

# Young Italians

Those  
who  
leave  
and  
those  
who  
stay

by Giada Armante & Claudia Cerulo

Italy has been populist for quite some time. If we look at the Berlusconi era it becomes clear that (right-wing) populism is not a new phenomenon. Italian populism started over twenty-five years ago with Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia party. Today populism is getting strong with Matteo Salvini (Lega) and Luigi Di Maio (Five Star Movement), although in a different way. The young generation of Italy has never experienced a stable political and economic situation in their life. Instead it has been confronted with dishonest political climate and economic uncertainty. Italy's youth unemployment rate - the second highest in the eurozone - is one of the biggest problems. It is the main reason why Italy is experiencing a new wave of youth migration especially from the southern regions to northern Italy and Europe. It often involves highly educated people. Germany, particularly Berlin, is one of the top destinations.

Giada Armante (German-Italian from Berlin) and Claudia Cerulo (from Naples) focused on the individual stories of young Italians both in Germany and Italy. Inspired by the title of the third book of the Neapolitan quartet by Elena Ferrante, they interviewed three people in Berlin and three people in Naples to answer the following questions: Why did they decide to leave or stay? To which extent does populism affect their lives? How do they perceive the current situation in Italy and abroad? Armante and Cerulo's project tells a different story of migration: It depicts the south-north migration of young EU citizens in the times of crisis, a topic that is rarely discussed among populists as well as in a greater European context.



**Ottavio Sellitti, 31 years old, born in Naples. He grew up in Sorrento and moved back to Naples where he discovered his passion for analogue photography. He studied Modern Literature at the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II and did his MA in Cultural Studies in Aix-en-Provence, France. Instead of becoming a teacher, he decided to move to Berlin to work as a freelance photographer. He is now part of the Stattlab e.V., an artist collective in Wedding.**



**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in Italy, maybe also compared to France?**

The current political situation in Italy is really bad. I don't know if it has gotten worse because I remember us getting through 20 years of Berlusconi – that was also not so funny. I think the situation we are living now in is the result of what was happening during the Berlusconi times. It was a deliberate destruction of the Italian culture. There were a lot of laws made by Berlusconi to protect himself and his friends. These laws still exist. They were made to prevent people from going to jail because of the mistakes they made or because of fraud. In Italy, it's easy to do that. Politicians have done it a lot of times. And then the left-wing party in Italy has lost its power and identity a long time ago - that's why the rights of the workers are less protected. Salaries don't rise. In Italy salaries stopped rising 20 years ago while in other countries they are rising normally. I don't know everything about economics but I know that the current government isn't suited to lead the country. Half of the government are extreme right-wing xenophobes. The Lega has actually been xenophobic for a very long time. It was xenophobic towards Italians of the south, so now it's a really strange situation. The other party, M5S, they are just amateurs trying to do something but without knowing and without thinking about the complexity of the world we are living in. Trying to give some easy solution to a difficult problem is not always the best idea.

**Speaking about the right-wing Lega – do you feel xenophobia, homophobia, racism and discrimination are increasing?**

I remember there was a situation a little bit like this in 2008 when there was the second Prodi government leading Italy. In the television, everywhere, especially on Mediaset owned by Berlusconi, there was news about people who were robbing or raping others. But actually the real statistics showed that the problem was decreasing. At the same time media coverage was increasing. I think now is happening almost the same thing, but on a bigger scale and with bigger problems to hide. Fear is everywhere now, and it is something that is used by the system. It's true that we have real issues in Italy, especially in terms of unemployment or bad employment contracts. But these problems are not caused by people who are coming to Italy. The system is the problem. But the system continues to find other

reason for its problems. Obviously, saying that the problem is “the other” is taking a lot of responsibility from the system – So, many individuals believe: “I’m in a shitty situation because of the blacks, or because of the immigrants.” It’s much easier than saying: “I don’t work because I didn’t study or because the production of the company I used to work for moved to Poland.” I would say that this kind of reasoning is something that is always there. As soon as you then hear politicians as the minister of interior say these things you feel it’s easy to be racist – it’s an easy solution for the problem.

**Do you trust the political institutions in Italy? Do you feel represented?**

No. The last two times I voted, the parties didn’t even get into the parliament. Once it was the partito socialista dei lavoratori italiani, once it was the sinistra arcobaleno. My political views are not represented in Italy.

**Do you feel like you have a say in Germany or on the European level? Do you participate in the political process other than voting? Do you go to demonstrations, for example?**

The way our democracy works it’s very difficult to be politically active and effective. I’ve been to a few demonstrations here in Berlin last year and demonstrating is always the same: we demonstrate and at some point it’s a party. And it’s a party also if the demonstration is about the increasing price of rent, which is one of the biggest problems in Berlin. People just party. That is not funny. It’s not a good way to try to solve the problem. It’s not changing so much, I think. On the international level, I think, as long as we live in the capitalist free market system, it’s really difficult to be effective politically and to change things. The German economy, for example, stands on the production of cars, but at the same time we know that the production of cars is bad for the climate. But since there is an economic interest, politics keeps defending car producers because there are thousands of people who work in this industry and who could lose their jobs. If the political system is not able to imagine another solution, it will always be a problem.

**What do you think about Europe and the EU? Would you say you are pro-European or do you have some concerns? What do you like? What don’t you like?**

I think both Europe and the European Union are very

precious and important for us today. It’s one of a few good things that the last generation has left us with. Personally, I find it very good that I can move to France or Germany and be there as a European citizen with the same rights as a French or German citizen. I really don’t see that big of a cultural difference. Also, I think there is something that unifies us beyond the cultural differences. The fact that Germany and France decided to make peace at some point is great. It happened also for the sake of balancing the power between the states after the Second World War. The problem is that the wealth of Europe depends on Europe itself. Right now, it is unbalanced. The richer countries should actively help the poorest countries to become economically stable. I think that Germany’s responsibility - in Europe and in the world - should be to help the rest of Europe to overcome the crisis instead of accumulating more and more money. If Germany doesn’t do that, it should get ready to take responsibility for the world that is coming - and I don’t know if Germany wants to take responsibility for another war.

**What kind of Europe do you wish? A Europe that is based on equality of all member states?**

I think that’s the only way to stay united.

**I want to move to your personal story of migration. Why exactly did you choose to come to Berlin?**

I met a girl in France, she is half French, half German and from Berlin, so I came here. Also, Berlin was and still is a relatively cheap city. I’m really angry with the Germans, though, that they were not able to defend themselves from ever-increasing cost of rent, nor could they create a better social state. I find that a rich country shouldn’t have such a poor welfare state. Germans should ask for more and shouldn’t be so accepting of every horrible situation, like being 70 and collecting bottles on the streets to survive.

**Do you struggle with finances in Berlin?**

Yes, I do. I do, but mostly because of the German system that is slightly different from the French one that I am used to. It’s much more demanding of its citizens. The French one is more liberal. In Germany, I have to work more, but also I don’t want to work too much. I don’t want to spend too much of my time working. So, I prefer to struggle instead of spending my time to get money and pay for things.

**Why did you decide to not become a teacher in Italy?**

Because the situation for the teachers is really bad. There are no funds for hiring new teachers at school. So, it's difficult. It's almost impossible. I have some friends who studied with me at university and who are teaching now. But they they started teaching last year and they are 30 years old. It's not a common situation to teach in Naples after your studies. Also, Naples with all the problems of the city was not the best future for me, so I decided to move to South of France, to Aix-en-Provence to finish my studies and then maybe try my luck in the academic world in France or at High school in France as a teacher. After my studies I figured out that if I wanted to be a teacher at the university level I had to be a shark and fight against all the other Italian students to get a PhD scholarship. I find, fighting for one position with other people in my same situation isn't the best activity to do. I think it is much better to work together to achieve one good thing than working and fighting against each other to get something. If the cake is too small, we should make another cake, we cannot try to figure out how to divide the small cake we have.

**Why exactly didn't you want to stay in Naples?**

The idea of moving out of Naples was really something I wanted to do. Even before I started traveling abroad. The only thing that kept me in Naples was the fact that it was less expensive for me to live there because my family living there. I didn't have to pay rent and during my studies I wanted to study, not work, if possible. Leaving Naples also meant leaving the traffic of Naples, one of the main reasons why I'm not living in Naples anymore is the traffic in Naples. The thing is, the city and all of Italy is organized the way the cars prevail. In Naples, they still have the streets meant for both pedestrians and horses, and it is very difficult to move around even with a car. So, the problem with traffic should be solved with public transport, not with private transport. There is also the lack of services. In Italy, we still pay a lot of taxes but you don't see what you pay for, you don't see where the money goes because of the several reasons. I prefer to live in a better organized country.

**When you look at your friends – how many people stayed and how many left?**

I don't know exactly. There are some people who stayed. I have a friend from high school that is now a Carabinieri, for example. He's doing the academy in

Florence. He tried very hard to get where he is because it's one of the few possibilities to work - being a policeman, a carabinieri. It's really hard to enter, it's really difficult to be among the people who know people who know people to then get a job.

**What do you think? How free are you to live the life you want to live here?**

I am free to live the life I want to live.

**Would it have been different if you would have stayed in Naples, or in Aix-en-Provence?**

I don't know because I never really tried to live my life in Naples and for what I do now I could theoretically do it everywhere. But in Naples you won't find a Fotoimpex (shop for analogue photography).

**How do you perceive the opportunities of a young person from Italy and a young person from a richer European country? Do you think the opportunities are about the same because you can choose to live somewhere else, or not?**

As long as you can choose to live somewhere else, it's ok. But for example, in Italy there is no minimum wage. Every contract is drafted on different terms. Most of the work is done under the table. I grew up in a city that is really touristy. Tourism was already well-developed when I was there, so you would think that it brings money. But some of my friends used to work at restaurants or hotels during summertime. I had a friend who was working for the whole month of August, two shifts. Starting off from noon until midnight or even longer. He earned 400 Euros. In France, I think, if you work one hour you get at least seven Euros. If you work the whole week, 35 hours you earn at least 1000 Euros per month. On the other hand, in Italy it's not so easy to earn 1000 euros. It's difficult to have a part-time job. It's not even about having a good career, but rather having the possibility to survive and maintain yourself. There is family and your parents who can actually help you and that becomes a problem, because if you have to rely on your family, then you don't really grow up or move forward. There is a difference between leaving because you have no choice and leaving because you can choose to have a different experience.

