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# Collective suffixes and ad hoc categories: from Latin *-ālia* to Italian *-aglia*

<https://doi.org/10.1515/flih-2018-0008>

**Abstract:** The expression of ad hoc categories ranges from discourse-level to syntactic and morphological strategies. Considering derivation in particular, it has been observed that also collective suffixes can be used for the identification of context-dependent sets. The aim of this paper is to investigate the relation between collectives and ad hoc categories by focusing on the Italian suffix *-aglia* and by discussing its diachronic relation with the Latin neuter nouns ending in *-ālia*. The discussion concerning the notion of collective will take into account a recent proposal that distinguishes between collective nouns, aggregate nouns, and superordinates. As will be shown, aggregate nouns are of particular interest for interpreting some Latin *pluralia tantum* in *-ālia* that denote sets of heterogeneous entities with similar properties. The same possibility to derive aggregate nouns characterizes the suffix *-aglia* that, when attached to proper nouns, can also convey associative meanings, or denote categories including persons and situations that share the named exemplar as a common denominator. As the analysis will show, the development of these functions correlates with the mechanisms of (inter)subjectification.

**Keywords:** Italian, Latin, morphology, derivation, collective, ad hoc categories

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Old and new categories

In the last decades of the past century, extensive research in cognitive linguistics showed the inadequacy of the ‘classical’ view on categories as artificial and stable concepts. As is well known, prototype models anchor the processes of categorization to the natural, bodily and perceptive experience, even in its

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metaphorical extensions.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, grammatical categories are considered as the linguistic expression of shared experiential domains, and the structuring of their content is viewed as a reflection of universal cognitive paths.

However, an apparently simple category such as number encompasses functions that are independent from the coding of quantity and microsystems that bypass the detection of numerosity (Corbett 2000). Among them, the collective presents unresolved issues on both the metalinguistic level, where the label is as common as it is vague, and the cognitive-semantic level, where the recent debate focuses on the role of taxonomies and categorization of sets (Mihatsch 2000, 2007; Joosten 2010).

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the use of the collective for the identification and labeling of context-dependent sets by focusing on the Italian suffix *-aglia*, and by discussing its diachronic relation with the Latin neuter nouns ending in *-ālia*.

The article is divided into four sections. This section illustrates the discourse-based approach to categorization and the main properties of ad hoc categories, along with the linguistic strategies used for their expression. In Section 2, the issues concerning the notion of collective are discussed by making reference to a recent proposal advanced by Joosten (2010), who distinguishes between collectives *sensu stricto*, aggregate nouns, and superordinates. As will be shown, the sub-category of aggregate nouns, which associates items with similar properties or functions, is of particular interest for the interpretation of some Latin *pluralia tantum* denoting sets of diverse elements. In Section 3, it will be argued that the suffix *-aglia* inherits from its Latin antecedent *-ālia* the possibility of deriving aggregate nouns, which provide economical labels for groups of animate and inanimate entities. Moreover, when the suffix attaches to proper nouns, the derivatives can convey associative meanings, or label categories including persons and situations that share the named exemplar as a common denominator. Finally, Section 4 offers some conclusive remarks on how collectives grammaticalize new functions and contribute to ad hoc categorization.

## 1.2 Categories in discourse

In the cognitive approach to categorization, which focuses on the psychological foundations and shared representations of universal categories, communication is seen as a process of assembling pre-existing structures. In contrast, the discursive approach treats talk and texts not as the representation and the

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<sup>1</sup> Among the many works on Prototype Theory, we mention for brevity only Lakoff (1987), whose subtitle is, significantly, *What categories reveal about the mind*.

proof of pre-established knowledge, but mainly as forms of social interaction. Since “categorization is *something we do*, in talk, in order to accomplish social actions” (Edwards 1991: 517), resources and linguistic strategies are not predetermined by the processes whereby speakers perceive and organize reality, but are constantly modeled according to discourse functions and contextual goals. According to this dynamic view, categories are thus seen as ‘flexible’ not only due to their prototypical, radial, and fuzzy structure, but also in the dimension of indexicality and in situational values.

More recently, the discursive and communicative point of view on categorization has found new perspectives in research on lexical pragmatics and within Relevance Theory (Wilson and Carston 2007), which emphasizes the constant adaptation between lexicon, semantic representations, and contextual interpretations of concepts. In addition, the progress of experimental studies in cognitive psychology strongly supports the existence and the relevance of categories that are “inherently variable, and created on-line as and when needed” (Croft and Cruse 2004: 92).

According to Barsalou (1983: 211), for instance, “the use of highly specialized and unusual sets of items pervades everyday living”. In fact, in their ordinary conversations speakers employ common and stable categories such as ‘furniture’ or ‘fruit’, along with fluid and temporary conceptual associations such as ‘things to take on a picnic’. Ad hoc categories, which typically meet specific and contingent communicative goals, are extemporaneously built in discourse, are usually conveyed by complex linguistic expressions *per se* not destined to memorization, and presuppose unstable correlations. Thus, when considering the instance ‘apple’, the relation with the hyperonym ‘fruit’ triggers automatic and context-independent associations, whereas the relation with ‘things to take on a picnic’ activates only in contexts that motivate the use of the category (Barsalou 1983: 223–224).

Like common categories, ad hoc categories presuppose inferential reasoning based on similarity and possess graded structures, but they also have a strong pragmatic component, due to the central role of context, which defines the purposes for which these categories are built, their prototypical core, as well as their boundaries.

The identification of ad hoc categories lies at the intersubjective discourse level and crucially depends on the means that the speakers employ for their expression. The cross-linguistic data illustrated by Mauri (2017) show that the cognitive and communicative processes underlying this type of categorization are encoded by mobilizing diverse linguistic devices from various linguistic domains and different levels. These include discursive, syntactic and also morphological strategies, which are of particular interest for the purpose of this paper.

### 1.3 The encoding of *ad hoc* categories

Among the more transparent and analytic constructions, the so-called *general extenders* (e.g. Latin *et cetera*, English *and stuff like that*, Italian *e cose così*) are discourse-level strategies that typically broaden the reference of a phrase and suggest a more vague and extended category according to contextually relevant associations. In a similar vein, also *non-exhaustive connectives* can combine with verbs and nouns (e.g. the Japanese particles *-tari* and *-ya*) to denote non-finite lists of events and things encompassing the mentioned exemplar(s) and other items whose inclusion is left to the interlocutor (Mauri and Sansò, this volume).

