SVEGLIATITALIA: è l'ora di essere civili.
An Enquiry into the Representations of the 2016 Italian Campaign for LGBT Rights

Aurora Perego

ABSTRACT

In the context of the parliamentary debate on the so-called 'Cirinnà Law', in 2016 several Italian organisations advocating for LGBT rights promoted a campaign to support the approval of the first law guaranteeing same-sex couples the right to civil partnership and stepchild adoption. This article aims to analyse the combination of textual and visual representations associated with the *Svegliati Italia* [Wake up, Italy] campaign through a queer postcolonial lens, in order to enquire into their deeper meanings. While the logo of the campaign was a pink clock, token of the Italian awakening in terms of LGBT rights, the main slogan *È l'ora di essere civili* [It's time to be civilised] was articulated around the discourse of 'progress' of the nation, to be measured through the extension of civil rights to non-heterosexual individuals. The focus of this article lies in the necessity to examine to what extent the representation of white, abled, young, beautiful LGBT subjects, together with the reference to the notion of 'civilisation', is entangled in the (re)production of white Italianness. By addressing the racial implications of the images utilised during the campaign, this discussion aspires to contribute to the on-going discussion on the Italian construction of a (homosexual) national identity.

INTRODUCTION

> A matter of civilization, more than love
> (CONDIVIDILOVE 2012).[1]

> Italy is one of the few European countries that do not provide any legal recognition of same-sex couples. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people do not benefit from the same possibilities as other Italian citizens, despite paying taxes like everybody. An unbearable discrimination

that cannot be justified (Plea to the Italian Parliament for the approval of the Cirinnà Law 2016).[2]

Provocatively, but responsibly, we would like to begin this reflection from our local point of view, Italy, a ghost sexual democracy located simultaneously inside and outside the map of European sexual democracies: a country that ranks 74 in the gender gap world index (…) but which nonetheless draws extensively on the repertoires of sexuality and gender to enable nationalist, racist and identitarian rhetoric functional to the definition of thresholds for inclusion and exclusion (Facciamo Breccia 2011).[3]

Svegliati Italia [Wake up, Italy] 2016 was supposed to be the year of the Italian 'awakening' in terms of recognition of civil rights for the LGBTI* community, which for decades had been advocated by NGOs, jurists, and members of Italian civil society. In a context marked by a generalised lack of institutional guarantees for queer[4] Italians, of blatant homo-, bi-, and transphobia, and of systematic discrimination, such 'awakening' was invoked when the 'Cirinnà Law'[5] was drafted. For the first time in the country, such provision would have introduced civil partnerships and stepchild adoption[6] for same-sex couples. The discussion of the bill was accompanied by fierce debates on the (dis)advantages of recognising marriage and adoption – i.e. rights traditionally attached to heterosexual nuclear families – to the so-called *famiglie arcobaleno* [rainbow families]. On 11 May 2016, the Law was only partially approved, since the Parliament did not recognise the right to stepchild adoption for homosexual couples.

In this context, several Italian organisations advocating for LGBT rights – such as Arcigay, Arcilesbica, and Agedo to name a few – promoted a campaign aimed at supporting the approval of the Law, as well as at raising awareness about the importance of guaranteeing equal rights to all Italian citizens so as to make Italy a 'civilised' country. In this regard, under the banner *Svegliati Italia*, not only did such actors directly demand that the Parliament recognise civil rights for LGBTI* individuals, but also organised demonstrations that took place in more than a hundred Italian squares on 23 January, scheduled political debates and conferences, and so forth. Since its very beginning, in order to gain support beyond the national level, the campaign was articulated around some principal visual and textual representations: the logo of the campaign was a clock containing a heart and an equals sign, token of the Italian 'awakening' in terms of equality and love; while the main slogan *È l'ora di essere civili* [It's time to be civilised] was accompanied by the caption *Fai il primo passo verso l'uguaglianza* [Take the first step toward equality] (see images below).

Image 1: Campaign logo   **Image 2: Campaign banner**

Source: Google Images

In an attempt to strengthen the discussion, the project CONDIVIDILOVE, active on social media, created posters showing two young same-sex couples tenderly cuddling in their beds, covered by the Italian flag (see images below). The main caption of such images was *Un paese civile protegge l'amore* [A civilised country protects love].