**More and more highly skilled young Italians are leaving. What do you think about the "brain drain"**

**everyone is talking about?**

I don't think that it's just a brain drain or just highly skilled people. Now we are at a level where everyone is leaving. It's not just about people leaving after ten years of studies to then accept a wonderful job opportunity in London. It's also about people who didn't finish high school and don't have anything to do and who decide to go to Berlin to make Pizza. Working in gastronomy in Berlin is much better than working in gastronomy in Naples.

**What do you think of populism?**

It's a complex term that is now used to define our current situation. I think it has a lot to do with the media. We are living in the moment where we have new media that is more direct and more open. A politician can use social media, for example. It's not like Berlusconi - when everything that was happening was controlled by Berlusconi's television and newspapers. I think that television and newspapers don't have the same strength as they had before. But there is new media that is much stronger and much easier to control if you know how to use it. And populists know how to use it. If a politician knows how to use new media then it's quite easy for him or her to get control over democracy.

**How would you differentiate between Lega and the Five Star Movement (M5S)? How would you define the M5S?**

Politics is not just about ideology, but about an idea of what your country should be like. It's not about the problem, it's about the solution. We all know what the problems are. The tricky thing is to find a solution. The M5S pointed to the problem - to the fact that we don't have a minimum wage or that there is no protection if you're not unemployed. There are several ways to solve this. The government chose to look at Germany to see how it works here. I soon understood that they're going to tackle the issue from a right-wing perspective. I think, that both the Lega and the M5S are right-wing parties.

**You are talking about the "basic income". Do you think it's a good idea?**

I think it's a wonderful idea, as is a minimum wage. We should receive it also without working, just to live. The way it is planned now - I don't like it. For example,

you have to work for eight hours in social work. That this is totally stupid because there are already others to do that. There are social workers. For example, if you need to paint the room of the school in your neighborhood, there is already a painter to do it! Why don't you pay the painter to do the job of a painter? Why does the unemployed engineer have to do it?

**So, you don't think it's actually helping to fight unemployment?**

No.

**Di Maio seems to be very optimistic. In an interview he said: „I hope that in five years Italy will be a place where young people no longer seek out a one-way ticket to London, Berlin or New York because their state can offer them support and tells them "we can find work together". A country that encourages people to stay and not to leave.“ Do you think that is a realistic idea of Di Maio? In 2023?**

A few weeks ago he also said that we are on the verge of the new digital economic miracle and we will make tons of money in Italy from this. 10 days later Italy was in recession, starting to go under zero production. This is nonsense. For me it's not about work. Me being here, it's not about work. I'm not working here. I mean, I'm not here to work, but to do other things. I'm here to live. Here I have a better life than I could have in Naples, just because I don't have the problems I had to cope with in Naples. For example, if I had to move from A to B, it was a problem. Public transport didn't work. That was my problem in Italy. I don't think it's just about work, because we're not yet that poor and desperate. But we are having a life that is worse than the one our parents had. Our parents could find a job. There was a possibility to create a family, to buy a house. All this was possible - before. I really don't know why I should have stayed in Italy to fight against the same generation of my parents who destroyed everything, to recreate it, when at the same time those people are still in charge. I don't want to. I'm not strong enough, I'm not living 200 years.

**Do you think there's some hope to restore inter-generational equity, some fairness between the generations?**

I think it's fair because the families have to provide for the children. My family has problems to support me. I am a problem for my family, differently than

my father was for his family. My father was already working at my age. He had a good salary and was already married. It was a different situation. My parents have a lot of problems with what I'm doing. But the generation of my parents was different. I think, the problem will always be there. I don't think that a generation cannot think of the next one, or the one before. In Italy at least this is the reality.

**How would you describe your generation? I found this sentence in the Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: "Italian young people have not started collective movements or at least demonstrations against the status quo, resignation has prevailed, although new parties and political actors are emerging." Do you think this is true? Do you think this resignation is dominant in your generation and do you think that your generation is non-political or not strong enough to change something?**

I think the M5S, they want to change things. But I think most people are tired. I don't know where all the people who want to change things are. Personally, I felt really tired at the point when Berlusconi won the election in 2008. I asked myself: If the majority of Italy votes for Berlusconi even after he destroyed Italy twice, what can I change? The system in Italy is so broke now. It's so difficult to change.

**Okay, I've got a last question: How do you see the future?**

I have no idea. Tomorrow I will be in the Statlab, though.







Giulia, 29 years old, born and raised in a town close to Turin. She studied Strategic Sciences at the University of Turin and spent a semester abroad at the Arctic University of Norway. She came to Berlin to work with mafianeindanke e.V. as part of the European Voluntary Service. She then applied to the Humboldt University of Berlin for a second MA in Social Science Research Methods. She is now based in Berlin, where she has a part-time job with the Open Knowledge Foundation Deutschland and is an integral part of mafia-neindanke e.V. on a voluntary basis.

**How do you perceive the overall economic and political situation in Italy, maybe also compared to Germany or another country you know in Europe?**

In my home place, where I grew up, it's currently quite complicated. There is a general mood in the air of pessimism and frustration because jobs are not paid well, the cost of living is pretty high and there is a lot of uncertainty. Also, many jobs do not provide enough guarantees. There are many unstable jobs with short term contracts that get renovated last minute. And this situation influences a lot, I think, the mood of the people. The frustration gets very high and the feeling is that you can't do anything against the system, you can't change anything. You're just kind of a victim of it. While the feeling that I breathe here in Berlin, or in Tromsø for example, it is completely different. So, as a young person here and in Norway I always had the feeling: I have to make effort, but if I really try hard and I really want something I can make it. And that's the main difference in comparison to Italy. That's what I think really makes a difference in your approach to life. If you have the feeling that you are just helpless and hopeless and no matter what you do you're going to lose - or nothing of your efforts are going to be recognized - then you lose motivation and you get in this passive mood, where you don't want to do anything anymore. Whereas if you have the feeling that if you try hard you will get something back then of course it's completely different. I have a lot of friends in Italy, people I grew up with that are struggling a lot. And some of them tried to dream bigger, they really tried to fulfill their dreams, but they failed quite badly. Their expectations were never met. They not only failed because they didn't manage to get the position or the money they wanted, it was mostly that they got so disappointed by the whole system and they had the feeling that they wasted so much of their time and energy. Now they just say: "Ok, I just want a shitty job, no matter what. I want my 1000 Euros a month and I want to do the least possible for it because I will never be able to get satisfied by the job market." If you're not even 30 years old and you already have this complete disappointment, this frustration towards the job, it's not really a good start, especially because we will have to work like another 30 or 40 years, most likely. And, of course, your life is not just about work, but if your work six to eight hours a day, it's really a big part of your life.

**Do you feel like xenophobia, racism, discrimination and all these things have increased in the past few**

**years in Italy?**

As a feeling, yes. I have never seen as many signs of racism or xenophobia as in the last period and especially since the last government got in power. In a way, it must have been already there, because I don't think it's something you can build up in a day. Also, if the government has been elected it's because some of those feelings were already there. Otherwise, they really would not have got there. The fact that the government gives the example to the rest of the society is really dangerous. If racist crimes are not condemned anymore, then the worst things can happen. There is no more social control over these phenomena, these instincts. In a civil society, we should know how to deal with those instincts and those fears. While if the government says it's perfectly fine to have those fears and to transform them into violence then I don't know they could lead us...

**Where do you think those frustrations really come from? Are they only economically motivated?**

Mostly. But it's not only a matter of the economic situation. It's about expectations people have that often don't meet the reality. Our generation was brought up with the idea that their lives were going to be better than their parents', but actually that is not the case. Our parents told us that if we make an effort we can reach anything. Our generation is absolutely not prepared to face a crisis. And that causes a lot of frustration. The truth is that in some places the situation is really crappy, you cannot find a decent job. If you're lucky enough to find a job it's often badly paid and a six months contract. There is a huge gap to fill between our expectations and the reality we actually live in. You really need a lot of self-reasoning and thinking to realize where this frustration comes from. The easiest answer is: All these migrants are coming to get our jobs and to get benefits from our welfare state." That is what some politicians try to make us believe, without treating the problem as something that has been there for many years.

**Do you trust the political institutions of your country? Do you feel represented?**

No, I don't. At the same time, though, I believe that as long as people continue not feeling represented and at the same time doing nothing to get involved with politics, nothing is going to change. I'm not ready to complain because I'm not taking action in this field.

**Do you feel bad because of that?**

A bit, yes. I also think that it would be a huge self-sacrifice to get into politics right now in Italy. So, I think it's really complicated. I also think that most of the people who joined the Five Star Movement- they were really trying to fill this gap. A lot of people who joined the Five Star Movement at the beginning believed that that was the platform, that was the way to give their contribution to a better society. But something went wrong.

**Can you name what went wrong?**

Direct democracy showed its shady faces. Society is not ready yet on a large scale for this direct democracy. It's actually creating problems because it gives the people the feeling that they can really change something. In the end, nothing happens or gets worse. It's an illusion.

**Do you feel represented on the European level?**

I still feel that the political aspects of Europe are a bit weak and quite far away. Many people think that Europe is deciding a lot of things for them, but still they do not have a direct reference point to European institutions. I think the general perception is that they are in this castle in Brussels and nobody knows who they are and what they do. But I see a lot of things coming from European initiatives like the anti-money laundering law in Germany. It has only been implemented because of a European directive. Otherwise, Germany would not have done anything.

**Do you see some kind of European identity in Europe?**

I think there is a process going on. The Erasmus generation is actually feeling a European identity because you end up having friends from other countries in Europe. In general, though, I have some troubles with the idea of national or regional identity. It's always excluding something else. I think the concept of „us“ and „them“ should be analyzed a bit more critically. In the end, I must say thanks to Europe. It has shaped most of my life choices.