Among the strategies working at the morphological level we find inflectional and derivational constructions. Beside canonical plurals, languages may have special types called *associative plurals* (e.g. the Hungarian plurals in *-ék*, the Japanese particle *-tachi*), which “consist of a noun X typically of human reference, usually a person’s name or a kin term and some other material, most often an affix, a clitic, or a word” (Daniel and Moravcsik 2013).<sup>2</sup> Their meaning is ‘X and other persons associated with X’ and, in spite of a restricted intralinguistic use, they show a wide cross-linguistic diffusion.

Besides the presence of a human focal referent, associative plurals are characterized by referential heterogeneity: this feature distinguishes them from additive plurals and ties them to *simulative plurals*, which are a subtype of associative and denote a class of objects including the reference and a group of one or more entities with similar features.<sup>3</sup> In many languages these meanings are expressed through constructions where a word is followed by an echo twin (e.g. Telugu *puli gili* ‘tigers and the like’, Hindi *roti voti*, ‘bread and baked goods’, Turkish *kitap mitap* ‘books and the like’). Being restricted to colloquial and expressive language, these formations have often been neglected in traditional

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<sup>2</sup> Due to its relatedness to additive meanings, associativity may be conveyed via the same morphological devices that provide number inflection (Corbett 2000: 83–87 and 101–110). In Sanskrit, for instance, the so-called ‘elliptical dual’ was used in the forms *Mitrá* ‘the deity Mitra and his companion Varuṇa’, *Kṛṣṇau* ‘Krishna and Arjuna’, *pitárau* and *mātárau* both meaning ‘father and mother’. Also in Ancient Greek the Homeric dual *Aἴαντε* denotes Ajax the Greater and his brother Teucer, while *Δευκαλιωνες* (Theoc. *Id.* 15, 141) refers to Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha. In Latin, which has lost the dual, the canonical plural lends itself to similar usages in *Castores* ‘the semi-god Castor and his twin Pollux’, *Cereres* ‘the goddess Ceres and her daughter Proserpina’ (Kühner and Holzweissig 1912: 72), and also *Romuli* ‘Romulus and Remus’ (Plin. *Nat.* 34, 23; Tert. *de cor.* 12). Similarly, in Old Icelandic the plurals *fedgar* and *mæðgur* mean respectively ‘the father and his son’ and ‘the mother and her daughter’.

<sup>3</sup> In Sanskrit the word for ‘mortar’ has the elliptical dual *aulūkhalau* ‘mortar and pestle’, while *kukkuṭau* means ‘rooster and hen’. For similar forms Kiparsky (2010) has proposed the label ‘associative duals’.

grammars; nonetheless, discussing Turkish *m*-doublets like *dergi mergi* ‘journals, periodicals, magazines, and so on’, Lewis (1967: 237) emphasizes that it is useless to seek words like *mergi* in the dictionary because “they are manufactured *ad hoc*”.<sup>4</sup>

Evidently, the reference to a group of entities relates associative and simulative plurals to collectives that, however, are often described as referentially homogeneous (Benninger 2001: 24). Nonetheless, considering the expression of ad hoc categories by means of derivational affixes, it has been observed that also collective suffixes can be employed for this purpose. Like reduplication and echo-words, derivational constructions take only one exemplar as the starting point for the identification of context-dependent sets. Also, since derivation pertains to the processes of word formation, the typical feature of these constructions is the creation of extemporaneous labels for unusual sets, whose meanings and contents are defined through associative reasoning and adapted in discourse.

In Italian, for instance, the suffix *-ame*, which can be found in lexicalized forms like *fogliame* ‘foliage’, *vasellame* ‘tableware’, etc., is also used to identify sets of entities and concepts correlated to human exemplars like *bambiname* ‘children and so on’ and, in colloquial language, is nowadays attached even to proper nouns, to create temporary labels and neologisms like *berlusconame* ‘Berlusconi & co.’ (Mauri 2017). These examples will be thoroughly discussed in Section 3, where it will be shown that also the suffix *-aglia* manifests similar prerogatives.

Now, in order to understand the synchronic and diachronic relations between ad hoc categorization and the collective, it is first necessary to examine the definition and contents of this controversial label, whose uses in the literature “are so different that the term has become almost useless” (Corbett 2000: 117).

## 2 Collective nouns in latin

### 2.1 (Re)defining the collective

As Mihatsch (2000: 244) points out “[l]e terme collectif est lui-même un collectif qui regroupe des phénomènes très variés” [the term collective is itself a collective that groups together very diverse phenomena], and indeed, the presence of

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<sup>4</sup> The pattern of *m*-reduplication (or *mühleme*) is highly productive; the most frequent bases are nouns, but it can also apply to adjectives, adverbs and verbs, with the exception of *m*-initial words (Wiese and Polat 2016: 247).

multiple features is reflected in the various definitions proposed for collective nouns.

The Anglo-Saxon tradition, on the one hand, focuses on the syntactic feature of variable concord, defining collectives as nouns that in the singular may combine with both singular and plural verbs and pronouns, as in: *The committee has met and it has rejected the proposal/The committee have met and they have rejected the proposal* (Quirk et al. 1985: 316). Since inanimate nouns do not display this feature, collectives are generally considered to be animate (but see the observations in Jespersen 1924: 195).

On the other hand, due to the absence of variable (verbal) concord in German, Dutch and French (e.g. *Le comité a/\*ont rejeté la proposition*), definitions based on the semantic features of collectives prevail in the ‘continental’ tradition. For Joosten (2010: 33), however, broad notions such as “nouns lexically referring to a (denotational) multiplicity that – in some way or the other – is conceptualised as a unity” yield a metalinguistic category that is semantically and syntactically too disparate.

In order to bring terminological clarity in this domain, Joosten proposes to distinguish between collective nouns *stricto sensu* (e.g. *club, team, archipelago*), aggregate nouns (e.g. *lingerie, jewelry, furniture*), and superordinate nouns (e.g. *vehicle, animal, fruit*). This distinction is based on five pairs of criteria: numeral vs. transnumeral, contiguity vs. similarity, ‘part of’ vs. ‘kind of’, non-additive vs. additive, and set profiling vs. entity abstraction.

The first couple focuses on the difference between collective nouns, which display singular-plural distinction, and aggregate nouns, which are morphosyntactically transnumeral (i.e. neither singular nor plural). The French term *lingerie* ‘women’s underwear’, for instance, lacks a plural form (*\*lingeries*) and does not combine with singular determiners or cardinal numerals (*\*une lingerie, \*deux lingeries*), but allows partitive articles and relative quantifiers (*de la lingerie, beaucoup de lingerie*) (Joosten 2010: 36–38).