Image 3: Posters by CONDIVIDILOVE

Source: Google Images

Both the Law and the campaign triggered discussions among the heterogeneous Italian LGBTI* and queer community on what self-determination means for non-heterosexual or non-cisgender Italians and what tools are more adequate to achieve it. In particular, the informal network *SomMovimento nazioAnale* criticised the Cirinnà Law for reducing LGBTI* rights to a heteronormative representation of what a non-heterosexual family should look like, without considering the socio-economic dimensions that those rights touch upon.[7] They also problematised the campaign for implicitly relying on an exclusionary discourse regarding sexual rights and 'civilisation'.[8] Such reflections were further articulated in the edited volume *Il genere tra neoliberismo e neofondamentalismo* (Zappino 2016), in particular in the chapter 'Tempo di essere incivili. Una riflessione terrona sull'omonazionalismo in Italia al tempo

dell'austerità' (Acquistapace et al. 2016). Following on from this work, this article aims to analyse the abovementioned combination of visual and textual representations associated with the *Svegliati Italia* campaign, which will serve as an entry-point to look at the discourses[9] that appear to operate around the concepts of 'awakening', 'civilisation' and 'gay Italianness', intended as a constructed Italian homosexual national identity. Deploying homonormativity (Duggan 2003) and homonationalism (Puar 2007) as main theoretical lenses, this investigation intends to examine to what extent such representations might be entangled in a rhetoric of inclusion/exclusion that (re)produces some gay[10] subjects as legitimately deserving 'equality'. By exploring the implications of such images, this article contributes to on-going discussions on homonationalism and homonormativity applied to the Italian construction of a (white and homosexual) national identity (Colpani 2015; Acquistapace et al. 2016). Far from debating the importance of guaranteeing civil rights to LGBTIQ* couples and individuals, this article does not presume to articulate a critique of the advertising features of the campaign. Rather, it aspires to develop a close reading that takes into account the implicit connections between the Italian 'awakening', sexual rights, and 'civilisation', as well as their possible implications for both the Italian LGBTIQ* community and the whole society.

The first part of the article will focus on how the campaign represents the Italian 'awakening' in connection with 'equality' and 'love'. The analysis will unfold around the concept of homonormativity, theorised by scholar Lisa Duggan as a gay neoliberal politics "that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them" (2003: 50). Through these insights, what does a combined reading of the captions – "A civilised country protects love" and "Take the first step towards equality" – and images say about who appears to be 'legitimately' able to aspire to such love? In order to deal with this concern, the second section of the article will investigate the configuration of a European 'civilisation' through the concept of homonationalism, which Jasbir Puar articulated as a biopolitical assemblage in which a narrative of progress for gay rights is "built on the backs of racialised and sexualised others" (2013: 25). In conclusion, the analysis will combine the concepts of homonormativity and homonationalism in order to situate the campaign, in particular its references to 'awakening' and 'civilisation', within the broader rhetoric of a "peripheral desire for Europe" (Colpani and Habed 2014a), in which equal sexual rights seem to have become the symbolic access to 'modernity', conjugated both in terms of Italianness and, perhaps even stronger, Europeanness.

The Italian (homonormative) 'awakening': 'equality' and 'love' for whom?

In *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (2003), Duggan explores how US neoliberalism has developed during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In her terms, neoliberalism is defined as "a new vision of national and world order, a vision of competition, inequality, market 'discipline', public austerity, and 'law and order'" (2003: x). The scholar argues that neoliberal policies have been implemented through the "ideology of discrete spheres of social life" (2003: xiv), which relies on a dichotomous separation of economic/class politics from identity/cultural politics. This dualism affirms that the economic domain is to be practically as well as analytically abstracted from practices of racial apartheid, gender segmentation, or sexual regulation. As a consequence, struggles concerning social justice have become more and more "divorced from any critique of global capitalism" (2003: xx), while the very concept of 'equality' has been rearticulated as "'color-blind' anti-affirmative action racial politics, conservative-libertarian 'equality feminism', and

