

Designing Inclusive Urban Places

Letizia Carrera

How to cite

Carrera, L. (2022). Designing Inclusive Urban Places. [Italian Sociological Review, 12 (1), 141-158]

Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.13136/isr.v12i1.522>

[DOI: 10.13136/isr.v12i1.522]

1. Author information

Letizia Carrera

Department DIRIUM, University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy

2. Author e-mail address

Letizia Carrera

E-mail: letizia.carrera@uniba.it

3. Article accepted for publication

Date: September 2021

Additional information about

Italian Sociological Review

can be found at:

[About ISR-Editorial Board-Manuscript submission](#)

Designing Inclusive Urban Places

Letizia Carrera*

Corresponding author:

Letizia Carrera

E-mail: letizia.carrera@uniba.it

Abstract

Cities have always been characterized by economic and cultural differences. More and more ethnic differences have progressively been added and very often combined to the others, generating a perverse multiplier effect of the social fragility of migrants. The model of territorial distance for decades “protected” cities from diversity, which was made “invisible” through its being relegated to the margins of the city itself. Today this model does not work any longer and the differences coexist in the same urban spaces.

In the absence of an intercultural dialogue capable of building and reinforcing an attitude of “active engagement” of urban areas, the solution that is too often sought is the assimilatory integration, which reinforces the disadvantage of *alterity*. Instead, the tension towards more complex processes of inclusion implies the overcoming of the concept of foreigner and the recognition of diversity and alterity in the name of the right of recognition of diversity.

The role of the *third space* becomes central, as a complex and dynamic result of the contamination among public, semi-public and private spaces that offer opportunities to stop and meet. Therefore, the strategies that can be activated in the cities are fundamental. These strategies start from the construction or enhancement of these third spaces, intended as functional places for a conscious proximity. Here the conditions for the construction of opportunities for mutual recognition are based on the specificity of the interests and cultural diversity and, at the same time, on the agreement on common and shared basic rules.

Keywords: third space, cities, differences, inclusive policy, right to the city.

* Department DIRIUM, University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy.

1. City and differences

The city is the place of differences, the place where everyone is a *foreigner* (Simmel, 1913). It is characterized by a high level of complexity and, most importantly, by continuous change, which contributes to generating the process of growing complexification of *postmodern city* (Amendola, 1990; Mela, 2020). Among these changes, a very important role is played by migration processes, which bring new differences in the cities where, alongside traditional differences in class and status, new ethnic, religious and cultural differences often add up and overlap. Differences occur in everyday life and in the spaces of the city. They are, also, defined spatially, socially, and economically, leading sometimes to polarization, inequality, zones of exclusion and fragmentation, while at other times constituting sites of power, resistance, and celebration of identity. Difference is created in all spatial relations but the particularity of the city is that it concentrates differences through its density of people and lived spaces (Bridge, Watson, 2003). Also, Henri Lefebvre (1967) described city and urban environment as a set of differences. ‘Nowadays, revisiting the widespread city means rethinking the double connection among territory/society/state, reflecting on the change in meaning that can be attributed to the term “public” after a few decades during which the debate increased the awareness that the type of society we are dealing with is increasingly characterized as a “society of differences”’ (Crosta, 2010: 50).

The effects of the encounter between these differences depend upon a number of variables at very different levels but, among these, a central role is played by the city’s governing policies which, in turn, are linked to national and supranational policies. Cities become the scene of processes bearing very different results, from the peaceful hybridization of the different coexisting cultures and functional processes of inclusion, to the radicalization of differences and the emergence of inevitable conflicts. Hence, what is certain, beyond the specific choices in relation to *policies*, is “the importance and liveliness of the urban dimension in the general scenario of the measures aimed at governing the multiethnic transformation processes of European societies” (Ambrosini, 2012). As Laura Zanfrini writes, “contemporary Europe is by all means a multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious society. Its composition, however – being increasingly distant from the nationalistic myths of homogeneity and ancestry - is an “unexpected” and, under many respects, unwanted outcome of a series of processes that have accompanied the recent history of Europe (2016: 137).