According to the second criterion, collective nouns are ‘collections’ of homogeneous entities connected by external bonds of contiguity (spatial, temporal, social, co-operative, or functional), while superordinate nouns are ‘classes’ of diverse elements joined by internal bonds of similarity (mostly functional). In this respect, aggregate nouns are poised in an intermediate position between collective and superordinate nouns, because they often encode ‘associations’ of heterogeneous entities united by relations that are mainly of similarity, and optionally also of contiguity (Joosten 2010: 38–39).

Discussing the third argument, Joosten points out that the entities included in a collective are a ‘part of’ (an island is part of an *archipelago*),

while those included in a superordinate class are a ‘kind of’ (a car is a kind of *vehicle*). In this case as well, aggregate nouns are halfway, because their entities are at the same time members and specimens of the category: a chair is both part of and also an example of *furniture* (Joosten 2010: 40).

Moreover, due to the external relations of contiguity, collectives are non-additive in the sense that they are usually more than just the sum of their entities, while aggregate nouns are additive due to the internal property that associates similar entities; this also explains why the properties of an aggregate usually apply to individual entities (*old furniture* entails old tables, sofas, etc.), but those of a collection are not necessarily inherited by the whole (*small herd* does not entail a sum of small animals) (Joosten 2010: 42).

Finally, the last argument clarifies the different functions in discourse; collective nouns, due to the strong conceptual focus on the unifying feature of contiguity, put the unity in foreground and push the members to the conceptual background, whereas aggregate nouns deliberately abstract from the specific entities to provide economical labels that, according to the context, may elicit vague or expressive readings. Therefore, they

are used in order not to have to name the individual entities making up the whole. People use nouns such as [...] *bétail* [‘livestock’] because the exact identity of the entities (cows? sheep? goats?) is not immediately relevant in the context (Joosten 2010: 43).

The proposal synthesized here, even if it does not solve all the problematic cases, draws attention to a sub-category of nouns that, in its reference to associative processes, relations of similarity, abstraction of entities, and categorization modulated in the context, can shed light on the relation between collectives and ad hoc categories. In the following, we will show that aggregate nouns are of particular interest for interpreting some Latin *pluralia tantum* and explaining the development of the derivational strategies by which Italian encodes sets and categories *à la* Barsalou.

## 2.2 The latin nouns in *-ālia*

The Latin language effectively illustrates “l’hétérogénéité sémantique et morphologique des noms que l’on dit, habituellement, collectifs” (Benninger 2001: 22, n. 9) [the semantic and morphological heterogeneity of the nouns that are usually called collectives]; here we find in fact three main types of nouns with different features and behaviors.

In general, ‘true’ collectives like *familia* ‘family’ and *exercitus* ‘army’ denote ‘collections’ of individuals conceptualized as a unity by virtue of contiguity; they are homogeneous, cumulative, countable, and may allow variable agreement.<sup>5</sup>

The *singularia tantum*, in addition to nouns of unique entities like *caelum* ‘sky’ and *terra* ‘earth’, and mass-nouns like *aqua* ‘water’ and *aurum* ‘gold’, include also terms designating ‘associations’ of diverse entities like *praeda* ‘booty’ and *supellex* ‘furnishings’; these do not combine with cardinal numerals, but accept relative quantifiers: *magna praeda* ‘big booty’, *multa supellex* ‘many furnishings’.

The *pluralia tantum* are nouns like *arma* ‘weapons’ and *castra* ‘military camp’, which lack a singular counterpart but, at the same time, do not refer to a plurality; some of them label objects composed of parts that make up a unit, such as *fores* ‘the two leaves of a door’ and *scalae* ‘stairs’.<sup>6</sup> Usually they do not combine with cardinal numerals, but accept distributives: *bina castra* ‘two encampments’. Nonetheless, some lexical plurals like *caelites* ‘the inhabitants of heaven, the gods’, *maiores* ‘ancestors’, *liberi* ‘children’, as the collectives, designate groups of individuals and are countable.<sup>7</sup>

Among the *pluralia tantum*, Latin grammars mention also the names of festivals like *Saturnalia* and *Bacchanalia* (Kühner and Stegmann 1914: 516), that is, substantivized neuter plurals of adjectives derived in *-lis*, which have been widely investigated by Leumann (1917). The nouns ending in *-ālia* form an interesting microsystem that deserves a detailed examination.

The Latin suffix *-li-* can derive adjectives from all kind of bases; combined with verbal roots it is usually preceded by a short vowel (e.g. *habilis* ‘manageable, suitable, fit’, *utilis* ‘useful’), combined with nominal and adjectival roots it is usually preceded by a long vowel (e.g. *fidēlis* ‘trustworthy, faithful’, *erīlis* ‘of the master of a family’, *curūlis* ‘pertaining to a chariot’, etc.). The form *-ālis* develops by resegmentation of the derivatives from stems ending in *-ā* (e.g. *anim-ā-li-s* but also *carn-ālis* from *carō*, *carnis* ‘meat’), and if the stem contains an */l/*, the allomorph *-āris* shows up (e.g. *militāris* ‘military’, *solāris* ‘solar’). According to the statistics provided by Kircher-Durand (1991), *-ālis* is very productive; it can follow common nouns of person (e.g. *regalis* ‘kingly, royal’, *matronalis* ‘of a married woman’, *famularis* ‘of a servant’), and also proper nouns to qualify

5 For example: *civitati* [community.DAT.SG] *persuasit, ut de finibus suis cum omnibus copiis exirent* [exit.SBJV.IPFV.3PL] ‘[Orgetorix] persuaded the community to march out of their territories with all the troops’ (Caes. *Gall.* 1, 2, 1).

6 For similar cases in English, Quirk et al. (1985: 300) use the term ‘summation plurals’.

7 For example: *Q. Metellus Macedonicus, cum sex liberos relinqueret, XI nepotes reliquit* ‘Quintus Metellus Macedonicus, having left six children, left eleven grandchildren’ (Plin. *Nat.* 7, 59).

temples, priests and celebrations (e.g. *flamen Dialis* ‘priest of Jupiter’, *virgo Vestalis* ‘priestess of Vesta’, *ludi Apollinares* ‘games in honor of Apollo’).

These derivatives show evident parallels with genitive constructions (Leumann 1917: 28) because the suffix describes relations of possession or generic reference with the entity denoted by the base (Kircher-Durand 1991: 115–116). In some forms, which are frequently used as nouns in the neuter plural form, the ending *-ālia* specializes in the meaning: ‘things related to X’, like *Saturnalia* ‘celebrations in honor of Saturn’.