**I want to come back to your personal story of migration. You didn't exactly decide to leave Italy. You came here and decided to stay – why? Why did you decide not to go back?**

There are many reasons. The strongest was exactly the feeling of frustration and passivity in Turin and possibilities in Berlin. After volunteering I wasn't ready to go back home, live at my parents' place, and get a job in an insurance company that I really do not like, just for the sake of earning enough money to make a living on my own. Probably even that would have been difficult. I asked myself: What do I get here? What do I get there? In addition, there was the possibility to build a future with my German-speaking boyfriend in Berlin. And these were the reasons why I decided to stay.

**How do you feel in Berlin? Do you struggle financially or are you fine?**

I feel quite lucky and privileged. I'm pretty fine. In Berlin, it's quite easy to have a decent quality of life with a small budget. My boyfriend and I, we are lucky that we don't have to pay that much for our flat. That's, of course, a matter of luck. So, that allows us to be very flexible with the jobs. We are able to work only part time and have a volunteering activity on the side. We are not forced to look for a full-time job with a proper income. Since April I work 20 hours a week at the Open Knowledge Foundation. The rest of my time I dedicate to *mafianeindanke*. In the end, I probably work more than 40 hours a week, but I get paid only for half of the time.

**And are you happy about that in retrospect?**

In general, yes. I'm satisfied with the quality of my life. The saddest part of being away is that my parents are growing old and my nephews are growing up. I don't feel I can support them enough from here. And, of course, I miss my friends. But with good friends you always find a way to keep the friendship alive.

**Do you miss something else?**

Yes, I miss the environment a lot, like the mountains. Here it's so boring flat.

**What would you say? How free do you feel to live the life you want to live in Germany?**

Right now, I feel more free here than in Turin. There are many more options here. The main obstacle, though, is the language. It makes it more complicated. I feel like I am running a marathon with some weight on my back. I have to struggle much more. But

I have more possibilities here than there, anyway. So, yes. I'm more free.

**Do you feel more free as a woman here?**

Yes. That's another point! I think there is a bit less male chauvinism in Germany. Especially in the work environment, I am more free. I really do not perceive it here as much as in Italy. I still have the feeling that as a young woman in Italy you're not supposed to have a critical idea or an opinion on many things – especially on what male colleagues or chiefs do. Unfortunately, there are just a few places where young women have a say. And I still think that these superficial aspects of being nice, kind and being good looking still play a bigger role there. And that's sometimes annoying if you don't want to fit this stereotype. I really have little interest. I always struggle with that. When I was back then in Italy, I was always struggling with that.

**You already talked a bit about your friends. Do you feel like your situation is much better than the ones of your friends?**

For some aspects, yes. Some of my friends are also fine and I'm happy for them. But on average I would say, yes, I'm really in a better position. I'm more independent, especially on the economic level. If a job doesn't really fit, I can look for another one. If you're lucky enough to get a job in Italy, you keep it no matter what.

**How would you compare the opportunities of a young person from Italy and a young person from Germany?**

I think it depends a lot on the area. Also in Germany, there are some areas where there are not that many opportunities for young people. The job market is, of course, more active everywhere in Germany compared to Italy, but culturally speaking, socially speaking, also in Germany there are areas that are not that inspiring. It's not Berlin everywhere. Berlin is a particularly metropolitan city where you can find anything. But it's not paradise everywhere. Also in Italy, some regions are really complicated. There you really have to struggle to get a decent future. Also, it depends on how much you get pushed to look for your way or how much you get pushed to go through education. It's a lot about the local social environment. I think it's complicated to make a general international estimation. But yeah, in general probably it's currently easier for German young people...

**How do you feel about starting a family in Berlin?**

I should start thinking about it. I don't feel any pressure. The feeling I have is that there is all the time of the world, but actually that's not true. Nature doesn't follow social rules. I would feel better in Torino, though, because my family is there.

**You have more support.**

Much more support. While here it's just me and my partner and, of course, a network of friends. But it's different. Of course, state support is much better here in Germany. But I still believe that family support plays a more important role, this is how I grew up. I didn't grow up with a babysitter taking care of me when my parents couldn't pick me up from school. I grew up with my grandparents picking me up from school when my parents couldn't and that's the kind of family model that then you tend to reproduce.

**Let me ask you a different question: More and more highly skilled young people are leaving Italy. How do you feel about that? What do you think? How does this affect Italy? What do you think of the „brain drain“ everyone is talking about?**

I mean, I think it's for sure bad for Italy because they are investing money in the education of young people. If they go away as soon as they are able to give something back, it's not so good. On the other hand, I believe it's a natural aspect that if you don't have anything to offer people are going to go away where they can get something. As much as I could feel bad for not being there, contributing, I also think that going there and working for an insurance company and living at my parent's place wouldn't be really a very good way to give something back to the society. It's a matter of evaluation. People will always look for their own better situation.

**Do you think that will create a problem at the European level? Because we already see that there is a lot of inequality among the member states.**

Germany will benefit a lot from that. Right now, they can get the best professionals from all over Europe, or all over Southern Europe at least. That's for sure very positive for them. But again, you cannot leave the choice to the individuals. They are going to look for their own best.

**What do you think is necessary to stop this? Would you think it is important to stop emigration from Italy?**

It would be very good to stop forced migration. There will always be people prone to travel and change and experience new things. And they are going to be happy about that. It would be important to give opportunities to those who migrate because they don't see any other option, who don't see any other future perspective. Out of desperation, they decide to move out and leave the country. That kind of migration would be important to stop. Moving people around, exchanging air, discovering new places is good, but what would be important is that those who want to stay should have a chance to stay and those who left should have a chance to come back in case they want to. Right now, I don't really have that feeling that I could easily come back and feel fine.

**How would you describe your generation? I found this sentence in the Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: “Italian young people have not started collective movements or at least demonstrations against the status quo, resignation has prevailed, although new parties and political actors are emerging.” Do you think this is true? Do you think this resignation is dominant in your generation and do you think that your generation is non-political or not strong enough to change something?**

I don't think my generation is non-political. I think my generation is paying a lot for the creation of expectations that are absolutely not met. I think it's living with the expectations brought up by our parents that are not finding any connection with the real world. That makes you focus a lot on the individual level and not on the collective because it's all about your personal realization and you are running after that. So, if you fail you think it's about you, something is wrong with you, you have to work on yourself, you have to meditate, you have to do yoga. And if you don't succeed you get frustrated about yourself and about your environment. Of course, you could say: It's the system's fault and we have to all get together to change it. But there is such a high level of frustration because you struggle so much in your everyday life but still you are not starving. Your parents are still helping you out financially, so you're in this limbo where you are struggling to find a way out, but you're not yet on the street where you say: “I have nothing to lose”. You still have this little bit that you might lose. This combination is not

the most effective to cause a societal reaction. Also, my generation is between many things, it's still not digital native but it's also not that far away from that. So, it's fascinated by this digital world that it's still not able to really get into it completely. The Five Star Movement was created by the ones who are between 30 and 40, but also by the ones who are approaching 30. Di Maio is 30-something, so that is more or less my generation. That's because direct democracy gives you the feeling: We can change something with a click, but that's an illusion. That's why it's a bad joke. You don't really change anything with a click. I think it is a political generation, it's just unable to organize itself in a common protest. Especially not with traditional ways like going on the streets.

**Do you think we should teach our kids a sense of collectivity?**

In some way, yes. There are some activities in the educational process that might facilitate that. Doing activities together like sports, things that are less individualized. It's a lot about the message that you send to the kids. Is it you, the single kid or is it you, a kid of many in a collective.

**Do you know the Fridays for Future movement? Yesterday I saw a video of Italian kids picking up waste from the beach. This movement seems very strong. Do you think this movement will help to (re)create intergenerational equity?**

That would be great. Right now, it seems extremely trendy. I hope it's going to last. I hope it won't be replaced by something that is completely useless. Unfortunately, it's still an elitarian movement. I don't think that kids from really desperate places, the peripheries, are that aware of the problem.

**Yes, because the movement is very concentrated in the capitals of Europe.**

Yes. Being conscious about the environment, eating food that is sustainable and organic - these things are very elitarian because people do it only if they can afford it. People who are struggling to get enough food on the table go to the discounter and get what is on offer. Also, it's really nice that this comes as a bottom-up movement, but I really believe that some decisions need to be pushed top-down. For example, choosing to travel by plane or by train should not be such an individual sacrifice. It is impossible that if I

want to travel from Berlin to Turin, a 1.5-hour flight costs me 30 euros with a low-cost airline and a 15-hour train ride costs me 200 to 300 euros. The economic difference is crazy. Some decisions have to be made top-down. Otherwise, why would a normal citizen choose to spend more money and time just because it's more sustainable?

**Let me move to the last topic. What do you think populism is?**

It's when someone says: „We are the people.” It's when someone pretends to represent everyone and to be the defender of the interests of the people. But you don't actually know who the people are. Right now, populism uses the limited amount of education of the population. It plays with very basic instincts of the population. It's not stimulating intellectual discourse, but rather keeping it easy so that it's accessible to everyone. Behind that wall of easiness, the populists can do whatever they want because no one is controlling them.

**How would you differentiate between the Lega and the Five Star Movement (M5S)?**

I think they are completely different. The people who are voting for them are not, but as a political concept, they are completely different. The Lega underwent an interesting development because they were extremely federalist when they still were Lega Nord. That is something everyone is forgetting about, but that was the main point and the only interesting idea they were proposing in their political agenda for 25 years. A more federalist approach in Italy - that could be right or wrong. It's a political idea, it's a political approach. It could be discussed. It might even make sense for some things. And then they became this far-right party. They were not even right-wing in the first place, because the Lega Nord was participating in some elections with the left, in some elections with the right.

**So, they were just extremist?**

No, they were just completely different. They had nothing of the politics that they present now. Of course, they were racist against the southerners of Italy, but I don't think they were as fascist in the way they were using their politics. The party changed radically with Salvini. The “Nord” disappeared because it was not bringing enough votes. Now the South is magically

voting for Lega and forgetting 30 years of discrimination. Then they introduced this craziness towards immigrants and this right-wing radicalism. The Five Star Movement in contrast, was born from really popular initiatives saying: “We are normal citizens. We are not politicians, but we have a lot to say and we want to be part of the political process. We are not a party, we are a movement. We are for direct democracy so that everyone can decide, everyone can contribute to making a decision.” Then they got a lot of support from all kinds of people who felt underrepresented by the traditional parties. After that, they lost the idea of what they wanted to do because of inexperienced people. As soon as you get into power, you have to be able to actually do something. But the five-star movement has many people who unfortunately don’t have the slightest idea of what they are doing. Also, with them, everything is possible: from the far-right to the far-left. Right now in Italy, the far-right is much more appealing, though. That’s why right-wing positions are emerging in the movement, but it’s not a right-wing movement. It was not born that way.