For a long time, differences have coexisted in the cities without ever encountering, as the policies of distancing regulated those “urban differences” by making sure that they never really met. The problems related to social

difference were solved by simply moving the weaker groups to the fringes of the city, and separating the center from the suburbs. It suffices to think of the “creative pickaxe” of Prefect Haussmann who disembowels the city of Paris, builds the big *boulevards*, while the most popular neighborhoods disappear, and their inhabitants are *displaced* to the new large suburbs¹, the still problematic *banlieu*. Till the last quarter of the twentieth century, the modern industrial city could be represented and interpreted on the basis of spatially identifiable, clear-cut differences, and relied on the balance between social and territorial distancing, constantly guarded by the market, as well as by public policies. After all, the attempt to increase more and more the spatial distance between the rich and the poor in the large western cities is still under way (Secchi, 2013). Despite their centrality, the urban space and its organizational models rarely, indeed, receive the necessary recognition and attention as keys to interpreting phenomena and changes (Gieryn, 2000).

For a long time it has been possible to read the center-periphery relationship on the basis of the principle of social distance superimposed on the urban one. “The D of inequality [in Italian *disuguaglianza*] is connected to the other three D: distance, density and duration. The most distant, less dense and less historicized neighbourhoods are poorer in opportunities and relationships” (Tocci, 2019). But the most recent processes of peripheralization of some central areas of the cities have forced to a rethinking of these categories and of the socio-urban strategies to be put in place. In the last twenty years, a series of phenomena, among which the processes of gentrification, fragmented immigration and the impoverishment of the middle class, have frayed borders and brought differences side by side. Among all differences, ethnic ones are some of the most crucial points of current urban balance. The city has turned into a sort of patchwork in which the encounter with the different has become inevitable. This new scenario, which is not mediated by a culture of difference and inclusion, has generated a widespread and undefined sense of insecurity and fear, expanded and even amplified by some political interpretations². The “geography of fear” (Carrera, 2015) makes the city smaller and smaller, effectively denying a large number of people -especially those who are socially vulnerable – the possibility to go through it and to fully experience it. In this

¹ This is a sort of *urban deportation* that removes the poorest from the city center and makes of Paris one of the safest cities in the world continuing to feed the myth of a dream city, while the *banlieu* becomes a marginal and dangerous place *par excellence*.

² Even though politics had originally the task of governing the subjects’ fear, there is still a political use of fear that, within a widespread climate of insecurity and risk, fuels the subjects’ most primitive fears, thus creating a *solidary community of fearful people* (Mongardini, 2004) exposed to the risk of aprioristic, defensive closures.

way, the full affirmation of «the right to the city» comes to be denied. These processes have made fundamental the actions of contrast to the processes of *peripheralization* of cities and contrast to the sense of widespread insecurity that keeps citizens, Italian and foreign, away from urban public spaces, reducing the city to an archipelago of fragmented spaces (Magatti, 2020; 2009; Petrillo, 2018; Carrera, 2015).

The theme of the city's hospitality in the migration era becomes, increasingly, a key issue. Urban spaces acquire a growing political relevance, as a consequence of the intensity and extent of migratory flows. Migration policies are fully part of a “cultural obsession for security” (Magatti, 2020) that represents the other as a threat and freezes his being present, depriving him of the historical depth of the motivations for migration. As long as the debate on immigration and its legislation continue to be short-sighted on the issues of the threat that some people believe immigration poses, focusing on control procedures and on the blocking of arrivals, will be considered necessary and indispensable (Gallino, 2006). This has to be acknowledged in the design of urban spaces and in everyday life. The urban space can be defined neither as related to a material morphology (the territory, in its practical-physical sense) nor as detached from it. It is neither a timeless entity nor a system among systems nor a system above the other systems. It is a representation and social form, a form of simultaneity, reunion, convergence, encounter (or, rather, encounters). It is a quality that originates from quantity (spaces, objects, products). It is a difference or, rather, a set of differences, according to Antonio Belli (2013).

According to Henri Lefebvre, it is possible to go beyond the physical aspect (the empirical arrangement of things in the landscape), and see the urban space as the manifestation of habits and practices, factual practices and widespread spatial arrangements of a social order, in other words, a social spatialization. Nevertheless, in our mind, the city inhabited by differences turns easily into a maze, where the feeling of constant danger becomes stronger, where one does not know how to move around and is afraid of getting lost (Perec, [1974] 1989). Thus, the city becomes the space of fear, where the perceived sense of insecurity grows alongside the fear of difference. In this sense, the political authorities at different institutional levels play a central role in the process of regulating everyday life, since they can, symbolically, abolish or reinforce the difference. Just think of the difficult decision concerning the selection of urban areas that will have to host the first migrants' settlements. There is indeed plenty of examples regarding the concentration of immigrants in the poor areas of the cities, the banlieues of Paris, the slums of Mumbai, the refugee camps of Amman, the informal settlements (*asentamientos nuevos*) of San José, the areas

excluded from the regulatory plans (*katchi abadis*) in Baldia and Orangi (Koser 2007).