Among the substantivized neuters, Leumann (1917: 28) lists a huge number of festivals related to various gods: *Angeronalia*, *Carmentalia*, *Cerealia*, *Compitalia*, *Consualia*, *Faunalia*, *Floralia*, *Furinalia*, *Laralia*, *Larentalia*, *Liberalia*, *Lupercalia*, *Matralia*, *Meditrinalia*, *Minervalia*, *Neptunalia*, *Opalia*, *Portunalia*, *Quirinalia*, *Robigalia*, *Saturnalia*, *Terminalia*, *Veneralia*, *Vertumnalia*, *Vestalia*, *Volturnalia*, *Vulcanalia*. To these he adds a series of more recent (or problematic) formations: *Agonalia*, *Bacchanalia*, *Feralia*, *Fetalia*, *Fontinalia*, *Fornacalia*, *Fugalia*, *Nominalia*, *Nudipedalia*, *Paganalia*, *Palilia*, *Parentalia*, *Rosalia*, *Sigillaria*, *Sponsalia*, *Vinalia*.<sup>8</sup>

For the purpose of this investigation, it is interesting to note that the ‘things’ associated with each divinity are indeed diverse and articulated practices of both sacred and profane nature, which may include sacrifices, solemn rituals and processions, public and private banquets, but also games and competitions, theatrical plays and markets, as well as licentious feasts. In other words, these forms in *-ālia* are aggregate nouns, i.e. economical labels whereby speakers avoid a detailed list of contents, which are tailored according to the implicit and shared knowledge about the attributes of each god or entity.

These cases where the named member denotes a non-human animate or inanimate referent (e.g. ‘wine’ for *Vinalia*), like associative and similitive plurals, take only one exemplar as the starting point to build a set (see Section 1.3). However, they differ from associative constructions, which build groups comprising X and one or more distinct referents, because the focus is not on an intrinsic contiguity/similarity with X, but rather on the habitual co-occurrence within the scheme ‘celebrating X’. Thus the ending *-ālia* develops set marking functions suggesting that ‘there is more’, and the mentioned exemplar functions as a pointer in order to abstract a category of (unstated but understood) entities and activities that the speaker perceives as salient enough to require a specific word to name it.

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<sup>8</sup> The noun *Bacchanalia*, for instance, departs morphologically from the general model and presents some etymological issues because the god’s name is *Bacchus*. According to Robin (1979) the form could derive from *Bacchanal*, which seems a loanword from Etruscan.

### 2.3 Aggregate nouns in latin

Interestingly, in addition to the names of festivities Leumann signals other neuters in *-ālia* that designate sets of diverse entities with similar properties or functions, like *accubitalia* ‘coverings and pillows spread over the dining-couches’ (from *accubitum* ‘large couch’), *fulcralia* ‘ornaments for beds’ (from *fulcrum* ‘foot of a couch’), and *mortualia* ‘mourning weeds or funeral songs’ (from *mortuus* ‘dead person’). In the last case, the typical polysemy of substantivized adjectives is resolved in the light of an implied term that can be inferred in the discourse; in fact the dictionaries add “sc. *vestimenta*” (i.e. ‘clothes’) in reference to the first meaning (cf. Naev. *ap. Non.* 548, 28), and “sc. *carmina*” (i.e. ‘chants’) for the second meaning (cf. Plaut. *As.* 4, 1, 63).<sup>9</sup>

According to Kircher-Durand (1991), the derivatives from verbs, like *utensilia* ‘utensils, necessities’ (from *ūtor* ‘use’), can help to clarify the semantic features that characterize the majority of the forms in *-lis*, that is, non-actualization and subjectivity.<sup>10</sup> In other words, ‘what can be used’ is a contextually defined category of items sharing functions and properties that pertain to a virtual sphere and depend on the speaker’s assessment.

This subjective dimension, for instance, concerns the synonyms *pulchralia* and *bellaria* (from the adjectives *pulcher* and *bellus* ‘pretty, beautiful’); the ‘beautiful things’ denote a set that is defined in relation to the banquet and, as we learn from Gellius (13, 11), includes *omne mensae secundae genus*, i.e. all that is suitable for the dessert: fresh and dried fruit, various sweets and, of course, wines (cf. Germ. *Delikatessen*).<sup>11</sup>

Also the content of categories labeled as *nugalia* or *minutalia* (respectively from the noun *nugae* ‘trifles, nonsense’ and the adjective *minūtus* ‘small, insignificant’) is likewise variable and adapted to the context; the ‘small, worthless things’ can be abstract notions, as in example (1)<sup>12</sup>:

- 1) *scholica quaedam nugalia*  
 ‘some scholastic pedantries’  
 (Gell. 4, 1)

<sup>9</sup> See Lewis and Short (1879) under the entry *mortualia*.

<sup>10</sup> These features are more evident in the deverbial forms of the type in *-bilis* like *mirabilis* ‘to be wondered at, admirable’ and *cognoscibilis* ‘recognizable, discernible’.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the *Noctes Atticae* of Gellius, see also the *Satumalia* of Macrobius (2, 8 and 3, 19). The Roman banquet encompassed the *mensa epulorum*, where people used to eat, and the *mensa poculorum* (or *secunda*), where they mainly used to drink.

<sup>12</sup> The examples in the text do not have glosses, which are not strictly relevant for a discussion centered on the interpretation of the derived forms.

Or they can be concrete entities, as in (2) and (3), where it is interesting to note that the forms occur in lists and that Tertullian adds the general extender *hoc genere* ‘of this kind’:

- 2) *omnia foras parata sunt: aqua, lasani et cetera minutalia*  
‘everything is prepared outside: water, chamber pots, and other toiletries’  
(Petron. 47, 5)
- 3) *culices, formicas, tineas et hoc genere minutalia*  
‘mosquitoes, ants, worms, and other small animals like that’  
(Tert. *anim.* 32)

At the opposite pole we find the term *magnalia* (a calque from Gr. μεγαλεῖα); in late and ecclesiastical Latin, the ‘great, wonderful things’ can be the divine works (Tert. *ad uxor.* 2, 7), or the miracles mentioned in (4):

- 4) *dat dextram mancus, loquitur magnalia mutus*  
‘the maimed man gives the right hand, the mute makes wonderful speeches’  
(Tert. *adv. marc.* 1, 54)

The use in Dante’s *De vulgari eloquentia* confirms the longevity of the term; moreover, in (5) *videlicet* ‘namely, that is to say’ introduces an explanation and establishes a common ground for the interpretation of *magnalia*, thus suggesting that subjectivity, ‘understood as relationship to the speaker and to speaker’s beliefs and attitudes’ (Traugott 2010: 30), is complemented by intersubjectivity, understood as ‘orientation toward the addressee in general’ (Narrog 2017: 36):

- 5) *haec tria, salus videlicet, venus et virtus, apparent esse illa magnalia quae sint maxime pertractanda*  
‘these three things, that is, salvation, beauty, and virtue, appear to be those *magnalia* which must be most thoroughly discussed’  
(Dante, VE 2, 2, 8)

Lastly, among the formations in *-ālia*, the more transparent *ramalia* (from *ramus* ‘branch’, cf. *ramaliaque arida* ‘dried brushwood’ in Ovid. *Met.* 8, 644) leads us directly to the *alba pratalia* ‘white fields’ (from *pratium* ‘meadow’) of the *Indovinello veronese*, and then to the Italian nouns

in *-aglia*.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the Latin ending becomes opaque as in *battaglia* ‘battle’ (from *battualia* ‘exercises of soldiers and gladiators’), but in most cases its functions are preserved and even enriched through the increase of subjectification.