**What do you think makes the far-right, the Lega so appealing?**

Animal instincts, fears and frustration. You want to protect the little you have.

**Sounds so easy, so simple.**

I think it’s a very egoistic point of view: “I have little, I don’t want to lose more and share it with these brown animals coming from the sea. They should die. I don’t give a fuck.” - I don’t think it’s more complicated than that. At the societal level, it’s a really complex phenomenon, but at the individual level, it’s rather because of egoistic aspects. Many people want a strong leader. They say: “He really knows what he wants, not like all the others who tell something and then don’t do anything.”

**Why do you think is Salvini dominating Italian politics? In the German media landscape, for example, there is a misrepresentation of what is going on in Italy. It’s very often just about Salvini.**

I think he’s so overrepresented because he spends his time on social media, not on work.

**Like Trump.**

Yes. I’m wondering if he’s ever working. And with working I mean sitting at a table, talking to people, writing and planning something...I really think he spends his time on the question: “How do I get more support from the media?” He’s just a public figure, he’s not a politician. I guess that most of the good politicians who are actually working are completely invisible because they don’t have time to be active on social media all the time.

**Do you know one policy he has introduced? Do you know what is on his agenda?**

I only know about his immigration agenda.

**That’s it? What about Di Maio? He wants to invest in technology and innovation to create new jobs for young people. Do you think that will work?**

I mean, that’s probably the only way. But, let’s do it then! Let’s start something rather than bullshitting everybody on Facebook. Let’s try to do something for this country! Innovation, technology and research have always been the way. And Italy has always been behind in this field.

**What do you think about the basic income, the “reddito di cittadinanza”? Do you think that will fight unemployment?**

There definitely have to be new tools to compensate for the transformation of the job market. The “reddito di cittadinanza” is one possibility. But with the current situation in Italy, it might be very risky. Thanks to Berlusconi there spread a culture of taking without giving anything back or trying to get as much as possible from the state. It might be misused by people who continue working in the black market and at the same time get the “reddito di cittadinanza”. Also because the basic income itself is not enough to live that well. The problem of that is not just that the money might be taken in an illicit way. It’s rather wrong on a symbolic level, especially to the ones who are actually paying taxes and working legally. They are not allowed to get this basic income. It’s a bad sign. In a way, the basic income is rewarding the ones who are already working black and it’s a punishment to the ones who are completely clean.

**The question is how to eliminate the black market. That’s a big question. I’ve got a sentence from Di Maio that I found in an interview with him. The question**

**was what Italy will be like in 2023: „I hope that in five years Italy will be a place where young people no longer seek out a one-way ticket to London, Berlin or New York because their state can offer them support and tells them "we can find work together". A country that encourages people to stay and not to leave.“. Do you think that is a realistic idea of Di Maio? In 2023?**

He said 5 years. Let's be positive and give him a chance. There is still a lot to do. He has a lot of work to do. But honestly, I don't think he will manage at the speed he is working right now.

**Maybe it's not only his responsibility.**

No, of course not. I mean, he's just a minister. I'm not particularly pleased with Di Maio. I find him quite useless, actually. And a bit hopeless. I think he believes in his project; I think he believes in the Five Star Movement. But he doesn't have the competencies and resources to solve the issue of unemployment.

**Yeah, it is portrayed as that. So, there is a right-wing government in Italy. There is no differentiation between the two.**

In my view, they have nothing to share. Except for the stupidity of a lot of their voters. I know that in Germany the five-star movement is portrayed as a right-wing populist movement. Of course, the Five Star Movement is doing shit together with the Lega. I think they are going to pay for that in the next election. But I don't think they promote the same political message as the Lega. I think they are quite far away from each other. Unfortunately, the successful model is the one of the Lega. I'm afraid the failure of the five-star movement will benefit the Lega.

**What kind of Europe do you wish for?**

I wish for a Europe that supports the member states that have more difficulties, but a Europe that is really in good control of the funds. A Europe that is using its financial resources in a more clever way than right now. Also, a more coherent Europe. Sometimes I really have the feeling that Europe is just a matter of interests, especially when it comes to foreign policy. There is a complete incoherence in what Europe is doing. I want a Europe that is more united and more coordinated.

**Last question: How do you see your future, your personal future?**

It would be easy if I knew. I don't know. Still for a couple of years here and then who knows...maybe somewhere else. Maybe go back. I don't see it as a very probable evolution, though. But maybe.





**Andrea Costa, 27 years old, born and raised in Agrigento, Sicily. Despite wanting to study abroad, he stayed in Italy because he was accepted to study Economics and Management for Art, Culture and Communication at Bocconi University. After that, he gained an MSc double degree in Management of Public Administrations from Bocconi University and Public Policy from the Hertie School of Governance. In Berlin, he first worked in consultancy and later as a Research Associate at the Hertie School of Governance. Now he is working in human resources for an app company.**

**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in Italy right now? Maybe also in comparison to Germany.**

Scary. When I look at the economic situation in Italy, I don't see any improvement. I would never think of moving back to Italy at this moment. I think the economy is getting worse and I don't see light at the end of the tunnel. The political situation scares me the most. We're seeing a drastic change. Populism is the biggest thing that I fear and in all its forms of racism or homophobia. Salvini is getting too much attention – that is a big problem. It's very dangerous how popular he is becoming, in terms of being a pop character. There are people who don't really care about what he does, they are rather being a fan of him. I see how little awareness there is of what he does and what he is promoting. What he says sometimes is just morally wrong. It's not part of our values, it's not part of what we believe in, it's not part of what we want to carry on with in the future. Regarding the situation in comparison to Germany, I remember a TV show I was watching once after the German elections. A journalist from Italy and a journalist from the FAZ were guests there and they were comparing the Lega to the AfD. They were saying: "The Lega is not the AfD". Back then I was new here in Germany but I could tell; well, actually it is. The Lega is similar to the AfD, but at the same time, I understand why they don't see it. There is this kind of storytelling that German populism or racism is mean anyway, or that the Nazis here are the true Nazis, whereas the Italian fascists they are nice people at the end of the day, they can do whatever they want because they are still good at the end of the day. But it's not all about feelings or values. The migration discourse, for example, is the most important topic in everyday politics for over a year now and of course this is not the only problem Italy has, and still it's the topic everyone wants to talk about (that the topic is so important it is already critical). The terms used are very critical. The way the Left parties are talking about it, the kind of opposition the Lega is receiving is ridiculous and this makes everything critical. It makes me worry a lot about what will happen. Of course, I'm not saying everything they do is wrong. I think we have to thank Salvini, the Lega and the government for making people understand that the kind of policy structures and policy arrangement we had before were not sustainable. It's true and we can try to put it in nicer words, but actually it is true that it was not sustainable. All refugees could just come to Europe. Of course, you can recognize a problem in a

way, but the ways you can solve it are many. The way they've tried to solve it - that is the critical part. We don't solve it just by blocking them from coming or leaving them on the sea for four weeks. On the one hand, they could understand problems in better ways than the previous governments. I think this needs to be recognized. But then they're offering such easy solutions to it and people are buying it. This is the other side of this very complicated coin. To be honest, I don't find the political situation in Germany so much better. Right-wing populism exists there as well, you can compare cases of racism in Italy as well as in Germany. The same things happen over here and over there. The only thing that I see as more positive here compared with Italy is the opposition. The left wing's opposition here is much better organized, it has better arguments and has better response to it. I'm talking about Die Linke, Die Grünen. In Germany, we have more leftist parties that in Italy are basically non-existent.

**Speaking about xenophobia, racism, discrimination and homophobia: do you think that all these things have increased in the past few years or have they always been there in Italy?**

I think they have always been there. There was always a latent feeling against diversity. Italy is a place where, I think, 80 percent of cities have less than 8,000 inhabitants. Italians usually grow up with their friends. You grow up with people who are similar to you. You grow up suspicious of people who are not like you. What I see increasing is the lack of shame. People are not ashamed anymore to express their feelings about diversity. Consequently, they find it more normal and the level of acceptance of violence towards diversity increases as well. For example, if I hear about a person of color being beaten every day, then I get more used to it with time. I think, that's why people just feel permitted to defend "their territory".

**Do you trust the political institutions in your country? Do you feel represented?**

No, not at all. Actually, I'm taking the steps to become German. I've been living here for five years. I need eight years in total to get the German citizenship. I have many friends who say "I would never do that. I don't feel like I need it." Personally, I don't feel like I'm betraying my country. What I really like about Italy, or my bond to Italy, has nothing to do with the government or with the institutions.

**Do you feel like you have a say in Germany or on the European level do you feel represented on the European level?**

In Germany, yes. When I was looking for jobs in the beginning, I was applying for public offices because I have a degree in public management. It was hard for me to explain to my Italian friends why I was doing that. They were saying: "They will only choose Germans for the public office jobs." And I knew: "No, it's not true." I felt this trust in the institutions. Every time I was applying, I felt like my application would count as much as anyone else's. In Italy, my feeling is very different. I have a degree in public management that I got in Italy and I would never think of applying to a public office in Italy because I don't even trust the application process.

**Are you politically active?**

Yes. I'm a member of the Linke. Right now, we are very much engaged with the European elections. But I'm mostly interested in Berlin's housing policy. There's this big petition we are collecting signatures for. It's a petition against big companies. The fact that I cannot sign this petition is very hard for me. I feel there is something missing. It affects me personally, but I also really believe in this petition and I believe in this petition because I believe in the entire system.

