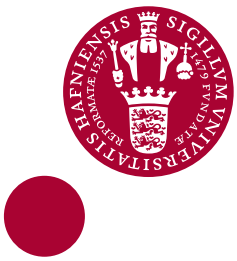

How right-wing versus cosmopolitan political actors mobilize and translate images of immigrants in transnational contexts

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How Right-wing versus Cosmopolitan Political Actors Mobilize and Translate Images of Immigrants in Transnational Digital Publics[1]

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Introduction

This article is interested in visual posters and symbols constructed and circulated transnationally by various political actors to mobilize public debate on the issues of immigration and citizenship in Western Europe. Following right-wing mobilizations on the issue of the Syrian refugee crisis in relation to fears of terrorist threat, immigration has become one of the most contentious political issues in both Europe and the United States (Caiani et al. 2012; McAdam and Kloos 2014). Images of immigrants have been recently used in the case of Brexit and in national referendum campaigns in different European Union member states to construct and legitimate an ethno-nationalist and homogeneous representation of citizenship and national identity that demeans and marginalizes minorities, Muslims, and immigrants (Kallis 2013; Wodak 2015). In constructing a "politics of fear" (Wodak 2015), right wing populist political parties have used provocative visual posters depicting immigrants as 'criminal foreigners' or 'threat to the nation', in some countries and contexts conflating the image of the immigrant with that of the Islamist terrorist (Betz 2013).

Research shows how right wing political parties and their extremist grassroots sympathizers build

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increasingly deep and connected networks at the national and transnational levels, both in Europe and in the US (Caiani et al. 2012). While numerous researchers have studied the national media coverage of contentious immigration politics, fewer have explored how visual images facilitate trans-national networking and mobilization by right wing and extremist political activists in different countries (see for example, Betz 2013). In this perspective, we need more systematic research on the *trans*-national dimension of contentious visual politics on immigration, particularly given the use of stereotypes of the 'terrorist' or the 'criminal foreigner' by both populist right political parties and extremist activists (Wodak 2015). As an example, in early 2016 the right wing populist Swiss People's Party (SVP) followed the German national media polemics about acts of sexual violence during New Year's eve in Cologne with a visual poster campaign against "criminal foreigners" in Switzerland (Ritter 2016).

Right wing political groups are not the only ones mobilizing on the issue of immigration. Inspired by left-wing and transnationalist ideas, progressive social movements have similarly created transnational campaigns to benefit refugees and immigrants (Doerr 2010). There is a growing field of research in social movement studies on the logic of "connective action" in which activists use "digitally networked action" to share and carry personal stories and *images* across contexts (Bennett and Segerberg 2013: 195-6). Because of their open ended, ambivalent characteristics, images have the capacity to address different audiences (Müller et al 2009), and through this condense the power of storytelling practices through social media and "affective publics" fostering emotional connections across distance (Papacharissi 2015). This article will explore the *trans*-national dynamics of visual mobilization by comparing the translation of right-wing, nationalist with and left-wing, cosmopolitan visual campaigns on the issue of immigration in Western Europe.

Research on how varying radical images of immigrants shape broader public debates about Europe and the EU is timely given the rising electoral impact of right-wing political parties and the challenges this poses to liberal democracy and cosmopolitan ideas of citizenship in Europe (Schmidt 2016). Following right wing political mobilizations on the issues of the refugee crisis and the Brexit vote, anti-immigrant protests and images have become increasingly visible, while cosmopolitan and left-wing inspired images of solidarity among citizens in different European countries have received less coverage within mainstream media (Doerr and Mattoni 2014).

A case illustrating the transnational effectiveness of anti-immigration mobilization through visual images is the SVP. Through a series of racist posters, the SVP over the past decade has increased its outreach to mainstream voters and internationally. Professionally designed, the posters have helped the SVP reach out to both populist right wing parties and more extremist right wing political activists (Doerr forthcoming). As an example, the SVP in 2007 launched a series of provocative "black sheep" posters created for its national election campaign. Their contentious poster shows three white sheep standing on the Swiss flag as one of them kicks a single black sheep away (see Illustration 1).

(Illustration 1 about here, see in the appendix)

The poster in Illustration 1 was initially disseminated online via blogs and social networks in Switzerland, where the SVP campaigned for "criminal" immigrants and foreigners living in Switzerland to be deported after serving their sentences (Kallis 2013). The poster deeply polarized public debates about immigration and citizenship in Switzerland and internationally.

While journalists from liberal newspapers in Switzerland, Europe, and the US attacked the poster's racist message (Bachmann 2007), SVP politicians officially denied any racist intention as in a 2007 news interview of an SVP official who said: "The black sheep is not any black sheep that doesn't fit into the family. It's the foreign criminal who doesn't belong here, the one that doesn't obey Swiss law. We don't want him" (Sciolino 2007:7). Wodak has conceptualized the simultaneous use and denial of racist contents the "calculated ambivalence" within populist right wing discursive strategies (Wodak 2013: 27). In contrast to the negative response by mainstream media, institutional right wing political parties such as the Italian Lega Nord (LN) and the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) in Germany translated the SVP poster into Italian and German, creating their own black sheep posters for local or national campaigns.

