investigation. The overall empirical findings all point towards a rhetoric of possibilities whether it may be about identity representations or space relationships, which all converge towards attachment to a place and interest into a group or lack thereof. The results were not predictable due to the unique singularity of this particular diaspora, as well as the overall connectedness of the data and conceptual approach despite attempted divisions of the analysis. The interconnected analytical chapters are each the premise and the guidelines in understanding the other and concluding the next.

In regards to the question on ‘How do the Sikh migrants negotiate the different rhetorics of identity representations in Italy?’ the empirical data gathered within interviews and ethnographic fieldwork for the chapter on Identity Representations led to a new development and perspective towards Sikh migrants from the old and the new generation. What is impressive about the charting out of specific rhetorics of identity representation is much more related to the unique situation of this community. Having the ability to negotiate personal performances through parental *culture* and *ways of life* which may fit any of the three rhetorics—Being Indian (Sikh), Being Italian, and Being Hybrid—has its fair share of challenges. Each individual is constantly creating their identity representation in comparison to the ‘other’ as *inclusions* or *exclusions*, in the case of the Sikh respondents, they are embedded in this understanding that other people know who they are, however, what this first analytical chapter has highlighted is that through performances, a Sikh can become any of those rhetorics of identity. These performances include adaptations and shaping their viewpoints to the *way of life* of Italians or to center one’s actions towards the parents’ *culture*. This incredible aptitude in tailoring one’s actions to fit the required social codes, a true negotiation, is impressive, especially for the new generation Italian-Sikhs. The fact, that they can be or become another representation than the traditional exotic persona of an Indian Sikh is remarkable, as well as they have not lost their knowledge of their homeland and religious traditions, especially since they have been performing as such, pivoting their way of being or becoming and perfecting or mastering their art, away from the local Italians’ eyes, in a way that they are now fully capable of being Indian, Being Italian or Being Hybrid at their own will.

As for the second sub-question, dealt within the analysis of Space Relationships, on ‘How do Sikh migrants experience and consider their spaces and the place of Italy nowadays?’, once again the field research permitted restricted as well as extremely rich opportunities to develop this question in an in-depth analysis. At first, with some reflections towards the central idea of spaces and place, with the migrant trajectories of this researched Sikh community, one must understand that “[n]owadays, in the western world, only a minority of people are born, live their entire lives and die in the same rural community or urban neighbourhood” (Massey & Jess 1995, 7), which is quite true of the majority of the respondents. Therefore what was striking about the second analytical chapter was the overarching importance of the Indian spaces for both older and newer generations. Despite being in Italy, many have strong feelings—positive and negative—about their traditional homeland. Most of the analysis has used views of India either from personal experiences that come out of relationships with people in India, as a backdrop and a comparative basis for the spaces and places of Italy. It may have been because of the seeming appearance of the surrounding

environment or simply because this space of India has left them with a deep and emotional mark on their life. Furthermore, it is easily understood that everyday life in Italy would affect the researched Sikh community, once again in positive or negative perspectives, but the fact that the respondents were part of two opposite spectrums when it came to create a sense of place was impressive. Truly, a part of the Sikh respondents were categorized as placeless, not able to realize themselves in the space, while another part, entertaining some place-meaning experiences not only created a strong sense of place, but they also established a home in Italy, a place to create new memories. The enracinement or rootedness to the Italian landscape was visible within the respondents and their emotions, meaning that Italy offered them something, either employment, life or worldview opportunities, which made them feel as though they belonged to Italy, socially anchored to this place which has hosted them either from birth or from their migration trajectory.

All in all the empirical data approached in a dynamic angle presented specific examples of how identity representation as well as space relationships would unite through a specific set of choices for the Sikh migrants of the north of Italy. Adapting to another mode of living might allow to pivot from one representation to the other, as well as creating memories and enjoyable personal experiences while being in close proximity with loved ones in order to feel at ease in a place are all choices that can be made if a migrant Sikh so desires. These set of choices are not always up to them, however when they are available, it is through those decisions that a person will personify a specific representation of identity and will experience and consider their very own geographic location in this world, their home-place.

This dissertation was based upon a grand ethnographic fieldwork, a place-based research in Italy, but due to specific limitations, not every possible research angle were investigated. For example this project did present a rhetoric of identity representation of being Indian (Sikh), however it did not dive into the plural presence of religious identity through denominations or the caste system. Along this line of thought, there were interesting angles which were entertained at the beginning of this research but the reduced scope of the research did not permit a full intersectional lens of the respondent group. Therefore, further analysis would be most interesting with sociological understanding of gender relationships, women's perspective towards religion and traditional customs (respectability, marriage traditions, emancipation, and so on). A full analysis of generational gaps would be more than significant, as well a research on power relations throughout the community and especially within the gurdwara management, meaning a possible full-blown study with the sociological changes enacted by the new generation of Sikhs within their community. As for the research itself, the respondents were purposely limited to those self-identifying as 'Sikhs' thus a recognition of those

from Sikh heritage but to identifying as such would bring some more added value to a research. Then, bringing into place the perspective of the local Italian society, their angle towards the migrant Sikhs in their neighborhood would prove fascinating. Furthermore, a larger scale research would venture to the multi-sited perspective of the migrant Sikhs and their migrational trajectory from India to Mediterranean Italy, for a transnational perspective on their community. As well as the perception of those Sikh returnees to India and the changes in representation as being the possible 'other' as viewed by those in India and themselves.

To conclude, this research empirically and conceptually contributes to the general sociological literature as well as migrant studies about migrant communities in Italy, the Sikh diasporas in Europe and to the perception and experiences of the migrant Sikh community in Italy on the threshold of their future. The broader purpose of this work is showing that researched migrant Sikhs have established significant connections both with the people in Italy, and with the place, through which they have adapted their *way of life* to become other possible rhetorics of representations without losing their traditional *culture*. Additionally, these deep connections with the place, for some of the migrant Sikhs, have allowed them to produce a new sense of place, where being attached to another country than their homeland is not impossible, it is in fact happening right now, in their rural countryside of Italy.

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