**What would you say: What is your relation to Europe?**

Sometimes I'm with the populists, to be honest. I'm very critical about Europe. I'm critical, but I'm not against it. I try to not be hypocritical. I mean, I'm an Italian who could come to Germany to study, work and live here. I see my friends who are not EU citizens and I see how hard it is for them. I'm very grateful to every European policy that has been put in place for certain things. The problem with Europe is mostly the European economic policy. It's a liberal economic policy. It's based on neoliberalism. Europe pretends that it's fair and neutral and that it doesn't hurt any member state. It's supposed to make every member state stronger. But it's not because Europe is a political entity, not just an economic entity. So, whenever you make economic policy, it is under pressure from political policy. Or your political forces. And because there is no political balance within the European Union, the economic policy also doesn't have a balance among the member states. We saw what happened in Greece during the last crisis. I don't

remember which economic institution, probably the European Central Bank, admitted that the measures they took were too strict. They did some damage to the Greek economy. But nothing changed. The European Union made a mistake and now Greek people have the fastest growing rate of suicide in Southern Europe. You know, if the EU makes a mistake it's fine, but if a member state makes economic choices that do not match the goals of the entire union, then the EU attacks it with no mercy. This is what I don't like. And then the EU always promotes civil rights, like it is the most liberal institution. But if you take off all the problems of the EU it's a very interesting institution. I mean the ideas and the values are very interesting, very liberal. I don't see the European Union as a place where I would imagine some radical innovation on the economic level or on the political level. Sometimes I really feel there are certain measures that the European Union has been doing since ever. Nothing has happened after the huge economic crisis in 2012. Nothing has changed for the better. If we have lost so much already, why don't we just try out new things? I always feel like we have to wait for the US or China to start something new and then we copy it. What I like about Europe is the regulatory policy. In terms of rules and in terms of regulatory policies concerning data protection or telecommunication infrastructures, I always find that there is a certain consistency of what the values of Europe are and what the policy should be. I really think I agree with the M5S in this case. Europe should be changed completely. Then of course also Salvini, also the Lega sometimes, has very interesting critiques about how the European Union works.

**What about the question of identity? Do you believe or do you see some kind of European identity?**

Yes, I dealt with this issue many times because I find it very interesting what European identity means. At the end of the day, European identity is a narrative we want to tell. The way we teach and learn history in school already makes us feel European. I come from Sicily and if I only knew with the same amount of detail how many people from the Middle East or from Africa have been in Sicily as much as I know about the French, the Spanish, the Swedish. They teach us all about the Europeans. Every single day they said someone from Europe stayed in Sicily. But what about the Turks, for example? This is a way of telling the story.

**I want to move to your personal story of migration. Why exactly did you decide to leave Sicily?**

It has always been very hard to imagine myself in Sicily since I was a child. I liked travelling. When I was a child, I visited many places in Italy and abroad and I always felt there were new things to learn somewhere else. And it was a better feeling. I knew that living in Sicily might be hard regarding the things that I enjoy and appreciate. I'm talking about basic things like public services or certain ideas and values. Like values of legality, of transparency, the way relationships are built on. I don't mean family relations or friendships, but rather relationships between a service provider and a client. I just didn't feel it was the right thing. Then mafia of course was also a big topic. I come from a place that is unfortunately very famous for that. Every time I talk about the Mafia with non-Sicilians, with non-Italian people, I say that it's not the hell everyone imagines. People think that people move around with guns or you have to hide. It's never been like this. In Sicily you try to avoid places that are run by the Mafia and there is the believe that you only get in trouble with the Mafia if you belong to it or if you have something to do with it. What I find problematic about it is that it's very hard to tell. It's hard to describe that there is this acceptance of it. There is the acceptance of saying: "if you hear people shooting each other, just go home! Don't do anything!". I don't think this is the right thing to do. If I hear of someone being beaten I will go and try to help. These are the kind of feelings I always had. Even when I was a kid. So I wanted to experience something else. That's why I went to Milan. When I came to Milan it was the hottest years for 'Ndrangheta to arrive in that place. Without talking about something that is related to me as a person, that's more of a system. You know that these things happen and because you don't trust your institutions and your government you will feel that you are left alone and that there's nothing that is being done against them. In my family, I have lots of police officers, Carabinieri, so I know it's not true. My uncle has been working on some cases that of course, not that he could have told us anything, but I knew that there is something. It's not that no one is doing anything against the Mafia on the legal level, but I just feel nothing really changes because people are very accepting of everything. And then it's not just about the Mafia, because as I said, it's not connected to me directly, but it was mostly because of the future. I could not see myself living a relaxed life there. Within the dual degree program I had three options and one

was Albany in the state of New York, one was Paris and one was Berlin. I didn't want to go to the U.S., so I had to decide between Paris and Berlin. And I remember thinking that I wanted to go to Berlin because it was a safer place on a social, political, and economic level. I wanted to come to Berlin because I knew that it would be a more relaxed life than in Sicily.

### **Safe in what way?**

Safe in the sense that I don't have to worry a lot because there is a state that is there to help me in case I have a problem.

### **Why did you choose Berlin before Paris?**

Because I felt Paris was a bit like Sicily. Speaking of narratives, there is this idea that France is similar to Italy, more than Germany. It was the search for a radical change.

### **How free do you feel to live the life you want to live here in Germany and would it have been very different in Italy?**

I think Berlin is a happy Island where you can actually really live the life you want to a certain extent. I mean it's becoming established that you need more money to live the life you want.

### **In Berlin?**

Yes, than before... now there is this idea of the 80s or 90s Berlin where you could actually have the life you wanted. It's changing. In Germany, I feel like there are many places where I think it would be much harder and many places where I think it might be possible. I have mixed feelings in terms of what I think of Germany. I was in Dresden once and I remember people at the bakery not talking to me directly, but talking to my German friends. Of course, this doesn't happen in Berlin and I feel like it's safe in terms of choosing what I want to do. In Milan, I feel that I would not have been able to have this freedom. Milan is not a big city. It's just a big town where you have your small friendship circle. In Milan, you live a fake metropolitan life. Diversity is not as accepted as here. I met many gay people here, for instance. They asked me how Milan can be so ambivalent towards homosexuality. Everything is accepted so long as it belongs to an already known category. If you're part of the unknown then it's very hard for you. And same things happen also with

people of color. If you come from certain countries it's fine. If you come from other countries it's not fine anymore. Comparing the two cities I feel that Berlin is a safer place to live in.

### **What's your situation like in comparison to the situation of your friends who stayed?**

I have two groups of friends who stayed. The first group has the exact same education as I have. When I compare them to myself or when we talk about leaving or staying, I always feel I have stronger feelings than with the other friends. The other friends are the ones who did completely different things and who chose to stay because they really liked Sicily. Most of them live in Sicily now. But the others also moved. None of them live in their hometown. The first group of friends is mostly concerned with the economic level. Not only in terms of income, but also labor conditions. Of course, they are working the same hours and making much less. But their labor conditions are so far away from anything I ever experienced here. It's completely different and worse for them. I really don't understand how on this level you can decide to stay. Why would I stay in Italy when there are no general rules? The contract can be whatever the employers want. Extra hours would not be recognized and without pay. And the market is rigid. If I did this, I would be stuck with what I'm doing for the rest of my life, most likely. Every decision has a big cost. Also Germany is not the most flexible labor market, but the flexibility I experience here is something that my friends should be envious about. I did research first, then consultancy and now I'm doing something completely different. This kind of flexibility is something that I like and that I would never have in Italy and my friends don't have. Also, I have a one year contract which already is a luxury good compared to the six month contract you usually get in Italy. My contract says already that the next time it is prolonged, it is going to be indefinite. These are all certainties. But even if it doesn't happen there are certainties that I have and my friends don't have. Getting closer to being 30 years old, I feel we are just like a parody of what we used to read when we were kids. We are these completely precarious people who cannot plan anything. One of my best friends has an offer to buy the house she currently lives in with her boyfriend. The landlord wants to sell the house to them, but she cannot think about it. She cannot really take decisions, because she doesn't know what's going to happen in six months, which is exactly what I remember listening in the radio or seeing in TV when

I was a kid: being 30 and not having a clue about your life. Again, we studied at Bocconi. We got the best education you could get in Italy in our field, and still this is the kind of arrangement that we have.

**What about the other group of friends?**

Most of them stayed in Sicily. I have mixed feelings about them. They have the worst economic conditions. Most of them do not work, so they need to be supported by their families. They stayed because they liked something. They were happy already. I left because I was not happy. Then I found happiness in another place. But they already had it, so why do we have to pretend like they didn't try or they didn't want to move? Why would they change their conditions if they are happy? It's true that they are supported by their families. This is something I would never accept. But there it is normal. Why do we think that this is wrong? It is part of an economic system that counts on families supporting their kids for a long time. That's why sometimes I really don't know what to think. It is hard when they say that they want to move. I have a friend, she has been the one who was the most convinced about staying. She never thought of leaving. Not that she didn't think about it, but she could really argue very well why it was not worth it leaving. Last year she started mentioning that she might think about leaving and that is what made me a bit less happy about them. Until then, I had always been very happy about them because of the fact that they already were what they wanted to be and they already accomplished what they wanted to accomplish. It's a bit of a paradox because she's the only one there who really has the best opportunities. She has got a really good job and still she is the one who says: Even with that I don't feel like I could ever have a family here - in terms of economic support. I really don't know how to feel about them. Sometimes I get envious. Sometimes I really would like to be in Sicily and enjoy the things that I miss here. At the end of the day, I am a foreigner here. Sometimes I really miss this feeling of being home which is something they have, for sure.

**What do you miss exactly?**

I miss the history of places and the storytelling of things in that place with me in it. The fact that I've done things in this place. I also miss the common knowledge that I do not have here. For example, the knowledge of dishes prepared in a specific way that

my mom taught me and many people know. For a long time, I missed being part of a neighborhood which is something that, since I moved to Wedding, I have more now. I lived in Neukölln before, which is maybe too international for that.

**How do you perceive the opportunities of a young person from Italy and a young person from Germany?**

I feel a young German has more opportunities to understand the world in terms of how things work, like finding a job, buying a house or building a career. I think a German is better prepared. Young Germans have less difficulties in moving around Europe and settle down somewhere else than in Germany, whereas I see young Italians being completely clueless on how things work beyond their own nose. I see that with my niece who is 15 years old now. When I talk to her she really has no idea. She has no idea what her future is going to look like and she doesn't know what she is going to study at university, or if she is ever going to university, or what kind of opportunities there are after school. I'm not saying every young German knows, but I kind of feel they are more prepared. The problem might also be because of the Italian school system that doesn't really allow young people to decide. It makes them decide too early and then they're just kept in this long path that maybe they don't want to follow after a couple of years. Also, if I don't think of labor and jobs, young Germans are also more conscious, more aware of what's going on.