The puzzle of different right wing political parties and their grassroots activists sharing and translating anti-immigration posters is theoretically relevant, providing a contrast case to transnational campaigns and connective action created by left-wing and progressive social movements (Bennett and Segerberg 2013). To contrast with the case of the SVP, I will also discuss the left-wing radical 'EuroMayday' protests. EuroMayday, a campaign centered on the issues of social precarity and immigration, was innovative in its cross-national use of visual media, online demonstrations and creative street parades (Mattoni 2012). Like other transnational protest networks, EuroMayday experienced multiple linguistic and structural challenges trying to translate the ideas of cosmopolitan and transnational citizenship and social rights across Europe (Doerr and Mattoni 2014)). To address these issues, EuroMayday founders in Italy used their members' communicative skills as journalists and graphic designers to invent a highly visual campaign of posters and visual symbols in order to target those living in European countries and speaking different languages (Ibid).

Addressing the insecurity and socially precarious situations of workers and immigrants in Europe, since 2004 EuroMayday has mobilized hundreds of thousands of citizens and immigrants to participate in 'untraditional' street parades on May Day (Mattoni 2012). To overcome linguistic barriers among its members, EuroMayday initiators in Italy consciously constructed a *visual language* of social precarity (Doerr and Mattoni 2014). The EuroMayday protest campaign and its political demands became most visible in European media and internationally in 2006 and 2007, around the same time as the SVP's initial black sheep campaign. However, in contrast to the SVP campaign, EuroMayday tried to create an effort to break stereotypical images of immigrants in public media. The EuroMayday poster in Illustration 2 depicts two young figures in front of an urban skyline, symbolizing the joint struggle of young Italians and (undocumented) immigrants.

(Illustration 2 about here)

Designed and published online by EuroMayday Milan in 2008, this poster depicts a dynamic central couple. The male figure is presented in a somewhat passive posture, arms crossed yet smiling. The female figure, is a bit darker in hue, a subtle difference to be discussed later, as it was important to the creators of the image. The poster portrays immigrants neither as black, male stereotypes of 'boat people' invading 'fortress Europe', nor in terms of 'victim images' of trafficked female immigrants (Falk 2010).

My research compares how right-wing and left-wing political actors appropriate visual campaign

materials by groups in other national contexts, and which language-based and visual *practices of translation* they utilize. Wodak has shown how quickly and effectively historic fascist and extreme right wing political movements and parties in Western Europe, drawing on German Nazi ideology, diffused and translated each other's symbols, songs, and political discourses (Wodak 2013). In light of the greater visibility of right wing anti-immigration politics, my research aims to understand the differences in the translation practices used by left and right wing political actors.

Pointing to a broader relevance of translation in social movement studies, researchers working on transnational diffusion have recently suggested the need to study the linguistic difficulties in the limits and processes of translation that are necessary when political meanings travel across countries (Chabot 2010). Elsewhere, I have demonstrated how immigrants' rights activists and progressives have used the practice of *political translation* to democratize culturally diverse or multilingual group settings and mainstream deliberation (Doerr 2012). Here, I take a restricted focus on the *intersemiotic* practices of translation that are necessary when political activists translate campaign posters or social media images to spread them in a different national and political context. *Intersemiotic* translation is defined as the "interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems" (Jakobso 2000: 115). I will show that the left-wing cosmopolitan EuroMayday groups who circulated and translated posters on the issues of social precarity and immigration used a more complex and reflective visual design than the right wing political groups who translated the SVP's black sheep poster.

In my analysis, I consider the difficulties of defining the broad and multi-facetted sector of right-wing political actors (Mudde 2007). Following a broad definition, I distinguish between right

wing populist parties versus more radical extremist activist networks and political parties (Mudde 2007). Wodak defines right wing populist parties based on their stigmatization of cultural, religious, linguistic, or ethnic minorities as a "threat and scapegoat" for a wide variety of different political problems (Wodak, 2013: 26-27). According to Wodak's definition, right-wing populist parties use a range of different discursive strategies including victim-perpetrator reversal and scapegoating to instill fear that constructs a "border politics" between an exclusionary majority "we-group identity" and a "dangerous", threatening "Other" (Wodak, 2015:2, 4). Caiani et al., define right wing "extremist" activist groups pointing to the broad variety of ideologies to be included among these categories, from those espousing revisionist neo-Nazi ideas or neo-fascist convictions to religious extremists of various denominations (Caiani et al., 2012: 3). The use of social networks and social media channels facilitates joint mobilization of the wide variety of extremist organizations and populist right wing parties (Wodak 2015). Both right wing populists as well as extremists increasingly use anti-Islamist discourses that construct the essentialist idea of defending of a nativist European "culture" based on Christianity (Caiani et al., 2012: 151; Mudde, 2007:85).