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gay 'normality'" (2003: 44). In other words, Duggan argues that race, gender, sexuality, dis/abilities, and several other axes of privilege and marginalisation have been deprived of their potential for critique through a neo-capitalist resignification, in which these categories are not in conflict with exclusionary neoliberal policies e.g. privatisation. In her view, it is precisely by commodifying a mainstream and polished version of political struggles that neoliberalism sustains itself. It is on the basis of this premise that the concept of homonormativity unfolds as a sexual politics that, since the 1990s, has operated in the US to 'normalise' and assimilate the gay population within a heterosexual neoliberal framework. By showing that homosexuals are as 'normal' as heterosexuals, and by accounting for their capacity to serve the nation, to pay taxes, and to be honourable citizens, many US NGOs advocating for LGBT rights have inscribed civil rights politics in what Duggan calls the "'gay equality' branch of multi-issue neoliberalism" (2003: 47). In other words, according to Duggan, during the 1990s more and more gay groups abandoned grass-root initiatives to develop a depoliticised agenda inscribed within the global neo-capitalist system. Not only did this sexual politics fail to contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but it reinforced them, by "promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (2003: 50). Furthermore, homonormativity as a discourse operates by creating an imagined and homogenous gay public who desires exactly what neo-liberal institutions offer them: a supposed 'normality' and the privileges recognised to so-called 'normal' citizens. In Duggan's own words:

> This address works to bring the desired public into political salience as a perceived mainstream, primarily through a rhetorical remapping of public/private boundaries designed to shrink gay public spheres, and redefine gay equality against the 'civil rights agenda' and 'liberationism', as access to the institutions of domestic privacy, the 'free' market, and patriotism (2003: 50).

Rather than arguing for an *a priori* application of Duggan's analysis to Italy, Acquistapace et al. (2016) maintain that the concept of homonormativity, with its account on the progressive inscription of LGBT rights in a neoliberal, normative, and patriotic framework, offers an analytical tool through which to develop a close reading of the entanglement of Italian 'awakening' – as (re)produced during the *Svegliati Italia* campaign – with mainstream discourses surrounding sexual rights in Italy. According to the slogans and captions that accompanied the campaign, Italy has indeed to 'wake up' from its political and cultural backwardness, so as to enter the domain of 'civilisation'. To achieve such an aim, two strategies seem to take priority: 'equality' and 'love'. Acquistapace et al. (2016) argue that the right to love is articulated in the two photographs through an intimate and domestic setting (a bedroom), which serves to portray homosexual love as being as 'normal' as its heterosexual counterpart. In the scholars' analysis:

> This pure love, which takes places under the family roof and the national sky, seems to show how normality is the biggest aspiration of those who do not practise heterosexuality under the tricolour duvet. In this sense, even non-heterosexual subjects develop the desire to feel attached to their society by adhering to a heteronormative relational model (2016: 70).

Such a desire to belong to the national community guides the idea that the Italian 'awakening' has to take shape around the moral necessity to provide and safeguard equal rights. However, as maintained by Duggan, the development of the 'equality agenda', when not taking into

account neoliberal power structures active within society, operates through processes of 'naturalisation' and 'normalisation' of an imagined mainstream gay public that are inherently interwoven with the multifaceted exclusion of non-conforming queer others. Similarly, Acquistapace et al. (2016: 71) affirm that the campaign contributes to constructing the boundaries of the Italian gay public around the concepts of the nation, the family, and the neo-liberal market. Against this backdrop, the following questions merit specific attention: who might be part of the national audience the campaign intends to address? Who do such representations aim to speak for and represent?

As Acquistapace et al. (2016: 69) emphasise, the most striking feature of the images is perhaps the prevalence of the colour white in the background, the sheets, and the bedclothes. The subjects in the campaign images are themselves not only white, but also young and normatively handsome. In the scholars' analysis, such a white representation does not only bear an overall sense of purity, but "it allows an entire national community to become visible as a white(ned) community held to ransom by indescribable racial dreams of decorum and morality" (2016: 69). In other words, no references to the matrix of privilege and marginalisation on which LGBTIQ* subjects are situated is to be found in the mainstream representations of the campaign. The complexity of positions within the LGBTIQ* Italian community according to class, race, and gender identity appears to be flattened by an imagined homogeneous gay Italian subjecthood who desires recognition within the institutions of marriage and domesticity. In this regard, a reading of the aforementioned visual and textual materials shows that the campaign conveys the message that gay Italian subjects are as 'normal' as heterosexual citizens and, therefore, deserve equal institutional treatment. As Acquistapace et al. affirm:

> What we are reading in this picture is the contribution of new sexualities to make more complex, but simultaneously more functional, the implicit relation between the heterosexual norm and the nation; while the claim for couple recognition, the plea for protection and the request for civilisation challenge the paradigm that equates the state to the heterosexual family, substituting it with the new paradigm that equates the nation to the homosexual couple (2016: 71).