**You mean, in the world?**

Yes, look at Fridays for Future, for example. That's kind of a hip thing now. Young Germans were not the first ones to do it, but they are doing it. I fear to ask my niece if she knows what that is. I'm sure there are lots of people at her age who still don't know what that is. Environmental issues are a black hole in Italy, not just for young people, but in general. People are less aware of them. Also, when I think of social rights or civil rights - Italians don't really engage in these things. In terms of age, you really need to wait much longer to talk about for example poverty on a certain level with an Italian than with a German. Or speaking of elections. I had the chance to speak to some Germans that were basically my nieces age and we could talk about the election results in Germany in 2016. They already had some ideas about which party to vote. But people at my niece's age in Italy have zero interest. There's not a lot of interest in common concerns.

**More and more highly skilled young people are leaving Italy. How do you feel about that? What do you think of the “brain drain” everyone's talking about?**

I heard about the topic of the “brain drain” for the first time in elementary school. It's nothing new. It's something that I was used to. Actually, I was wishing that for myself. Many people were wishing for that. When you are a kid you don't realize what migrating means. You are sold this idea that migrating is cool, that going abroad is cool, but it's a challenge. I really wanted to be one of those few people who can make it. What I grew thinking is very different from that. Sometimes I see myself as a migrant. I think highly skilled migrants are very much forgotten in the discourse on migration and I think it's mostly seen as a problem for the country with its people leaving, rarely for the country that is receiving these people. I started developing the idea that I was a problem for many Germans. At the beginning when I started working, I didn't know anything about German labor market. I was obviously taking less money than a German would have taken and I probably took the spot of someone who didn't get the job because he or she wanted more. Also, I'm living in Wedding now, so I obviously took the apartment off a Turkish family that wanted to live here and that's because I earn much more than they do. This is an unspoken problem, because then in Germany they can sell the narrative: We're so competitive that very qualified people come here. But then there are lots of social problems that these very qualified people create and we don't want to talk about it. I said this thing about the elementary school because I don't think there is anything that's been really done so far. The only thing I know is that if I would go back to Italy my taxation regime would be very good. I would have to pay half of the taxes that other people pay. Only because I lived abroad and came back.

**Why is that so?**

This is a policy that was implemented to promote people to come back. Apart from that I really don't know what has been done so far to discourage people from leaving. I don't feel like the situation has changed so radically that now it's more of a choice. I think that it has become less of a choice for people with a very high qualification to stay. I have a friend who is 28 years old now. Due to a ridiculous law she cannot work anymore where she's been working. Because of anti-corruption measures her contract cannot be renewed

again in the public institutions she used to work in. She's now thinking about moving to Belgium where she might have more opportunities. As a woman, it's even more complicated growing older and making these kind of decisions because of children and so on. I recently had this discussion about moving to Madrid with some friends from Rome. Spain is not the most economically developed country, but it's still better than Italy. At least in Madrid labor conditions are better, in Madrid at least there are public services that work. For highly qualified people, I think it's not worth staying in Italy. They just do it either because they're already in Italy for too long and don't want to start a new life at 30.

**What about the “workers drain”? What about people who are not highly skilled?**

This is also very controversial. There is the entire gastronomy industry that Italy should count on. But the market there is very family oriented or network oriented, and not in a way of ensuring transparency. You don't get the job through your network after you went through a transparent selection process. I'm talking about even being a waiter or waitress. You don't just get a job because you did a training in gastronomy. You get the job in a restaurant even if you didn't do it, but you know someone.

**How would you describe your generation? I found a very interesting sentence in *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy*: “Italian young people have not started collective movements or at least demonstrations against the status quo. Resignation has prevailed although new parties and political actors are emerging”. Do you think this is true?**

Yes. Also, there is a bit of envy towards our parents' generation. We feel that they had the best and the best is over. There is a strong resignation because we feel like all protests are over now. I think it has a lot to do with the change between the First and the Second Republic. Talking about people who grew up in the nineties, they don't know what the First Republic was like but they know it was a better place for people. There were more opportunities before. But we were born and grew up in the Second Republic and we see that it all about trying to solve an emergency that never ends.

**Why do you think nobody is doing anything about it? Why do you think there are no significant**

**demonstrations or movements?**

Speaking of the Second Republic, we grew up watching trash TV. That didn't really give us any impulse to engage in anything. Also, I would say that strong family relationships go beyond political views. You cannot engage because the more you engage the more fragile your family relationships get. I see that as a very problematic issue. My family is pretty much a liberal family, but not certain points. Abortion is a topic in my family that we're often half split about. My sister, let's say, who is against it would never join a pro-abortion protest as much as my father who is pro-abortion would never join a pro-abortion protest. Our family is more important. It's just an example, but there is a lot of non-engagement because it's not valued.

**You talked about this envy surrounding your parents' generation. How do you think could Italy restore intergenerational equity when everyone's leaving?**

That's typical migrant's guilt - always feeling guilty about the fact that you are not making things better if you leave. That is one of the arguments that my friends from Sicily have. Personally, I think there is a point where you can try to fight, but then you also have to think of yourself. I consider myself as a very socially oriented person and I really value the common good more than my private one. But still I think: why would I stay in Sicily for 20 years and feel that nothing's going to change when I could go somewhere else and have a better life?

**I want to move to the last topic. What comes to your mind when you think of the term populism?**

I think of the word "popolo" and fact that it is a very homogenous group of people. Populism represents them although they don't really exist. Sometimes I think: why do populists have to be right-wing? There is also left-wing populism. For instance, the senate of Berlin released some very strict guidelines for theater plays and directors on how to talk about populism. I find this kind of action also very populist because they are implying that everyone in theatre thinks the same about it.

**What is the difference between Five Star Movement (M5S) and Lega, or Di Maio and Salvini? What do you think of the coalition?**

The difference is clear in terms of ideology structure. Lega has always had a very strong ideology. Salvini changed the whole spectrum. It was Lega Nord and now it's Lega. First, the enemies were the Southern Italians, now the enemies are the southerners of the world. M5S in contrast, does not have an ideology or they try to not have one. They were born as a movement, they didn't want to be either left or right. In a moment, in a political era where we really believe that right and left do not exist, M5S was the perfect movement to embody this and to say: we can be open towards gays and less open toward migrants. Of course this doesn't make any sense if you look at it from a left-right perspective but it made exact sense when they were founded. That's where I see the difference between them. What I think about the coalition is that everything is a mess in terms of how it is managed and this is all M5S's fault. The party was not able to keep up the promise of being a good leader or managing the country in a way they wanted to. For instance, the "basic income" is a very good measure. We have it in Germany with Hartz4. It's something that has been criticized in Italy because they say: if you don't work why would the state give you money? Whereas I say, well if you don't work it's not because of you, it's because the social and economic conditions are not good. The state has the responsibility to provide for you. But then it is the worst moment to be inspired by Hartz4 because even the SPD and the Linke are saying it's nonsense. So M5S was inspired by a measure that doesn't actually work. They were inspired by a measure without really knowing it because there is no minijob contract in Italy. You cannot implement a policy without looking at the entire policy context that is there. You can tell that M5S are not professionals. They like the ideas, they really want to make use of them and they are very enthusiastic. In terms of resignation, they are maybe the ones who could tell: there is hope, we should not resign completely. But then they fail. I think they are going to pay very much for this. Because of that Lega is actually the only one who is consistent.

**Do you think that's why Salvini is dominating Italian politics?**

Salvini is dominant because he has a very good social media team. What I said is for sure part of the reason. But communication is crucial. He is making topics relevant. That's his biggest strength.

**Di Maio wants to invest in technology and innovation**



**to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. Do you think that will work?**

It's more a matter of social infrastructures that are problematic for the labor market. For instance, most of his voters are from the south. I didn't sense any huge investment in the South which would actually be a really good move to get more votes. I think technology is not the problem.

**I found a statement of Di Maio in an interview. The question was what Italy will be like in 2023: „I hope that in five years Italy will be a place where young people no longer seek out a one-way ticket to London, Berlin or New York because their state can offer them support and tells them "we can find work together". A country that encourages people to stay and not to leave.“. Do you think that is a realistic idea of Di Maio? In 2023?**

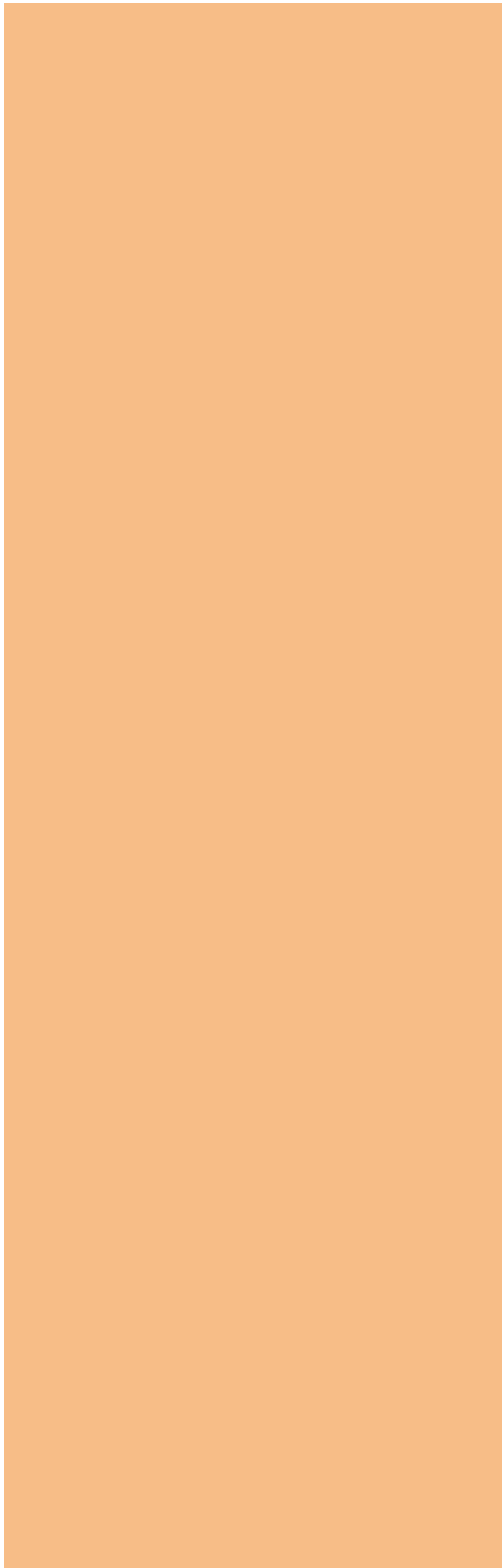
What he says is true. A state should help the individual to find a job. There are already institutions for doing that. First of all, it's not something you can change so quickly and second of all, it's not only about creating measures for the state to help individuals but it's also about creating measures for companies to help them. I don't think Di Maio has a very clear view of how the labor market works.