## 3 Collective nouns in Italian

### 3.1 The suffix *-aglia*

In Italian, as in other Romance languages, the derivation of collective nouns employs a number of different suffixes (Grossmann 2004: 244). However, only for a few of them is the formation of collectives the primary function, and very few are also synchronically productive, such as *-ame*, *-ume*, and, of course, *-aglia*, by which the Latin nouns inflected for neuter plural are reinterpreted and integrated into the feminine singular (e.g. Lat. *ramalia* > It. *la ramaglia*).

In the majority of handbooks and dictionaries, *-aglia* is classified among the pejorative suffixes, and this feature is explained with the claim that the collective is perceived as “personalizzante” [depersonalizing], especially in the case of formations designating groups or classes of individuals (Grossmann 2004: 245).

To confirm this assumption, Grossmann lists three series of forms:

- a) derivatives from nominal (or nominalized) lexical roots denoting human referents.

The examples are: *cialtronaglia* ‘bunch of slobs’, *frataglia* ‘bunch of monks’, *furfantaglia* ‘bunch of scoundrels’, *poveraglia* ‘mass of beggars’, *pretaglia* ‘bunch of priests’, *ragazzaglia* ‘rude and noisy youngsters’, *ribaldaglia* ‘bunch of villains’, *sbirraglia* ‘bunch of cops’, *soldataglia* ‘undisciplined troops’.

- b) derivatives where the suffix reinforces the derogatory sense of collective nouns that are already negatively connoted.

The examples are: *ciurmaglia* ‘mob, rabble’, *gentaglia* ‘mob, riff-raff’, *plebaglia* ‘hoi polloi, rabble’, *teppaglia* ‘hooligans, troublemakers’, *truppaglia* ‘undisciplined troops, militants’. To these we can also add *canaglia* ‘riff-

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<sup>13</sup> The *Veronese Riddle* is a short text written in the eighth or early ninth century on the margin of a parchment, probably by a Christian monk from Verona, in northern Italy; discovered in 1924, it is one of the oldest documents in Italian.

raff' (from *cani* 'dogs'), and *pecoraglia* 'silly and manipulable crowd' (from the metaphorical meaning of *pecora* 'sheep').

c) derivatives from nominal stems denoting inanimate referents.

The examples are: *boscaglia* 'brushwood, boscaje', *granaglia* 'cereals, grain mill products', *ferraglia* 'scrap metal', *minutaglia* 'bits and pieces', *nuvolaglia* 'mass of scattered clouds', *pietraglia* 'loose aggregation of stones, gravel', *ramaglia* 'tangle of twigs and small branches', *siepaglia* 'thick, overgrown hedge', *sterpaglia* 'tangle of bush'. To these we can add *muraglia*, which means 'great wall, barrier', and maybe *accozzaglia* 'medley'.<sup>14</sup>

At a closer examination, however, the meanings of the nouns in group a) do not seem to differ from those of the forms in group b); in fact, lexical bases like *cialtrone* 'slob', *furfante* 'villain', *ribaldo* 'rogue', or *sbirro* 'cop' have a negative connotation from the outset, in the same way as the collective bases of the second group like *ciurma* 'galley slaves, crowd', *plebe* 'plebeians', or *teppa* 'mob'. In other cases, pejorative values emerge in the discourse, as with *frati* and *preti*, which can be used to denote sanctimonious and corrupt clergymen, or in the case of *gente* 'people', whose negative qualities can be implied in the context, as in *la perduta gente* 'the lost souls, the damned' in Dante's *Inferno* (III, 3).

In addition, and contrary to the claim that "I derivati da basi con il tratto '-animato' sono anche essi, in genere, connotati negativamente" [derivatives from bases with the feature '-animate' as a rule have a negative connotation as well] (Grossmann 2004: 247), the derivational strategy with *-aglia* seems neutral when applied to inanimate entities. As a matter of fact, the examples in group c) simply describe sets of inanimate entities that, at most, are scattered and messy, but definitely not despicable.

As a first approximation, we might then say that the process of word-formation is not pejorative, and that the alleged deprecatory value of the suffix merely reflects the preference for lexical roots that already have, or assume expressive meanings in the context. In Section 4, the discussion of the relation between these derivatives and the notion of 'disorder', as well as the 'pragmatics of pejoration' will help to clarify this issue.

<sup>14</sup> This form is usually explained as a derivation from the verb *accozzare* 'jumble', but it could also derive from the deverbal noun *accozzo*, with the same sense of 'medley, jumble'. In general, the formations at issue can display different degrees of lexicalization and morphological transparency.

### 3.2 The suffix *-ame*

According to Grossmann (2004: 247), the cases where different (collective) suffixes attach to the same lexical root are limited and scarcely significant; however, for the purpose of this paper, the overlaps between *-aglia* and *-ame* deserve special attention.<sup>15</sup>

First, the derivational strategy with *-ame*, like the one with *-aglia*, can be neutral when applied to roots denoting both animate and inanimate entities as, for instance, in *bestiame* ‘livestock’ and *pollame* ‘poultry’, or in *scatolame* ‘set of boxes of various types’ and *legname* ‘set of pieces of wood, timber’. Second, the couples of synonymic variants show that both suffixes can derive nouns depicting a disorderly medley, as in *accozzame/accozzaglia* and *ferrame/ferraglia*, or identify sets of heterogeneous entities that share some properties and behaviors with the named exemplar, as in *bambiname/bambinaglia* and *ragazzame/ragazzaglia*.<sup>16</sup> More precisely, *bambiname* and *bambinaglia* mean ‘children and so on’ and describe a category that includes both children and their typical activities: playing, laughing, screaming, generating disorder, etc. (Mauri 2017: 311). Likewise, *ragazzame* and *ragazzaglia* denote a group of youngsters along with their characteristic attitudes and behaviors.