Logic of Comparison

Given their different ideologies as well as the organizational differences I conceive of the SVP and the EuroMayday campaigns as relevant cases for an *asymmetric comparison* (Krause 2016). McAdam and Kloos suggest that the comparative analysis of contentious politics on immigration and nativism focus not only on left and progressive movements but also on coalitions between parties and movements, notably on the political right (McAdam and Kloos 2014). Accordingly, my study explores the theoretical interest in understanding transnational mobilization on the issue of immigration by comparing political actors with contrasting ideologies and with different

resources and organizational backgrounds, both right-wing political parties as well as grassroots, left-wing social movements (Ibid).

The SVP can be understood as a political party whose provocative image mobilized and inspired social movements on the extreme right as well as right wing populist parties (Betz 2013; Kallis 2013; Skenderovic 2009). In comparison, Euro Mayday used Youtube and alternative media sites as a grassroots social movement organizing decentralized street parades involving undocumented immigrants and resident immigrants, which took place in over 20 cities such as Hamburg, Florence, Berlin and Milano (Doerr and Mattoni 2014). Unlike the SVP campaign, EuroMayday captured mainstream media attention only briefly, even though it's the campaign influenced some institutional left unions and academics to consider precarity as a broad societal and political problem (Doerr 2010). Indeed, although the SVP and the EuroMayday campaign design look different, we shall see that both relied on professional media design. In comparison, I will ask: How did the SVP and EuroMayday campaigns portray the relationship between immigrants and citizens in order to reach out and mobilize supporters in distinct national contexts and transnationally? The visual translation processes of these contrasting cases allow us to grasp the wide spectrum of transnational political mobilization on citizenship and immigration.

Different National Political Contexts

In regard to how images potentially translate across different national political contexts, I focus my study of the translation of the SVP poster on the LN in Italy and the NPD in Germany. This allows me to trace how new contentious debates on immigration within the context of European integration and globalization were situated within different contentious histories of fascism like those of Germany and Italy. Regarding Switzerland, Skenderovic shows the historical

connections and fluid overlap between SVP and extreme right activist groups through socialization, joint political events, and concrete endorsement within elections and extreme right-wing publications since the eighties and nineties (Skenderovic 2009). The SVP officially denies any connection to the most extremist groups and yet both uses ambivalent media discourse to reach out to them and participates with them in transnational networks (Betz, 2013).

Within the particular political context of Italy, the LN is a right wing political party that, in light of its anti-immigration policies, is arguably part of the extreme right (Caiani et al. 2012). As a separatist political party from the North of Italy, the LN was part of the right wing coalition between Berlusconi's Forza Italia and the Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale during the 1994 national elections (Caiani et al. 2012). While both MSI and AN have historically been part of the neo-fascistic parliamentary organizations in Italy, LN joined their coalition using xenophobic policy claims on immigration (Bar-On 2013).

Among political parties translating the SVP's poster, the German NPD is an interesting case with a different ideology from the LN. Caiani et al. situate the German NPD as a "radical political party" with close connections to extreme right movement organizations (Caiani et al. 2012:28). The NPD mobilizes within longstanding histories of fascism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant mobilization (Caiani et al 2012; Mudde 2007). It is interesting to compare whether and to what extent the institutional right wing parties (SVP and LN) in my sample - despite their official denial - use visually-styled cartoons as tools to propagate racist discourse in much the same vein yet with a different strategy than the ideologically more extremist NPD.

Unlike the SVP, EuroMayday brought together *local* groups who did not have a national organization but formed a loose, transnational network, communicating mostly through digital and social media (Doerr and Mattoni 2014). Previous work has shown the political impact of social media images studying the transnational diffusion and circulation of EuroMayday visuals which occurred through alternative social media channels (Mattoni 2012). Activists created alternative media or 'media sociali', including visual symbols with inspiring stories on the 'ironies' of social precarity and people's individual struggles and the use of collective agency to effect change (Mattoni 2012). In contrast to these progressive and cosmopolitan oriented visual translations of precarity, the highly contentious translation of the black sheep symbol into different national political contexts encourages the comparison of the substance of right-wing and left-cosmopolitan political campaigns.

Methods and Data

This paper applies an interdisciplinary methodology of visual and discursive analysis drawing on the work of research on social movements and social media (Doerr et al. 2013; Müller et al. 2009). Visual analysis extends primarily to three aspects of social movement dynamics: (1) visual manifestations, as a class of expressions, produced in social movements; (2) the representation of social movements in images disseminated in mediation processes; and (3) a larger societal framework granting visibility to certain groups and claims while others remain invisible (Doerr et al. 2013). Addressing the role of images versus texts, I will compare the visual and discursive translation strategies used by the actors in the different cases within their different national and local political contexts. In a first step of visual analysis, I apply the interdisciplinary methodology of *visual iconography* (Müller et al. 2009).