**What kind of Europe do you wish?**

I wish for a more social Europe. I imagine a Europe with more social policies implemented, but also a Europe that gives more independency to all its member states, so that it is less dominant in many policy fields.

**How do you see your future?**

I see my future here. I will stay in Germany. I feel very safe here. I imagine my future as a happy one, with a good job and with a good apartment.





Sara, 24 years old, born and raised in Volla, a town near Naples. She has a master's degree in Modern Languages and Literature from the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II and studied in Paris for one semester. She works as a teacher at a high school in the mornings and gives private lessons to students in the afternoon.

**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in Italy?**

Living in Southern Italy I can see the effects of crisis through the anxiety of the young people that surround me. It appears as though we do not have the right to build our own destiny.

**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in other European countries?**

I had the chance to travel and live abroad, and I usually measure the differences between Italy and other countries by evaluating the young people's dreams: outside Italy young people seem to have bigger and more ambitious dreams. The current obsessive dream of my generation in Italy is finding a decent job.

**Do you feel like xenophobia, racism or discrimination has increased in the past few years? Do you see these things happening in other European countries, too?**

I think that xenophobia has increased since the media started to define the migratory process as an emergency. This way of communicating scares Italian people and they lose their sympathy for those who leave their country to find better conditions, forgetting their own history of migration. This xenophobia characterizes most of European countries because it derives from an ancestral fear of the unknown.

**Do you trust the political institutions of your country? Do you feel represented? Do you feel like you have a say in Italy? Do you participate in the political process?**

I do not even think I have a say in my own town. I have participated on a few occasions of direct democracy (like referendums) but even when I have tried, in the past, to be politically active, I never identified with any party or politician. I have just lost faith in the power of combined human effort.

**What do you like and what don't you like about Europe or the EU? Do you believe in a "European identity"?**

I think that trying to define a European identity it's just an attempt to expand the boundaries of the nation-states in order to create a larger community, which still leaves out non-European communities that are

actually filling-up our countries.

**Why did you decide to stay in Italy? Does it have to do something with the political or economic situation?**

The reason why I decided to stay has nothing to do with the political or economic situation in Southern Italy. If it were not because of private matters that hold me here, I would have left the country right after my graduation.

**If you could choose any other country to live, which country would you pick?**

I would choose France mostly because I am emotionally attached to the city of Paris, where I studied for 6 months a few years ago. There, it was different particularly in terms of public transport and cultural offer. I feel that in Paris the promotion of artistic and cultural events aims to a wider public, above all young people. However, I feel that in the past few years the political and economic situation has worsened even there.

**How do you perceive the opportunities of a young person from Italy and of a young person from e.g. Germany?**

This is a tough question that I could answer in one sentence: Italy is no country for young people. As a young woman, what impresses me is the differences in the growth process among generations. I feel that our parents and grandparents started to build their adult future much earlier than we do now. Italy is known for men and women still living at their parent's after 30, and I would not blame just a cultural habit, but also the precariousness of the working conditions. How can we seriously think of leaving our parent's house and being sure of not coming back, with a temporary contract (if any)? I see many talented people giving up on their dreams because it looks there is no place for them in the labour market. I have the strong feeling that young people from e.g. Germany, France, UK are encouraged by the governments to become independent quickly, while in Italy we still need the help of our parents.

**What comes to your mind when you think of the term "Migration"?**

Well, I've been looking for a job in the past few months and I've only found 9 to 6 jobs with a wage of maximum 500€ and no certainties of keeping the job or

getting paid more in the future. For one of the two jobs that I have now I am not even paid. I completely understand people migrating abroad: a dear friend of mine living in Bristol who is the same age as me, is buying her own apartment! I would not determine if it were a good or a bad thing, I would just say that sometimes you really need to leave your country to fulfil your dreams and goals.

**More and more highly skilled young people are leaving Italy. Do you believe in "brain drain" or the impoverishment of human capital in (Southern) Italy?**

I would say that this is not a cause of the impoverishment; it is just a consequence, which is why I cannot consider it as a major problem. We cannot solve or worry about "brain migrations", we should first deal with the causes such as the huge generational gap in Italy that privileges old people and neglects young brilliant minds.

**If you think of non-European migration, how does immigration affect Italy, Germany and Europe?**

Migration involves the fact that people are looking for better life conditions, which is a sacred human right, and no one is to blame for that. Populist government are claiming that non-European migrations are one of the causes of crisis that started many years ago, but then why are European's migration seen as a source of wealth instead?

**How do you perceive the young generation in Italy?**

We are all afraid, that is what I can say. I know many people of my age that started to see a therapist right after their graduation, and the number of people involved in this process, makes me suspect that it is due to a general problem that is not psychological source but social: am I useful, will I ever be happy, will I ever have certainties? What is my role in society? What did I study for?

**How would you describe your generation? A sentence from the Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy says: "Italian young people have not started collective movements or at least demonstrations against the status quo; resignation has prevailed, although new parties and political actors are emerging." Do you think this is true?**

Compared to young people from other countries maybe Italian young people are not as cohesive and connected on a national level, but I can say that young activists both in Volla and in Naples are incredibly persistent and are making little but relevant changes.

**What comes to your mind when you think of the term “Populism”?**

I consider populists the politicians who take advantage of the fears, discontent, and rage of people who are experiencing crisis and offer to those people some shortcuts, nourishing the dangerous idea that everything can be resolved in simple ways like by identifying an enemy. Oversimplifications can be tempting but also harmful.

**What do you think of the coalition between the Lega and Five Star Movement (M5S)? Do you see a difference between Salvini and Di Maio? Why is Salvini dominating Italian politics?**

In my opinion the coalition derives from a good strategy: the two parties share the same ideas with only slight differences, but one of them – M5S – works as the element that reassures citizens, because it seems to be the reasonable and moderate part of the government which would restrict the action of the other party in case of authoritarian drift. Di Maio wants to invest in technology and innovation to create new jobs for young people in Italy. Do you think this measure will successfully fight (youth) unemployment? I must admit that I feel disillusioned at the moment. I am not making any prediction because on the one hand, I feel that Italian issues are too deep to be solved by a single measure, on the other hand I really hope that things are going to change for the best.

**What do you wish for Italy, Germany and Europe?**

I hope that one day Italian people will choose Italy because it's a profitable place to stay and not just because they have to. I would like to live in a more cooperative Europe where every country plays its part. I hope that the migrations that are characterizing our times will lead to the end of eurocentrism and xenophobia: you cannot stop the course of history and I think that the key is learning what cohabitation means.

**How do you see your future?**

Even though I know that the current situation of my country doesn't look very bright and everyone is telling me that I won't be able to build a solid and happy future, I know for sure that I'm going to do everything in my power to pursue the career I dream of, no matter what.



**Luca Marangolo, 34. He is a comparative literature scholar who graduated in Naples and completed a PhD in Rome. He also studied in Switzerland, at la Sorbonne in Paris and at U.C. Berkeley. He is now an adjunct professor at Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II. He works as a post-doctoral scientific consultant on a research project that is financed by the European Research Council.**

**Where are you from? Can you tell me something about that place?**

I was born in Naples, arguably the main urban centre in southern Italy. As a huge metropolis, Napoli plays a crucial role in the commercial, industrial, and cultural life of a rather poor zone like southern Italy.

**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in Italy?**

The situation is extremely poor. The Italian economy is almost completely stagnant, if not dead, at least in the poorest areas. This is primarily due to the geopolitical situation that traps Italy in a communitarian system designed to favour some European countries rather than others.

**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in other European countries?**

The economy is getting increasingly worse all over Europe. Even in Germany – the largest European exporter– the situation is slowly deteriorating. This is clearly demonstrated by the growing lack of confidence that the German people have in the centrist politico-economical establishment.

**Do you feel like xenophobia, racism and discrimination have increased in the past few years? Do you see these things in other European countries, too?**

Clearly, growing xenophobia is not only a European problem, but also a global one. The main historical cause is the U.S. subprime-crisis in 2008. Something similar happened during the great depression of the 1929 in America, which led to growing xenophobia across Europe and the helped the totalitarian regimes come to power.

**Do you trust the political institutions in your country? Do you feel represented? Do you feel like you have a say in Italy?**

I do not trust the political institutions anymore, even if I always try to participate in the political process, in all possible ways.

**What would you say? What do you like and what don't you like about Europe/the EU? Do you believe in a "European identity"?**

I strongly believe in European identity, which has its roots both in ancient roman history and in European medieval history. I believe that the European Union has been wrongly conceived since the very beginning. In macro-economic terms, it had some sustainability as long as the economic partnership with the U.S. was strong. After the global crisis of the 2008, it was clear that the U.S. economy had the fundamental capacity to recover, whereas the EU did not. However, I think that the European system, as long as it worked, offered incredible opportunities in terms of cultural, intellectual and work exchanges across Europe.

**Why did you decide to stay in (Southern) Italy? Does it have to do something with the political or economic situation?**

It does not have anything to do with politics. I do not dismiss the opportunity to migrate in the future; I remained here due to personal and cultural reasons, such as the feeling of belonging to the land and my relationship with my family.