When taking into account the desire to belong to the nation, the colour white acquires a peculiar meaning in the representation of the Italian 'awakening' in terms of equality. As Acquistapace et al. suggest, since through complex historical processes Italians have finally acquired the privilege of being considered 'white', the colour white might represent a way to be a legitimate part of the Italian national community (2016: 63). Through these insights, the presence of the Italian flag, the *tricolore*, in the images of the *Svegliati Italia* campaign gains a (perhaps unexpected) strength: not only does it speak of the unadmitted representation of 'normal' (gay) Italians as white, but also it articulates whiteness as one of the unmarked features (Dyer 1997) that constitute the very concept of the Italian national identity, in both its heterosexual and homosexual features. By combining critical accounts on whiteness with the lens of homonormativity, it appears that in the campaign, gay Italians are simultaneously configured as both white *and* able to engage in the neoliberal market, i.e. to support a privatised, depoliticised 'equality agenda' anchored in domesticity and consumption. In this regard, we can think of *Svegliati Italia* as a slogan to be pronounced by an imagined gay public from which (racialised) individuals who do not want to or are not able to engage with the market are excluded. Consequently, the claim for recognition of 'love' and 'equality' appears to be valid solely for 'normal' gays and lesbians, the only ones who can legitimately aspire to gain access to the institutions of domestic privacy, an entrance mediated by their active participation in

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neoliberal institutions. The audience, on the contrary, is not composed of homosexuals only, since Italian civil society as a whole is asked to wake up from its nightmare of backwardness and discrimination, in order to enter the dream of 'civilisation'. Such a twofold move can be understood through Duggan's account of the potential of homonormative discourses to create a homogeneous, non-racialised, neoliberal gay public, while simultaneously appealing to a broader national mainstream, of which homosexuals can finally be a 'normal' part. At this point, it is worth wondering: which meaning(s) does 'civilisation' entail? How is Italy supposed to become a 'civilised' country?

Entering 'European civilisation' through sexual rights

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007), Puar forged the concept of homonationalism as a biopolitical reconfiguration that occurred in the aftermath of 9/11, in which 'acceptance', 'tolerance', and 'equality' for gays and lesbians were rearticulated "as the barometer by which the legitimacy of, and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated" (Puar 2013a: 24). Building on Duggan's theorisation of homonormativity, Puar explains that homonationalism questions the inscription of LGBT rights within neoliberal narratives of 'progress' and 'modernity', which (re)produce the inclusion of certain gays and lesbians in the nation-state at the expenses of "the partial and full expulsion from those rights of other populations" (2013a: 25). Which homosexual subjects are, in this respect, rendered 'illegible' and 'improper'? In Puar's view, the "rise in the legal, consumer and representative recognition" (2013a: 25) of some LGBT individuals occurs concomitantly with the exclusion of racialised and sexualised others, especially Muslim others, whose pathologised (hetero) sexuality has fuelled the geopolitical discourse of 'war on terror'. This rhetoric (re)produces "whiteness as a queer norm and straightness as a racial norm" (2007: xxiv). Homonationalism is hence a useful tool to analyse how, through specific – material or symbolic – articulations, 'tolerance' and 'inclusion' towards certain LGBT communities are negotiated through neoliberal practices of exclusion of non-conforming, racialised, queer others. Rather than as a geopolitical position developed by nation-states, homonationalism is theorised as an assemblage, as Puar articulates in the following way:

> [A] structure of modernity, a convergence of geopolitical and historical forces, neoliberal interests in capitalist accumulation both cultural and material, biopolitical state practices of population control and affective investments in discourses of freedom, liberation, and rights (2013a: 39).

Understanding homonationalism as an assemblage represents, then, a "condition of possibility for national and transnational politics" (Puar 2013b: 337). Building on these insights, Italian scholar Gianmaria Colpani (2015) investigates the possibility of reading homonationalism 'from Italy', through an interrogation of how Italian 'backwardness' in terms of LGBT rights is articulated and represented. Instead of proposing an acritical application of homonationalism to Italy, Colpani argues that the specific biopolitical assemblage of homonationalism and homonormativity unveils how the discourse of sexual rights has shaped Italian 'provincialism' in a way that relies on and reinforces boundaries both between Italy and the rest of Europe, as well as within Italy itself. In his own words:

> To think of homonationalism through Italy might suggest (…) that the liberal discourse on sexuality could nowadays become operative within a 'continuous'

> negotiation of the colour-line of the *Belpaese*; a negotiation of both processes of racialization of Southern Italians, as well as of whiteness and Europeanness – or of Europeanness as whiteness (2015: 201; emphasis mine).