Visual iconography is a method derived from art history. It allows social and political scientists to analyze the complex aesthetic messages and possible misunderstandings within visual images disseminated in multicultural transnational public spheres (Müller et al. 2009). I apply visual iconography to compare and contrast the visual construction or omission of national borders by right-wing versus left-wing political actors in the cases studied. An example is the visual iconography of SVP black sheep visuals drawing on nationalistic flags and allusions to Nazi iconography (Richardson and Wodak 2009), which can be contrasted to cosmopolitan online maps diffused by the EuroMayday in the same period, which explicitly *omitted* national borders (Doerr and Mattoni 2014). Beyond the conscious choices of visual design, my emphasis on translation processes leads me to explore the complex aesthetic messages and possible (intended or unintended) limits of visual translation, such as when people in one national context may not be able to understand the symbols constructed by people in another (cf.Müller et al. 2009). The time frame for visual analysis is the period of 2006-2008.

Following my in-depth visual analysis, I add an additional step of *contextual* analysis. This *contextualization* is an additional inclusion of interdisciplinary sets of data to help me to deepen my knowledge of the genres of the images, and the place within the historical context of image *traditions* and *forms* (Ibid). For the contextualization, I rely on two different sets of qualitative methods to consider the differences between the two cases as well as the particular challenges of conducting research on right wing political actors (Caiani 2014). In ethical terms, I situate my study as part of a critical research perspective directed at revealing racist and xenophobic visuals and contents, in order to create a broader "critical visual literacy" perspective in the social sciences (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). To apply this critical perspective I analyze selected statements by right wing politicians and activists made to journalists on the issue of the black

sheep motive choosing news. For my corpus I selected two leading international quality newspapers featuring different ideologies, i.e., the liberal New York Times and the more conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, In addition, I selected one Italian language regional online news source, Tio.ch/20 Minuti, owned by the Swiss media company Tameda. Read by regional audiences in the North of Italy as well as in the Italian parts of Switzerland, Tio.ch/20 Minuti was reporting in depth about official statements by LN politicians about both the perceived racist contents of their party's poster.

My analysis of politicians' statements is inspired by the Discourse Historical Approach within Critical Discourse Analysis (Richardson and Wodak 2009). In the perspective of DHA, I propose to analyze how radical right-wing parties in different countries use posters to construct "political imaginaries" representing different imaginary historical pasts and identity narratives (Wodak, 2013: 26). I contrast official press statements to the content of the posters circulated online and offline. I analyze news statements. In a multimodal perspective of analysis (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) the combining of different discursive and visual materials will allow me to trace how racist contents circulate among grassroots activists while being denied by party officials as part of what Wodak has termed the "calculated ambivalence" within right wing populist discourse practices (Wodak, 2013:27).

For my data analysis of the black sheep campaign, my sample includes relevant visuals found on webpages and blogs by the groups associated with the cases studied. The data analysis was carried out in 2016. I constructed a theoretical sample that included images with a clear "black sheep" theme created by the groups in the cases analyzed found through Google searches including in total 98 visuals. The problem was that the right wing extremist groups studied used

changing webpages on which they circulated images inspired by the SVP. This data sampling challenge reflects Caiani's finding that far-right activists use the Internet as a highly important, anonymous public space for transnational or even global communication (Caiani 2014).

To understand the dynamics of translation and political meaning-making in the transnational EuroMayday network, I analyzed visual materials and posters displayed on EuroMayday homepages and blogs, focusing on the production of distinct images as well as their re-contextualization and translation by Euromayday activists in place-specific settings. I was a participant observer in two European and six local small-group meetings of the EuroMayday network in Berlin and Milan in the years 2007 – 2008. I included as additional materials for my contextual analysis a number of selected qualitative in-depth interviews and impressions from participant observation of EuroMayday activist meetings. I conducted in total 30 interviews with EuroMayday designers and participants. I coded the evidence gained through the interviews, expecting EuroMayday activists to be motivated by an ideational logic of counter-hegemonic, autonomous, anarchist, anti-racist strategies (Mattoni 2012).

Transposing Ethno-Nationalist Boundaries by Bonding against the Black Sheep

My findings regarding the black sheep poster campaigns reflect the sophisticated use of visual politics deployed by right wing political parties. What was striking in the SVP's capacity to shift national mainstream politics from a moderate to a radical debate about "criminal foreigners" launched by the "black sheep" poster. This is reflected, for example, in reporting by the New York Times: "As voters prepare to go to the polls in a general election on Oct. 21, the poster — and the party's underlying message — have polarized a country that prides itself on peaceful consensus in politics, neutrality in foreign policy and tolerance in human relations" (Sciolino,

2007:7). The SVP used the poster to build widespread popular support for legal measures to expel immigrants convicted of minor offenses and to restrict their access to legal aid. While perceived as scandalous in 2007, these radical policy proposals in 2016 have gained new media attention across Europe in the context of public polemics related to crimes allegedly committed by refugees (see, e.g., Ritter 2016). Following a successful national referendum campaign in 2007, the SVP initiative also advocated discussion of a further step to deport the entire families of minors who committed crimes (Sciolino 2007). Illustration 1 shows the SVP posters as displayed in public spaces within Switzerland (see Illustration 1 on p. 3).