These examples confirm that *-ame* and *-aglia* share the preference for lexical bases whose referents display properties and attitudes that are defined in the context and that, in turn, help to identify the contents of the category expressed through derivation. In fact, the productivity of the suffix *-ame*, which Poletto and Penello (2006) detect in youth language, finds exact matches in many neologisms in *-aglia*; for instance, in correspondence with *parentame*, *nipotame*, *genitorame*, and *professorame* (from *parenti* ‘kin’, *nipoti* ‘nephews/nieces/grandchildren’, *genitori* ‘parents’, and *professori* ‘teachers’, respectively), on the web we encounter *parentaglia*, *nipotaglia*, *genitoraglia*, and *professoraglia*. To be precise, however, *professorame* and *professoraglia* are attested since the nineteenth century, while more recent creations are synonymic couples such as *marocchiname/marocchinaglia* and *zingarame/zingaraglia* (from *marocchini* ‘Moroccans’ or people from North Africa in general, and *zingari* ‘Gypsies’, respectively).

<sup>15</sup> The suffix *-ame* comes from the Latin ending *-āmen*, which in origin derives event nouns from verbs of the first conjugation (e.g. *certāmen* ‘conflict, dispute’ from *certāre* ‘fight’).

<sup>16</sup> Other synonymic couples are *minutame/minutaglia*, *pecorame/pecoraglia*, *pietrame/pietraglia*, *sterpame/sterpaglia*, and also *gentame/gentaglia*, where the first member is, however, an old term that has fallen into disuse.

As suggested by Mauri (2017: 310), however, the real creativity of this strategy lies in derivatives like *berlusconame* and *grillame*, from the names of the Italian politicians Silvio Berlusconi and Beppe Grillo. Interestingly, these formations can have two different readings and thus refer to two distinct kind of sets: the first meaning is ‘X & co.’, ‘X and his associates’, while the second denotes a category including persons, situations, attitudes that share X as a common denominator.

### 3.3 Nouns in *-aglia* and ad hoc categories

It is not surprising that analogous considerations apply to the neologisms in *-aglia* obtained from the surnames of the politicians Romano Prodi and Matteo Renzi, *prodaglia* and *renzaglia*, which appear in newspapers, blogs, and discussion sites. Their use is illustrated in the following examples:

- 6) a. *Ha coniato una parola nuova: ‘prodaglia’.*<sup>17</sup>  
 ‘he coined a new word: ‘prodaglia’.’  
 (La Tribuna di Treviso, 12 April, 2006)
- b. *È l’anima [...] di quella che il presidente della Regione Veneto Giancarlo Galan ha battezzato ‘prodaglia’, tutta tasse e statalismo.*  
 ‘It is the soul ... of what the President of the Veneto Region, Giancarlo Galan, has baptized ‘prodaglia’, all taxes and statism.’  
 (La Repubblica, 20 April, 2006)<sup>18</sup>
- 7) a. *Il neologismo del giorno è #renzaglia. Un francesismo, elegante, rende l’idea.*  
 ‘The neologism of the day is #renzaglia. A Gallicism, elegant, it gets across the idea.’  
 (Twitter, 31 March, 2016)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> [http://ricerca.gelocal.it/tribunatreviso/archivio/tribunatreviso/2006/04/12/VB9T\\_VB901.html](http://ricerca.gelocal.it/tribunatreviso/archivio/tribunatreviso/2006/04/12/VB9T_VB901.html)

It is evident here the ironic juxtaposition with *brodaglia*, which likely derives from *broda* ‘swill, slops’, a depreciative form of the noun *brodo* ‘broth’. For similar coinages based on politicians’ surnames see Thornton (1998: 390–391).

<sup>18</sup> <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2006/04/20/prodi-nonci-difendera-dalla-cina.html>

<sup>19</sup> This educated writer perceives the affinity with French derivatives in *-aille* that, beside *volaille* ‘poultry’, include also *canaille* and *racaille* ‘rabble, scum’, as well as *marmaille*, in

- b. #renzaglia \*è\* #gnuranza (e arroganza, protervia, superficialità, approssimazione, ...).  
 ‘#renzaglia \*is\* #ignorance (and arrogance, bullying, superficiality, inaccuracy, ...).’  
 (Twitter, 16 April, 2016)
- c. *Meglio accozzaglia che renzaglia.*  
 ‘better being a jumble than a renzaglia.’  
 (Crema Oggi, 24 November, 2016)<sup>20</sup>

Examples (6b) and (7b) show that, when the associative process whereby the speaker/writer profiles the set is not based on objective or shared connections, which favor lexicalization, but presupposes personal or expressive associations, which often characterize newly built forms, the meaning can be negotiated in the intersubjective dimension. In this way set marking suffixes become strategies for the expression of ad hoc categories where the referent is taken as a starting point to make inferences about further potential exemplars. Depending on the interpretation shared by the interlocutors, the terms *prodaglia* and *renzaglia* can either designate a group connected by a focal referent, thus showing parallels with associative plurals, or denote a non-exhaustive list of persons, behaviors and situations revolving around the named exemplar, as in (6b) and (7b). In both cases, and analogously to *berlusconame* and *grillame*, “knowledge concerning Italian politics and access to the Italian context is required in order to identify the similitive relations to infer, in order to correctly abstract the category” (Mauri 2017: 311).

On the whole, ad hoc categories conveyed through derivational strategies require access to a general cultural context, but are not strictly anchored to a specific speech situation (Mauri 2017: 320). However, it has also been observed that, probably due to the fact that they are inherently nominal strategies, morphological constructions tend to correlate with categories denoting groups of entities (either animate or inanimate), while categories describing lists of activities and situations are instead more easily conveyed by constructions that are inherently syntactic and operate at the discourse level, such as non-exhaustive connectives and general extenders (Mauri 2017: 320). Accordingly, we can hypothesize that for *-aglia* the functions reflecting the construction of mixed categories including persons, behaviors and situations develop from the

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origin ‘bevy of kids’, from *marmot* ‘kid’, whence It. *marmaglia*. More examples at: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/renzaglia>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cremaoggi.it/2016/11/24/moni-ovadia-a-crema-meglio-accozzaglia-che-renzaglia/>

functions related to the expression of less articulated groups of entities. Consistently with this idea, for derivatives like *prodaglia* and *renzaglia* the priority of the associative meanings finds support in diachrony, as we will see in a moment.