Through the analysis of a previous Italian campaign aimed at raising awareness on racism and homophobia, Colpani shows how the Italian neoliberal inscription of LGBT rights is, to use Puar's term, "concomitant" with the representation of *certain* Italians, namely those from the South of the country, as unable to catch up with European 'tolerance' towards sexual rights. In this regard, sexual freedom and LGBT rights have come to be signified as what Colpani and Habed (2014a) have defined as a "peripheral desire for Europe". According to the two researchers, through peculiar biopolitical configurations of power – called "European homonationalism" (Colpani and Habed 2014b) – 'Europe' not only has emerged "as a powerful trope and as the exceptional bearer of sexual freedom and recognition" (2014b: 28-29), but the very idea of Europeanness has been conflated with specific (North) European locations where such a promise of tolerance and acceptance can be guaranteed. Furthermore, the materialisation of 'Europe' as the fortress of gay rights, and the overlapping of 'Europeanness' with 'tolerance' and 'equality', articulates Europe as the horizon of 'modernity' and 'civilisation', a horizon that needs to be protected from what is conceived as the 'backwardness' of Southern-European countries.

Colpani and Habed also maintain that the signifier 'Europe' (re)produces Europeanness as "a normative device producing others from Europe as well as others within Europe" (2014b: 36-37) both on a European, as well as on a national scale. In the Italian case, if "Europe figures as a privileged horizon for the demand of LGBT civil rights in Italy" (2014a: 79), this 'desire for Europe' is articulated through a biopolitical reconfiguration of the very idea of Italianness. Maintaining sexual rights as the means of access to European 'civilisation', a reading utilising the concepts of homonormativity and homonationalism suggests that Italy has to negotiate its position of 'civilised' country through dis-identification from the source of its provincialism: the Mediterranean (2014a: 87). In this sense, if it is to enter the domain of 'civilisation', Italy has to develop its gay national identity through the assimilation of white homosexuals that can prove to be 'good neoliberal citizens' in the same manner as straight Italians.

The above presented theorisations offer a rather innovative perspective of the *Svegliati Italia* campaign: what appears as a desire for a newly tolerant national identity takes shape around a 'peripheral desire for Europe'. The rhetoric of European 'modernity' and 'civilisation' operates to represent the Italian 'awakening' as a process that leads to a construction of Italianness according to neoliberal, white (Northern) Europeanness. In this regard, the materialisation of 'proper' (gay) Italians seems to inherently exclude those subjects who fall outside of a European neoliberal discourse on sexual rights, such as Southern Italians, non-white Italians, migrants and non-conforming queers (Acquistapace et al. 2016). The particular assemblage of homonormativity and homonationalism, then, represents a strong tool to situate the campaign within a specific biopolitical configuration that operates through practices of inclusion/exclusion. Within this framework, the above analysed textual and visual representations acquire a deeper, stronger meaning: not only do they present particular sexual rights as priorities, appealing to an imagined audience of (hetero and gay) neoliberal subjects, but also contribute to construct the Italian, 'modern', 'civilised', (homosexual) subjecthood along homonormative and homonationalist lines.

Conclusions

This article does not advocate a conservative argument against the crucial importance of recognising and guaranteeing rights to the LGBT community. On the contrary, it intends to show how a neoliberal conflation of civil rights and 'equality' can operate as an exclusionary, rather than inclusionary practice that reinforces already existing power dynamics. A call for the Italian 'awakening' in terms of a national dream for European 'civilisation' fails to consider that LGBT individuals living in Italy, Italians and/or not Italians, are located along several axes of differentiation, privilege, and marginalisation. Thus, not only does the rhetoric of 'love' and 'equality' which takes a (gay) self-referential stance for marriage and adoption not necessarily represent a priority for the whole LGBT community, but also, and perhaps more importantly, it appears to exclude non-conforming queer others from the very domain of (gay) Italianness and 'modern' national identity. Through the way the campaign was configured and led, then, we can see how neoliberal conceptions of sexuality are entangled in homonationalist and homonormative formations that occur at the expense of disavowed individuals. A consideration of this field of power might, using Puar's words:

> [S]tress the importance of moving away from (…) the 'mainstream/global queer' versus 'queer-of-colour/non-western queer' logic of argumentation (…) that often fails to interrogate the complex social field within which 'queer' is reproduced as a privileged signifier across those boundaries (2013a: 42).