As a first step of visual content analysis, note that the poster constructs a strong nationalist contrast between white and black, i.e. Swiss citizens and criminal foreigners. In visual terms, this dichotomous strategy is further emphasized through the use of colors: the red Swiss flag acting as a field for the white "Swiss" citizens while "criminal foreigners" are relegated to a colorless no-man's-land and thus associated only with the loaded "black sheep" stereotype. In terms of its color dichotomy and use of black and white, the black sheep poster acts ambivalently and conflates several historic racist and religious icons (Richardson and Colombo 2014). Graphic visuals using flashy colors such as red, black and white are supposed to attract attention (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) and are a well-known discursive genre used by racist and anti-Semitic groups in the past and present (Wodak and Richardson 2009).

If we analyze the visual contents and the immediate text in this poster together, we find evidence of what Wodak calls "calculated ambivalence" (Wodak, 2013: 27). In other words, because of the lack of explicit references, the black sheep symbol in the poster (like all visuals) invites multiple interpretations (Müller et al. 2009). As the visual elements of the poster in themselves do not

make it explicit that the "black sheep" represents a criminal foreigner, the symbol may indeed be interpreted to connote 'foreigners' generally. This racist reading becomes likely, for example, if the symbol is read together with the ambivalent title "For more security" (my translation from the German title *Für mehr Sicherheit*). The visual could also be interpreted even more broadly as 'those who do not fit into (our) family', which could allow for mobilization against different 'minority groups' or even against those in opposition to the policy proposals made. As will be shown, the extremist NPD did in fact translate and use the ambivalent black sheep symbol to create a more extremist and openly racist poster text.

In fact, in 2016 the SVP itself re-used the racist visual design to create a more radical and novel version of the original black sheep poster radicalizing its rally cry to deport 'criminal foreigners'. Using the same symbolic and graphic design as the original 2007 version seen in Illustration 1, the 2016 version has a clearly radicalized battle cry: "Endlich Sicherheit schaffen", or "Creating security, finally", or "*Let's finally create security* (my translation from the German original title). By adding the notion "finally" to the title, the text suggests urgency and the intention of imposing restrictive legal measures to expel "criminal foreigners." At the level of racist *contexts*, the text's focus on finality may also be read as an implicit allusion to historic national socialist jargon on the "final solution" and the Holocaust (cf. Richardson and Wodak 2009).

The Italian LN used the black sheep visual created by the SVP to benefit its own political agenda, translating its content into a different national, linguistic, and political context. As a separatist right wing party in northern Italy, the LN has profited from the recent rise in right wing resentment and has attracted right wing and extremist sympathizers by demanding a halt to immigration by non-European immigrants to Northern Italy, particularly immigrants with a

Muslim or African regional background (Bar-On 2013). Following the original SVP black sheep campaign, the LN was a key actor in popularizing the SVP's poster in national television programs and local party rallies. Creating and promoting their own black sheep t-shirts, LN party leaders participated in highly visible TV shows. On TV and in interviews with journalists, they referenced the SVP's black sheep campaign and framed themselves and the SVP as the 'true' victims of immigration in Europe. As an example, following an official presentation at a press conference in Rome of the LN's black sheep poster inspired by the SVP, a prominent LN leader, Roberto Castelli, asserted to journalists that the LN's poster had no racist content (Tio.ch/20 Minuti 2007). In conjunction with the official presentation, the right-wing separatist party journal "Padana" printed the poster shown in Illustration 3.

(Illustration 3 about here: Black sheep poster designed by the Italian Lega Nord)

The LN poster replaces the Swiss flag and its red cross with the symbol of the wheel on a green background, which identifies the northern Italian regional focus of its own party. LN activists thus combine their parochial and specific symbols with universalist "black sheep" stereotyping of immigrants, foreigners, and minorities.

At the level of linguistic translation and political recontextualization, the LN poster supports an article by party president Umberto Bossi, written in Italian in the party journal and focusing on the urge to toughen national anti-immigration policies. The symbolic action on the LN poster is framed as "Security Lessons from the North," which leaves somewhat ambiguous who exactly is the author of these security lessons, and what is meant by the black sheep (Doerr forthcoming). This relatively vague and ambiguous linguistic translation of the black sheep poster allowed LN –

just as the original had allowed the SVP - to address a broad spectrum of socially and geographically diverse supporters and mobilize the general perception of non-European immigrants as criminals (Bar-On 2013). The poster text also appeals to the discourse of the homeland, entitled "Security at home" (*Italian*: *Sicuri a casa nostra*). Moreover, "lessons from the North" may stand for both the SVP in the geographic North of Switzerland, and the northern regional separatist party identity of the LN.