### 3.4 The fortunes of the derivatives in *-aglia*

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that in Italy *Renzaglia* is also a family name. The relation between *-aglia* and proper nouns has in fact a well-established tradition in onomastics and also Rohlfs (1969: 386) mentions the series of surnames “che esprimono un complesso di famiglie” [which denote a group of families], for instance *Antonaglia* ‘family of the Antoni’. More precisely, the cadet branches within a lineage can derive their surnames from the main family name, but the derivation from personal names or nicknames is possible as well; therefore, for instance, *Brandaglia* could come from *Brandi* or also from *Brando* (hypocoristic for *Aldobrando*), *Pazzaglia* from *Pazzi* or from *Pazzo* (for *Jacopazzo*), and *Turaglia* from *Turi* or from *Tura* (for *Bonaventura*). Assuming the derivation of *Renzaglia* from an individual’s name (here the hypocoristic for *Lorenzo*), the meaning ‘Renzo and his family’ makes clear the parallels between the surnames and associative plurals.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, while the surnames are destined to be passed down and survive through the centuries, the neologisms coined on the names of politicians or celebrities have instead a transient life, which is typical of ad hoc categorizations. These creations have in fact temporary usage and usability, and are not intended for storage and entrenchment in the lexicon. Still, considering the *continuum* between stability and ephemerality, it turns out that, when the derivatives do not define precise and stable sets, they can be useful tools to be vague in discourse.

This happens with more enduring and successful formations where *-aglia*, like the neuters ending in *-ālia*, identifies vague categories in the same way as nouns like Eng. *thing*, Fr. *chose*, It. *cosa*. As observed by Mihatsch (2007: 372), the use of the so-called placeholders often reflects discursive strategies: “in informal situations, nouns with a pejorative potential are often employed to hide word-finding problems by pretending that the referent is not worth being designated by the correct label”.

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<sup>21</sup> Of course, these parallels are still valid even if the surnames derive from another family name and function like plural proper nouns as *the Smiths* in the sense of ‘Mr Smith and his whole family’.

In a similar vein, the word *politicaglia* denotes the category ‘things associated with politics’, whose subjective connotation and contents may remain implicit as in example (8), taken from a letter written in 1928 by Carlo Emilio Gadda (Manacorda 1979: 65)<sup>22</sup>:

- 8) *Addio monti di spaghetti sorgenti dall’acque salsose della pommarola [...] mangiati nelle più nefande e saporose bettole della suburra, facendo finta di discutere lettere e politicaglia tanto per salvare un po’ le apparenze.*  
 ‘Farewell, you mountains of spaghetti rising from the waters of tomato sauce [...] eaten in the most nefarious and tasty taverns of the slum, pretending to discuss literature and ‘politicaglia’ just to keep up appearances.’

In example (9), instead, the gloss to what the journalist wrongly considers as a neologism spells out an articulated taxonomy, which aggregates multiple sets of negative entities (*marmaglia*, *canaglia*, and *clientele*) within the superordinate category of wrongdoing and corruption (*politicaglia*):

- 9) *Una città preda della politicaglia, diciamolo con un neologismo, categoria da sottobosco che comprende tutto: la marmaglia, la canaglia e le clientele politiche.*  
 ‘A city prey of the ‘politicaglia’, let’s say it with a neologism, an underworld category that includes everything: rabble, canaille, and political clientele.’  
 (Il Messaggero, 12 June, 2015)<sup>23</sup>

These usages prove that the derivatives in *-aglia* not only solve problems of labeling, but also categorize open sets whose contents, which depend on current events and change over time, can be left pending as in (8), or can be inter-subjectively fine-tuned as in (9). At this point, what remains to be clarified is the issue of the pejorative potential of the suffix.

<sup>22</sup> This passage is a parody of Manzoni’s novel *I promessi sposi* (*The betrothed*), published in 1840, where one of the famous scenes begins with the words: “Addio, monti sorgenti dall’acque [...]”.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/roma\\_marino\\_mafia\\_capitale\\_degrado\\_virman\\_cusenza1088274.html](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/roma_marino_mafia_capitale_degrado_virman_cusenza1088274.html)

## 4 Conclusions

### 4.1 Some order in the disorder

In this respect, Rohlf's (1969: 386) rightly affirms that *-aglia* is “un suffisso collettivo, cui si lega l'idea accessoria del disordinato e del brutto” [a collective suffix to which the supplementary idea of ‘messy’ and ‘ugly’ binds]. More precisely, we can say that the notion of ‘ugliness’ reflects the speaker's assumptions about the term of reference, while the idea of ‘mess’ is the constant thread that links the suffix to the heterogeneous nature of aggregate nouns and ad hoc categories.

Coming back to the Latin derivatives in *-ālia*, the idea that they pertain to a ‘non-actual’ and ‘subjective’ dimension (see Section 2.3) becomes clearer when observing the properties that distinguish ‘true’ collectives from aggregate and superordinate nouns. In particular, Joosten (2010: 39–40) argues that, due to the relation of contiguity, “membership in a collection is dependent and strongly linked to concrete reality”, whereas the relation of similarity tends to create “more abstract (or: less natural) wholes than collections”.

Moreover, the relation of contiguity presupposes a cognitive operation of conjunction between entities that are ‘a part of’, whereas the relation of similarity presupposes an operation of exclusive disjunction between items that are ‘a kind of’. Example (10), from Joosten (2010: 40), illustrates the comparison between a collective and a superordinate noun:

- 10) a. *archipelago* = island and island and island ...  
 b. *vehicle* = car or train or boat ...

As we have seen in Section 2.1, aggregate nouns, where individual entities are at the same time ‘a part of’ and ‘a kind of’ a category, are midway in the *continuum* between collectives and superordinate nouns. Accordingly, they combine both operations of conjunction and disjunction in a process of ‘inclusive disjunction’ (Joosten 2010: 40), which leaves room for interpretation about the contents; in fact the term *pulchralia* may refer to fresh fruit, and/or dried fruit, and/or sweets, and/or wines, but even to the whole dessert.

The theory of mental models discussed by Mihatsch (2007: 367–371) proves that the process of inclusive disjunction is cognitively more complex than the others because it requires the comparison and the evaluation of a greater number of mental images. This explains the widespread preference for those lexemes that presuppose operations of conjunction. In fact, collectives are

acquired, memorized and used more easily than superordinate nouns; besides, they are semantically more autonomous and stable with respect to those nouns that “are not based on stable imagery, but rather on a temporary categorization of referents” (Mihatsch 2007: 363).