In this respect, by raising awareness regarding the connection between the construction of an Italian (gay) national identity with racialising neoliberal processes, this article aspires to contribute to current and future theoretical discussions on homonationalism and homonormativity. It also calls for further investigation and academic debate on how normalisation and racialisation intersect in the neoliberal market so as to impose depoliticised equality agendas and further exclude certain LGBTIQ* subjects from social justice claims. Similar analyses are indeed more than ever necessary to prepare the ground for a political reappropriation of LGBT struggles as social critique of intersectional exclusionary 'norms' that transform the rights of the community into privileges for some minorities.

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NOTES

[1] "*Una questione di civiltà, prima ancora che d'amore*". [online, accessed 30 August 2018] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLsYtYNlJG0. Hereinafter, when not specified, Italian texts and/or other materials are translated by the author.

[2] "*L'Italia è uno dei pochi paesi europei che non prevede nessun riconoscimento giuridico per le coppie dello stesso sesso. Le persone gay, lesbiche, bisessuali e transessuali non godono delle stesse opportunità degli altri cittadini italiani pur pagando le tasse come tutti. Una discriminazione insopportabile, priva di giustificazioni*". The full text in Italian can be found at http://www.arcigay.it/svegliatitalia/ [online, accessed 30 August 2018].

[3] Translated by Colpani and Habed (2014a: 89).

[4] The term 'queer' presents a rather intricate etymology. Originally used in the UK to refer to non-heterosexual people in a derogative way, not only has the word been re-appropriated by a wide range of LGBTI* communities (even beyond Europe and the US), but it has also come to signify specific critical approaches established in the US as an academic discipline. In this paper, 'queer' and 'queerness' are deployed as umbrella terms to refer to identities, orientations, and practices that exceed the heteronormative (Butler 1993) forms of gender identity and sexual behaviour. For an in-depth understanding of the genealogy and travels of the term, please consult Hall and Jagose (2013). For its reception, significance, and use in Italy, please refer to Prearo (2012) and Pustianaz (2010).

[5] Named after the senator Monica Cirinnà, spokesperson for the Parliamentary Commission that presented the bill.

[6] In generic terms, adoption is the legal process through which a person assumes parental rights and duties over a minor. The expression 'stepchild adoption' specifically refers to those situations in which an individual adopts their partner's offspring, thus legally becoming one of their parents. In Italy, the right to stepchild adoption is recognised for heterosexual couples only.

[7] An account of the reflections developed by the network can be found at https://sommovimentonazioanale.noblogs.org/post/2016/03/04/altroche-cirinna-ci-riprendiamo-tuttoil-sommovimento-nazioanale-scende-a-roma/ [online, accessed 21 December 2018].

[8] More on the problematisation of the campaign articulated by activists from *SomMovimento NazioAnale* is available at https://sommovimentonazioanale.noblogs.org/post/2016/09/24/report-confini-pinkwashing-omonazionalismo/ [online, accessed 21 December 2018].

[9] According to Stuart Hall, "a discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way." (Hall 2006 [1996]: 201). In this sense, drawing from Hall, the analysis refers to the concept of discourse so as to describe the practice of meaning-making.

[10] Despite having previously used the acronym 'LGBT' to refer to the organisers' claim that the campaign concerned the entire Italian LGBT community, from this point on the author will mainly deploy the term 'gay' when referring to the commented mainstream images. In doing so, the aim is to argue that both such representations, and the decision to primarily focus the campaign on marriage and adoption, excluded trans*, intersexual, and queer members of the community. This account unfolds through the theoretical framework of homonormativity, which will be discussed in the first section.

Aurora Perego holds a Research Master's degree in Gender and Ethnicity from Utrecht University (the Netherlands) and a Bachelor's degree in Peace Studies, International Cooperation and Development from the University of Pisa (Italy). Aurora's RMA thesis examined the legal status of LGBTI* asylum seekers in Spain and it was awarded the 2018 Best Research Master's Thesis Prize of the Humanities at Utrecht University. Her research interests concern the articulation of political claims and collective identities around the categories of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.