The growing presence of different ethnic groups in the urban areas has led the political and social debate to reflect on the best option to govern this process, between the *waiting*³ strategies, aimed at facilitating a positive spontaneous resolution of those differences, and strategies aimed at preventing potential conflicts through actions of diversity governance and promotion of active inclusion.

However, *waiting* strategies have already shown their limits, for example, in North-American cities with a longer history of multicultural settlements. Here, the juxtaposition of different cultures and ethnicities turned the urban space into a sort of mosaic lacking a consistent image, which still today shows both the material and cultural signs of a difficult mix of cultures. According to Martinotti, 'in the United States, the coexistence of ethnic neighborhoods has worked well for about a century. Little Italy, Chinatowns, Jewish Ghettos, Harlem, the German Yorktown, where immigrants coming from faraway countries could find their first dwelling among people speaking their own language, eating their own food, dressing in their own style. It was thought that starting from this "mosaic" of typical neighborhoods, the city could act as a melting pot, allowing for integration at a later time, but then it became clear that (...) discriminatory mechanisms prevailed, whereby segregation triggered a vicious circle of poverty, degradation, violence and criminality' (in Vicari Haddock 2017: 235). Similarly, Richard Sennet argued for a cautious interpretation and planning when, in "*Flesh and stones*" (1994), he pointed out that the seeming multiculturalism of the Greenwich Village in New York was, actually, nothing else but the mutual "polite indifference" between different cultures and ethnic groups prevailing in that area. There was no intercultural dialogue, no care about the others, no relationship between different groups. They *simply* lived next to each other, exercising a sort of mutual "civic inattention" (Albrow 1997), occupying different portions of the urban space or, in some cases, temporally segmenting the city and dwelling in the same space at different times of the day.

Within this model, problems can arise when the interaction between differences becomes inevitable, as in the new cross-breed city with frayed borders, which becomes a potential ground for conflicts between differences that have not been previously mediated. The most sought for solution to this problem is, in fact, that of boosting assimilation towards the culture of the host

³ These political strategies rely on the assumption that, when left unfolding in daily dynamics, differences can spontaneously generate points and opportunities for meeting and contamination, producing a sort of cultures' cross-breeding.

country, which undermines a culture of otherness and accepts this only if deprived of its deepest difference. Thus, the challenge of interacting with the *Other* and its culture ends up being exacerbated. This consolidates the implicit assumption that there is nothing to learn from the *Other* and that mutual interaction is worthless. This cultural assumption can lead to both social separation and mutual indifference between different ethnic groups, as well as to forms of latent or overt conflict.

Without a culture and a politics of difference⁴, the now inevitable interconnection of people and ethnic groups turns very easily into confrontation and conflict. A comprehensive policy of the urban space becomes, therefore, an indispensable starting point to deal with such a situation, as well as a fundamental tool to counterbalance the risks of cultural segregation through processes of integration, if not even inclusion. In order for the latter hypothesis to be implemented, and for educated indifference and simple tolerance to evolve into a – certainly not easy, but still possible – process of dialogue, at least two conditions are necessary.

The first condition is a commitment to rethinking public spaces, while the second one concerns the production of policies to regulate the use of urban spaces.

The first condition points beyond the semantic value of space as a frame of reference, (Ikas, Wagner, 2009), as well as beyond spatial metaphors. It concerns the physical space in which the encounters take place. Public places, such as streets and squares, do not provide this kind of space, since there, the encounter, if any, is fleeting and ephemeral, and it does not offer the right conditions for mutual acquaintance or for the creation of bonds. Solutions to this cannot be sought for in a private space, which is, by definition, an enclosed space. Here, access is allowed only to selected individuals and is, basically, homogeneous. Cities need spaces in which it is possible to stay, and this is the reason why space and time become essential aspects to take into account in relation to the spatiality of society, that is the way social relations are intertwined with space over time (Queríos, 2016).