**If you could choose any other country to live, which country would you pick?**

I lived a lot in Paris throughout the years, which I consider as some sort of second birthplace. I have also travelled to many foreign countries; for example, across the USA and Germany, and I would love to live there. I would especially love to get to know the beautiful southern regions of Germany better, like Bavaria. In some cases, it has been very easy to adapt to a new place when living in another country. I have found myself very comfortable in France and USA, but I found it hard to live in Switzerland, for example.

**How do you perceive the opportunities of a young person from Italy and of a young person from e.g. Germany?**

In general, I feel that Germany offers much more opportunities. Anyway, it depends a lot on your family's circumstances; in southern Italy, young people that come from a rich family are much more privileged.

**What comes to your mind when you think of the term "Migration"? Is it a good or a bad thing?**

Migration is a good thing, even necessary. It helps both the migrant and the host country.

**More and more highly skilled young people are leaving Italy: How does emigration affect Italy?**

Of course, brain drain and impoverishment is a tragic truth in Italy, but it increasingly -and in some cases consistently - affects other countries in Europe.

**If you think of non-European migration, how does immigration affect Italy, Germany and Europe?**

Nowadays, a serious policy for the management of the non-European migration is strongly needed. Nevertheless, the fear of immigration is rather caused by ideological reasons, and the worsening of the relationship between natives and migrants in many areas of Europe is clearly connected to the increase of poverty, which affects the most fragile parts of the population, to which migrants belong.

**How would you describe your generation? I found a sentence in the Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: "Italian young people have not started collective movements or at least demonstrations against the status quo; resignation has prevailed, although new parties and political actors are emerging". Do you think this is true?**

This assertion is false. Italian youth, all across the country, has developed very refined kinds of political participation and civic engagement. Anyway, we have a political establishment, which managed to exclude the younger part of the population at least from the Seventies onwards, and this happened increasingly in Berlusconi's era.

**What is the relationship between the old and the young generation in Italy?**

Opportunities in Italy are distributed very unequally. Our country lives of the wealth accumulated by the elder generations, and the family plays a crucial role in the personal and professional development of the individual.

**Do you feel like the Italian government has been investing in young people?**

The Italian government does not have the economic resources to invest in younger generations, because the complex system of corporate interest inherited by elder generations needs to be maintained.



**What comes to your mind when you think of the term “Populism”?**

Populist parties took power with a rhetorical gesture, which profited from the overall discontent. Salvini is a vulture, who has proven to be very able in monopolizing the attention of the media. The M5S failed to create a valid political establishment, and was unable to build a sensible political representation. However, the main culprit for the rise of populism is the centrist establishment, not only in Italy (PD, PDL, SEL) but also across Europe, which left a terrible political void.

**What do you think of the coalition between the Lega and the Five Star Movement (M5S)? Do you see a difference between Salvini and Di Maio? Why is Salvini dominating Italian politics?**

The two political movements have different stories and natures, but both are born because they represented an answer to certain political needs. The answer is merely rhetorical, because the economic problems that affect Italy, do have European roots, and need European solutions. Their anti-Europeanism is mainly rhetorical, as it helped them to reach power. Salvini and Di Maio are very different; the first one has great political intelligence, and an ability to communicate through the media, which Di Maio lacks. Even if Di Maio is rather smart, he is not expressing a particular political strategy that the M5S has not. He obtained a ruling position only due to reasons of internal political equilibrium in the party.

**Di Maio wants to invest in technology and innovation to create new jobs for young people in Italy. Also, he wants to implement the “basic income”. Do you think these measures will successfully fight (youth) unemployment?**

As a matter of principle, I am not against universal basic income and a rather rigid discipline on contracts. Anyway, in this particular case, I feel that these measures lack any general political vision or credible strategy, which makes them useless in the long term.

**What do you wish for Italy, Germany and Europe?**

I wish that European institutions go through a rather painful but necessary process of political reform, which is necessary to avoid a political-economic catastrophe that could occur with the collapse of the Eurozone. I would also stress that, in this particular

moment, a lucid alliance between European people is necessary: Germans and Italians should stop to perceive each other at odds in terms of political interests and should understand that the political fate of Europe is common and that both countries' interests are legitimate. In particular, Germans should understand that the Italian public debt has nothing to do with the reasons of the European economic crisis, but is rather structural to the main macroeconomic fundamentals of Europe (in terms of commerce: their growth is our debt, and the other way around). Our destiny is common and urge common solutions. I wish that Europe were based on democratic participation, and not on corporate interest, as now is the case.

**How do you see your future?**

I see my future as rather uncertain. Nevertheless, I'm conscious of being born in the part of my country that enjoys economic privilege, which helped me in my personal and professional life, and could help me in the future.





**Francesca Grasso, 24 years old. She was born and raised in Naples and has a master's degree in Modern European Languages and Literature, specialising in English and French, from the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II. She spent four months in Paris with the Erasmus Programme. She is currently working in an enterprise as a web tester.**



**How do you perceive the overall political and economic situation in Italy?**

Quite a disaster. I see a country that is becoming more and more inhospitable to the ones who live in it. Above all, Naples is a very peculiar city where you can see the oddest opposites living together. It is a marvellous place that you cannot forget, for better or for worse. I think that the global situation in Europe cannot be considered as globally positive.

**Do you feel like xenophobia, racism and discrimination have increased in the past few years? Do you see these things happening in other European countries, too?**

I think so, but I also wonder if the level has not increased as dramatically as it seems, and if the problem is instead with the representation of it made by the media. Maybe racism has not increased, but the representation of racism has. Based on what I see, I think that these problems are more frequent now. We became more suspicious of diversity.

**Do you trust the political institutions of your country? Do you feel represented? Do you feel like you have a say in Italy? Do you participate in the political process?**

I do not feel represented, I do not feel like I have a voice, I feel that politics tries to seem like it is made for people and made by people, when it is completely disconnected from the citizen.

**What would you say? What do you like and what don't you like about Europe or the EU? Do you believe in a "European identity"?**

I have never considered Europe as a true reality. I mean that it is easier for me to consider each country belonging to it as a single item, more than being part of something bigger. Maybe it happens because I feel like European countries are more concerned about keeping a national identity than a larger, global, one.

**Why did you decide to stay in (Southern) Italy? Does it have to do something with the political or economic situation?**

Until this moment, it was not possible for me to decide where to live and study for personal reasons. Now that I finished university everybody tells me to leave

and to look for a job elsewhere, but I decided to try to Naples and see if I can find my place here.

**Have you ever lived or studied abroad? If yes, what was different there?**

I stayed in Paris for four months. I loved the city, but I soon realized that it is not easy living there. It was a very difficult period, because I stayed there during the Bataclan episode, so the city was in alert all the time, everywhere. Life rhythms were different, also personal contact with people was quite missing. Moreover, I did not feel like there was a real integration among people coming from different backgrounds there.

**How do you perceive the opportunities of a young person from Italy and of a young person from e.g. Germany?**

I can say that one of my best friends had lived in Germany now for 3-4 years and he is very happy. He also has two babies, and he always talks about how German state helps people live a better life compared to Italy. For example the economical and educational help.

**What comes to your mind when you think of the term “Migration”? Is it a good or a bad thing?**

The term “migration” is connected to a survival instinct, it makes me think of a human being leaving an uncomfortable or dangerous situation in search of something better.

**More and more highly skilled young people are leaving Italy: How does emigration affect Italy?**

I do believe in impoverishment of human capital in Southern Italy. It is a real shame to see how we spit on our economic and human potential and how we generate a dramatic vicious cycle losing more and more chance to recover.

**If you think of non-European migration, how does immigration affect Italy, Germany and Europe?**

I would say that it brings European countries too many people and we are not able to cope with them. We do not really possess the resources or the ability to deal with a humanitarian crisis as the one we’re going through.

**How would you describe your generation? I found this sentence in the Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: “Italian young people have not started collective movements or at least demonstrations against the status quo; resignation has prevailed, although new parties and political actors are emerging.” Do you think this is true?**

There is a general noncurrence for the political situation among young people. I would not be able to tell you why. We are distracted from something else; maybe we think it is not our business. There are still people who demonstrate that this is not completely true. There are many young people involved in politics in Naples, and we often have collective demonstrations in the street about important topics of our times.

**Do you feel like the Italian government has been investing in young people?**

No. I do not. On the contrary, I think everything that is being done by this government is increasing ignorance, poverty, hate, confusion.

**What comes to your mind when you think of the term “Populism”? Do you think that populist parties are represented accurately in the media? Do you think they have some legitimate critique?**

I identify populism with the need to gain the consensus of a huge mass of people, who are not very aware of what is happening, and the role they could actually play. There is, of course, some legitimate critique, but at least in Italy we accept opinion from everybody. I mean that in TV emissions about politics, for example, it is common to see people talking who do not have any awareness of the historical situation we live in. I think this is confusing and puts significative opinions in a shadow zone.

**What do you think of the coalition between the Lega and the Five Star Movement (M5S)? Do you see a difference between Salvini and Di Maio? Why is Salvini dominating Italian politics?**

I am not sure of the difference between the two. They belong to different parties with different programs but, in reality, they just look like one the other side of the other, like partners in crime or a comical duo playing gags together. Salvini is having so much support because he knows which buttons to push and where to address people’s confusion and rage, and how to

look like a reassuring and a familiar image to them.

**Di Maio wants to invest in technology and innovation to create new jobs for young people in Italy. Also, he wants to implement a “basic income”. Do you think these measures will successfully fight (youth) unemployment?**

I am not too optimistic, but I hope so. I think that a measure such as basic income could create an excuse not to look for a job anymore. I think that the problem of youth unemployment is in an urge of resolution, but there are many young people who do not really consider it as a problem. Maybe they just not faced the reality of facts, how difficult is to have even a modest life nowadays, or maybe they just feel fine living in a sort of miserable way. What I wish for Europe is to come to a balance between personal and collective identity and credibility. I wish for a European organisation which honours the principles it was founded on.

**How do you see your future?**

I hope to have the chance to live in a place I like and I have chosen to live in, not only because I was forced to leave some other place in search of fortune.





Claudia Cerulo and Giada Armante in Naples, May 2019