To contextualize the poster, it is interesting to understand how LN party members verbally translated the poster with reference to Italian proverbs and colloquial language use of the black sheep metaphor in religious and popular culture. LN politician Roberto Castelli, who was Minister of Justice under Berlusconi, defended the poster against critical journalists by arguing it was not aimed at recreating racism but rather had been "uniquely inspired by an Italian traditional use of the 'black sheep metaphor according to which a 'black sheep' refers to "those who leave the flock" (20 Minuti).[2] Castelli was refering to a colloquial Italian usage of the notion of 'black sheep' (*Italian*: "pecora nera che traligna il gregge") with multiple interpretations. A black sheep in Italian can be interpreted to refer to children who disappoint their parents as well as to individuals who are 'different' from the 'norm', such as homosexuals. Within the context of historical agricultural usage in Italy, black sheep, even today, connote inferior animals for which Italian farmers and shepherds receive less money on the market - the coat of a white sheep is easier to dye.[3] LN leaders not only denied the racist message of the image but also the multiple historical racist meanings and intertextual associations of the 'black sheep' metaphor within

[2] Translation from Italian by the author.
[3] I am grateful to the suggestions and comments provided by Maria Manera and Valentina Paradiso regarding this tradition.

Italian popular culture, as well as the party's broad media strategy to publicize the poster within the context of its anti-immigrant politics (cf. Richardson and Wodak 2009).

Operating within both national and trans-national contexts, members and sympathizers of the German neo-Nazi party NPD carried out the most extremist and transnationally-oriented translation of the SVP poster. Different regional NPD parties in Eastern and Western Germany reproduced the SVP poster in their own local electoral campaigns. In blogs and webpages such as the Swiss German "RainbowNetBlog Schweiz", neo-Nazi NPD sympathizers combined each other's posters in a collage and constructed their own transnational vision of an association between populist right wing and extremist groups at the European level (see Illustration 4).

(Illustration 4 about here: Visual from "RainbowNetBlog Schweiz")

From an NPD sympathizer's perspective, the poster in Illustration 4 constructs a radical symbolic alliance among populist anti-immigrant parties in Switzerland and Italy, the German extremist NPD, and neo-fascist NPD sympathizers.

At the level of visual content, the NPD poster repeats and combines the messages of all previous right-wing posters inspired by the SVP. While retaining the Swiss flag as a nationalist background motif, this poster design appropriates it for the bloggers' own extreme ideology and radicalizes the underlying racist message and content of the SVP's political message, without the necessary approval of the SVP. The illustration keeps most visual elements of the original poster while transposing its meaning from a national to a transnational right-wing message. The symbolic "white sheep" in this simplistic poster are given names such as "SVP," "Lega Nord,"

and “NPD,” thus losing all ambiguity. Through the process of multiple rounds of translation in online public venues created by radical sympathizers, the SVP’s populist rhetoric is being replaced by an extreme racist visual rhetoric that accentuates and increases the binary narrative of threat by multiplying the number of “black sheep.”

The NPD’s translation is carried out most explicitly at the level of the new poster title: The NPD German language poster title “Sippenhaft Dank SVP” (*English*: Family punishment due to the SVP) alludes ambiguously to the NPD’s neo-Nazi ideology while connecting it to the most controversial claim of the SVP: to deport not only criminal immigrants but also, in the case of criminal minors, the immigrant's entire family. This title associates the SVP’s present policy proposal in Switzerland with the German history of national socialist practices of family punishment (“Sippenhaft”) used towards political opponents and Jews (Doerr forthcoming). In the perspective of DHA, it is a good example to illustrate how extreme right-wing parties combine multiple layers of *text* and *context* within one poster to construct “political imaginaries” representing a trans-national identity narrative suiting their own ideology within the history of fascism in Europe (Wodak, 2013: 26). The new title makes a national-socialist practice the shared core of an imaginary alliance among anti-immigrant organizations in different countries. However, the NPD bloggers’ solidarity expression remained one-sided: Neither the SVP nor the LN officially cross-referenced any of the NPD’s posters or online blogs.

The case of the SVP poster translation illustrates how different populist and extremist right-wing political parties and grassroots activists combined several visual and text-based processes to translate the black sheep poster in reference to their own ideologies and strategic needs. The open

question is how left-libertarian social movements contest campaigns such as these and try to break racist stereotypes of immigrants.

EuroMayday: Creating Cosmopolitan Images of Citizenship and Immigration

In the present section I explore, in contrast to the SVP's anti-immigrant images, how the EuroMayday network constructed progressive visual images of immigrants in order to give credit to the participation of immigrants in many of its local groups across Europe. In contrast to the SVP campaign, the EuroMayday poster designers worked decentrally and constructed webpages and blogs that addressed specific, local Mayday groups in the cities of Italy, Germany, and other European countries (Doerr and Mattoni 2014). I will restrict my analysis to the posters of two of the largest local EuroMayday groups, in Milan and Berlin.