For this reason the suffix *-ālia* survives in lexicalized forms designating homogeneous and stable sets (e.g. *ramalia*), but it also transmits to its successors the propensity to label categories of diverse entities that, temporarily and contextually, share similar properties (e.g. *minutalia*) or functions (e.g. *mortalia*). The feature of heterogeneity, which in aggregate nouns is also linked to the complexity of the process of inclusive disjunction, translates into the notion of fluid and unstructured sets, that is, into the idea of ‘mess’ that Rohlfs perceives in the derivatives in *-aglia*.

## 4.2 The pragmatics of pejoration

Since aggregate nouns are not ‘collections’ built on contiguity but ‘associations’ based on similarity, the sets denoted by the nouns in *-aglia* can be a medley devoid of cohesion and depending on the speaker’s evaluation of the mentioned exemplar. Thus, when the suffix is attached to stems that denote inanimate referents, the derivatives describe confused and disordered clusters of entities.

On the other hand, with respect to the Latin forms discussed in Section 2.3, the Italian derivatives show increasing subjectification, which is the mechanism whereby “meanings are recruited by the speaker to encode and regulate attitudes and beliefs” (Traugott 2010: 35). Thus, when *-aglia* is attached to stems that denote animate and/or human referents, the derivatives describe groups of individuals and/or behaviors that are already negatively connoted, or acquire a pejorative value in a contextual and shared reading.

In addition, the process of subjectification can be followed by intersubjectification, which is the “increasing use in constructions and contexts associated with hearer-orientation” (Narrog 2017: 36). Thus, when using the suffix to build ad hoc categories from proper nouns, the speaker guides the hearer to identify the relevant set by appealing to current opinion about unpopular and questionable persons.

On the whole, pejoration is not only a matter of lexical semantics and morphological processes, but it also involves the cognitive and pragmatic dimensions (Finkbeiner et al. 2016; Meibauer 2014).<sup>24</sup> As suggested in Section 3.1,

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<sup>24</sup> On the issues concerning the word-formation/pragmatics interface and the field of ‘morphopragmatics’ see also Dressler and Lavinia (1994).

pejorative values are not inherent to the suffix and the derogatory readings of the derivatives seem instead an epiphenomenon reflecting the processes that build the categories and the attitudes towards their contents. More precisely, both aggregate nouns and ad hoc categories presuppose a process of amplification, which roughly indicates ‘more of the same/similar’, ‘and so on’. This, along with the (apparent) irrelevance of the individual entities, which seem unworthy of being specified, may add vagueness and also devaluation to the meaning of the derivative.

Furthermore, the pivotal exemplar is the precise incarnation of some salient properties, while the associated entities are just similar to that ideal, without reaching it. Since the whole category reflects these properties only by approximation, the hearer may perceive this ‘blurred similarity’ as an instance of deprecation. Lastly, as also observed for echo formations involving proper nouns, pejoration can also be “iconically supported by the deformation the name undergoes, which can serve as a symbolic attack and derision of the name’s bearer” (Wiese and Polat 2016: 251).

These intersections between amplification, pejoration, deformation, and ludic potential show that contextual inferencing plays a role in the interpretation of derivations (Meibauer 2014), and confirm the relevance of the pragmatic component for all the strategies that encode heterogeneous categories built through similarity associations. Also, pragmatic inference is generally considered as a major factor in triggering the mechanisms of grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 71).

### 4.3 Deriving ad hoc categories

As we have seen, aggregate nouns are characterized by speaker-based functions because they profile sets by deliberately abstracting from individual entities. Moreover, the internal relation of similarity may presuppose personal evaluations or expressive associations, which are inherently subjective *per se*. When creative or extemporaneous associations do not lead to the straightforward identification of a well-defined set, there is a shift towards the intersubjective dimension, where speaker and hearer appeal to contextual information in order to retrieve the relevant ad hoc category.

The idea that the capacity to derive aggregate nouns is a crucial property which motivates the relation between collectives and ad hoc categories finds further support in the examination of the suffix *-er̃a*.<sup>25</sup> This multifunctional suffix can

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<sup>25</sup> It probably comes from Fr. *-erie*, which in turns combines the two suffixes *-ier*, from Lat. *-āriū(m)*, and *-ie*, from Lat. *-īa*.

form feminine nouns denoting: a) activities, crafts and their workshops (e.g. *salumeria* ‘delicatessen’, *oreficeria* ‘goldsmith’s (art)’); b) abstract qualities and behaviors (e.g. *porcheria* ‘rubbish, obscenity’ *furberia* ‘cunningness’); c) groups of animate and inanimate entities (e.g. *cavalleria* ‘cavalry’, *fanteria* ‘infantry’, *biancheria* ‘linen, whites’, *argenteria* ‘silverware’). The last examples confirm that these derivatives can also denote ‘associations’ of heterogeneous items that share some similar property, as in *politicheria*, which is less derogatory than *politicume* and *politicaglia*.

Furthermore, in recent times Italian has been playing with extemporaneous combinations between the suffix and proper nouns as in *dalemeria* or *veltroneria*: word, proposal or attitude typical of the politician Massimo D’Alema or Walter Veltroni.<sup>26</sup> However, a neologism like *bersaneria*, according to the usage in (11), is clearly an ad hoc categorization that can refer to the group ‘Pier Luigi Bersani and his associates’, or to the broader set ‘people and situations revolving around Bersani’:

- 11) *La guerra contro la sinistra e la bersaneria* [...]
   
‘The war against the Left and the bersaneria ...’
   
(Il Fatto Quotidiano, 8 February, 2016)<sup>27</sup>

It thus seems that also the suffix *-eria*, in the same way as *-aglia* and *-ame*, is becoming a strategy for the expression of ad hoc categories through the acquisition of hearer-oriented functions. In these cases, set marking suffixes select an exemplar that, rather than bearing an independent (and discourse relevant) reference, serves as a pointer for the identification of a context-dependent category.

The multifunctionality that characterizes the use and the interpretation of these morphological strategies is consistent with the ‘layering’ effect often found in grammaticalization, which here involves the mechanisms of (inter)subjectification. These processes can explain how collective suffixes that create aggregate nouns can contribute to label ad hoc categories by means of formations that are typically volatile and unstable, because “neither meanings nor structural relations are specified in the lexicon, but are construed ‘on-line,’ in actual situations of use” (Croft and Cruse 2004: 97).

<sup>26</sup> In the online dictionary Treccani ([http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/dalemeria\\_\(Neologismi\)/](http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/dalemeria_(Neologismi)/) and [http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/veltroneria\\_\(Neologismi\)/](http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/veltroneria_(Neologismi)/)), both forms are registered as neologisms.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/08/02/referendum-verdini-e-i-centristi-fanno-comitati-per-il-si-danna-la-guerra-contro-la-sinistra-e-la-bersaneria-e-vinta/2951016/>

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