As a participant-observer and in interviews, I found that local EuroMayday activists in Italy and German virulently disagreed about European politics. Many Italian activists supported the idea of a European dimension on the issue of social precarity, while a number of German activists were more skeptical toward this idea (Doerr 2010). Despite this deep, ideological disagreement on European politics, a first relevant finding is that EuroMayday groups in both Germany and Italy *shared* a visual theme in posters and stickers that refer to EU immigration policies, and to immigrants, as positive forces for solidarity beyond the nation state. A good example of protesters' alternative images of EU citizenship and immigration is provided by a poster designed by EuroMayday Milan in 2008 (Illustration 2 on p. 5).

To put this design in context, it should be noted that posters displayed on the websites of local Mayday groups in Italy, Germany and other countries are widely different in style and content,

and that all were created and distributed by the activists themselves. One of the EuroMayday founders from Milan, herself a professional graphic designer, explains how she put together the poster after intense discussion within her group:

> I made this poster based on a photograph we took [in Milan]. The female figure is a migrant; the male figure is a precarious [worker]. This poster stresses migration as a topic, and the struggles for migrants in our own network, as also written in the text.[4]

In the above e-mail interview, this designer of the Mayday poster in Milan 2008 explains that the input of immigrants entering the *local* group in Milan led to a change in the visual self-presentation of their group (Illustration 2). In relation to how the couple is visually portrayed, the Italian text mentions immigrants first and precarious [workers] second, emphasizing the political relevance of immigrants within this protest event. Moreover, elements of text are combined with visual designs, with an English language slogan addressing the European dimension of protest (*Let's conspire and fight for the Other Europe*) as well as an Italian subheading addressing precarious workers and other immigrant workers participating in the protest parade. Listed in the subtle green hue at the left margin of the poster are all of the European protest cities involved in the EuroMayday campaign, while the red dot on the right side marks the place and time of the local protest. In iconographic terms, note the different colors produced in the poster in Illustration 2, symbolizing different ideological groups in the local Milan coalition of protestors. For example, according to Milan-based EuroMayday founders, pink stands for queerness as a new

[4] Interview with the EuroMayday designer, November 6, 2008, Milan.

radical subjectivity within the distinct context of Milan and beyond traditional left workers' mobilizations (Doerr 2010).

More evidence based on the interviews helps us to understand the connections between visual and verbal translation practices taking place in transnational groups and movements. The Milan EuroMayday group's pluralist composition, and its discussions about restrictive immigration laws by the Italian government inspired a "we-group" poster that symbolizes the joint struggle of undocumented and documented labor immigrants working with other long-term EuroMayday Milan activists. She says:

> Then we talked about the Bossi/Fini legislation against migrants, and new racism. What is politically very important is that the poster shows second generation migrants, who are part of our network […]. This poster does not show our foes, it shows us, our group."[5]

The interviewee argues that the deliberative process that inspired her group to produce the above poster, in discussing about restrictive immigration laws, gave birth to a new image of the group. Translating the meaning of the poster she created, the interviewee reconstructs the history of the EuroMayday collective in Milan as an extended "we" group in which immigrants become more central actors:

> At the beginning, EuroMayday was very much a network on precarity. In 2008 for the first time, migrants participated actively in the process of constructing the

[5] Interview with the EuroMayday designer, November 6, 2008, Milan.

> EuroMayday parade [in Milan] so we felt they should be protagonists with us on the poster.[6]

Like the Milanese example, all EuroMayday posters found online visualize immigration as an activity of everyday life within Europe's global cities and their peripheries. Note, however, the place-specific differences in poster style among local EuroMayday groups of the transnational micro-public space created by EuroMayday activists. A useful example with which to demonstrate this is a comparison of the Milan EuroMayday posters with those of the local Mayday parade in Berlin. Inspired by their Italian colleagues, Berlin-based EuroMayday members designed three posters showing a young cleaner, a young white androgynous figure crossing a border fence by cutting it, and an elderly man without stable residence fleeing from the police."[7] In other words, as in the Milanese poster, Berliners placed a figure of an immigrant at the center of their poster trilogy "work/migration/city." This choice was intentional. The border-crossing figure in the center provides a contrast to conventional media icons of undocumented immigrants (Falk 2010).

Despite these similarities, the visual content in posters in Berlin and Milan provide evidence of different place-specific political ideas and a selective sharing and translation of the EuroMayday posters in Milan which had initially inspired the Berlin group. As a participant, I observed that that immigrants present at Berlin Mayday meetings asked for a stronger inclusion of trans-European topics and sharing of contents with groups from other European cities but were turned down by German Mayday leaders, who wanted a stronger focus on Berlin-based political issues.[8]

[6] Interview with the EuroMayday designer, November 6, 2008, Milan.
[7] http://interkomm.so36.net/archiv/2006-05-01/2006-05-01-buendnis.php. [Accessed on 1.1.2010]
[8] Participant observation, Mayday Berlin preparatory meeting, May 2009, Berlin.

The decision not to refer to European topics is reflected, first and foremost, in the style of the poster designs. The posters by the Berlin group include the word "EuroMayday" but only in very small font.[9] In comparison, the Milan poster in Illustration 2 follows a European framing in its text and visual iconography.

Recall that in Milan, group-internal discussions led to a broad European framing of its parade and placed immigrants in the center of its visual design. On the other hand, Berlin Mayday designers, said when interviewed that they had refused to adopt distinct iconographic elements symbolizing the broader European dimension of EuroMayday, offered for sharing by the Milan group. Their stated motives for rejecting Milan's offer were a place-specific visual poster culture, and the rejection by local group leaders of a positive political reference to the concept of Europe.The creator of the Berlin Mayday poster trilogy explained his choice of visual designs within the specific context of Berlin:

> "I personally feel that Europe is not attractive as a topic for Mayday posters (in the specific context of Berlin). […] We try to design what we call 'social images': images that question existing social relationships, images that come to dance, that are able to 'swing' the relationship between the viewer and the image."[10]

The interview-based evidence shows how local group deliberation in Berlin led to the production of images perceived as "attractive" by place-specific group insiders such as the poster designers.

[9] A copy of the poster trilogy (Illustration 2) is archived online on the homepage of a group from Berlin: http://interkomm.so36.net/archiv/2006-05-01/2006-05-01-buendnis.php. [Accessed on 1.1.2010] [Accessed: October 1, 2009].

[10] Interview with a Berlin Mayday designer, February 2, 2010, Berlin.

In contrast to the reproduction of racist stereotypes in the case of the SVP, anti-racist translation in the case of EuroMayday activists carefully considered the *local* meaning of visual forms in order to construct socially inclusive images. Other interviewees noted that members of the Berlin group had discussed and agreed with their designers' view, which supported a decidedly local visual poster culture that distinguishes itself from images that work like commercial advertizements.[11] Moreover, only in Milan did immigrants directly influence the group discussion on the visual design of the posters that represented them in the EuroMayday campaign. While immigrants were visible participants in the Milan protest parades, their participation decreased during the Berlin Mayday parades. And yet, while right-wing mobilization elided the broader socioeconomic context affecting citizens in different European societies and nation states, the left-wing EuroMayday campaign created a cosmopolitan vision of solidarity connecting citizens and immigrants living in countries such as Italy and Germany with place specific national histories of fascist movements and political institutions.

Conclusion

My comparison shows that the figure of the immigrant is the symbolic core not only of institutionally endorsed right-wing anti-immigrant campaigns but also of non-institutional grassroots campaigns by left-wing activists constructing a trans-nationalist vision of cosmopolitan solidarity between immigrants and precarious activists in Europe. The figure of the immigrant denigrated as a stereotypic black sheep inspired by the Swiss SVP has been translated and appropriated by populist right-wing parties and radical extremists in Germany and Italy. The SVP's use of a professionally designed and racist "black sheep" motive that referred to no

[11] Interview with a Mayday organizers, April 4, 2009, interview with a Mayday participant, May 5, 2009, Berlin.

specific group allowed different right wing actors to translate and recontextualize the poster for their own purposes. Following the example of the LN and the NPD, the SVP also reused the design in a new context in 2016 to rally sentiment against a broader range of minorities including refugees.

This article has shown how transnational diffusion processes depend on a complex cultural process of translation that changes the political meanings of contentious images and protest (Chabot 2010). Right wing political actors translated the SVP's ambivalent racist visual motive making few adaptations; the far-right German NPD utilized an explicitly extremist jargon referencing historic fascist discourse. Reflecting a populist right wing strategy, the separatist LN in Italy followed the example of the SVP and used a *calculated ambivalence* (Wodak 2013); its leaders officially denied their use of implicitly racist symbolism and metaphor. By scapegoating immigrants as societies' shared internal foe, right-wing political activists succeed in mobilizing sympathetic audiences across Europe precisely by constructing a culturally homogeneous and stereotypical ethno-nationalist image of citizenship.

Compared to the right wing's restrictive notion of citizenship, left-wing campaigns like EuroMayday illustrate the potential of creating inclusive and diverse imaginaries of citizenship and immigration in Europe inspiring transnational networks of solidarity through connective action and alternative social media (Bennett and Segerberg; Mattoni 2012). Engaging in a reflective process of translation, EuroMayday activists living in Germany refrained from sharing some of their Italian colleagues' local progressive ideas and images of immigration. Compared to their colleagues in Milan, the local group members in Berlin had varying ideas about what makes a good visualization of cultural diversity and immigrants' participation and agency. This is

important as it highlights the challenges and limitations of progressive activists' attempts to translate cosmopolitan images of citizenship across different national and linguistic contexts, in contrast to the right wing's rapid and effective diffusion and contentious translation of denigrating images of minorities in multicultural transnational public spaces.

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Figures

Illustration 1: SVP campaign poster 2007[12]

[12] http://www.ithaca.edu/depts/i/Swiss_Peoples_Party,_Creating_Security,_2007/14381_photo.jpg

Illustration 2: Milan EuroMayday poster[13]

[13] Permission granted by the poster designer.

Illustration 3: Black sheep poster designed by the Italian Lega Nord

Illustration 4: Visual from “RainbowNetBlog Schweiz”