The function of a *third space* becomes, thus, central. It refers to a set of public and private spaces, a plurality of minute, almost interstitial places scattered around the city, whose specific characteristics may contaminate each other, and which may become an opportunity to implement strategies of

⁴ There is no doubt that inclusion and encounter between cultures cannot be imposed by law, and that cultural contamination also happens thanks to non-political factors. However, public policies, especially local ones, may have a strong impact on the opportunities and modes in which that encounter can take place, as well as on the kind of inclusion they create and implement in urban spaces.

inclusion and promotion of diversity. The notion of third space does not, in fact, overcome the antimony between *agorà* and *oikos*, for it remains a public space. However, it represents a *third* option because of its particular physical, practical, symbolic and cultural features. These urban spaces become places full of meaning and even of a shared sense of belonging (Borch, 2002; Ambrosini, 2012) when they start to have a meaning for those who live in and experience them. Susan Halford (2004) highlights how the sense of space, especially in relation to spaces and places of everyday life, develops in line with the use of those places. This sense arises from within the experiences concretely carried out in those places, but also from the uses that the governing rules permit or that are permitted in the absence of rules.

The second requirement concerns the need for a political planning that is able to create the conditions for the use of spaces in connection and coordination with the active subjects already present and with new ones, whose participation must be facilitated, in order to promote an “active engagement” of the areas themselves (Sandercock, 2003).

It is important to encourage the research on territorial transformations to go beyond the good feelings and to be genuinely committed to socially related actions, which are aimed at recognizing and re-planning change, helping the communities to go beyond mutual tolerance, exploring the issue of diversity outside the problem of unconditional hospitality, towards concrete and challenging forms of full recognition of diversity in the urban environment (Belli, 2013).

In this sense, it is equally important that local administrators are appropriately trained, as they are called to govern the growing complexity of the urban space (Dioguardi, 2017) beyond any logic of emergency *governance* (Verdirame, Horrel-Bond, 2005).

2. Third space and urban strategies of inclusion

Taking up and developing Bhabha’s analyses (2001), Edward W. Soja suggests to conceive of the *Third Space* as one of the features of post-modernity itself related to the spaces of a symbolic representation. It refers to a horizon of new, somehow liminal, interstitial spaces that allow the construction and deconstruction of radical changes and creative responses to changes occurring or falling into the urban space (Bhabha, 2001; Soja, 1996, 106-11; Soja, 2000). This *third space* provides a place for conversation between different people, who temporarily get together, and may even form associations, to create opportunities for debate – which can be sometimes confrontational – around ideas and practices that may also have a political impact (Mazzette 2013).

It is possible to give a sort of “social” translation of the third space model with an emphasis on its political function. This entails physical spaces where both the informal dimension of the encounters and their formal dimension can find accommodation, and where diverse subjects have the opportunity to get together and undertake the construction of local communities, not on the basis of a common history and culture, but on those very differences and contaminations. These models are far from the “wardrobe communities” cited by Bauman (2004), which gather around emotionally intense but fleeting events, and rather recall community models closer to that described, among others, by Amitai Etzioni⁵. This latter suggests a sort of mosaic society in which each community (ethnic, religious, cultural, political etc.) maintains its own peculiarities, it keeps its own traditions and principles, and it is proud of its identity. At the same time, these communities are aware of being an integral part of a larger whole, which is homogeneous but compatible with their differences, and commit themselves to a common and shared regulatory order. This represents an evolution from the *melting pot* theoretical model, which had already been more a mission statement than the object of real urban policies, towards the *salad bowl* model proposed by Glazer and Moynihan as early as 1970. The focus of this different approach to inclusion is that differences should not mix together to the point of becoming a homogeneous whole. Rather, they ought to mix without losing their specificity, their coexistence relying on mutual acknowledgement and on the common acceptance of a mandatory and essential “package” of shared rights, values and norms.

In this process of creating the conditions for such a different community, the *third space* is a key notion, as it stands for all those urban micro-spaces where the weight of difference can be *eased* through the everyday life routines, through the common interests and the sharing of a new city project. It regards workplaces, schools, universities, youth centers, sports clubs, leisure centers, neighborhood houses, or regenerated places having this specific purpose. These are all places to be thought of and experienced as places where contact, here *inevitable* and prolonged, may represent an opportunity to overcome prejudices and preconceived models, as well as an opportunity for the cultural and social

⁵ The reference is to the 1998 essay, *The moral dimension: toward a new economics*, in which the author identifies the principle of *codetermination* as what determines human action: the human being does not only act on the basis of his own profit, but according to the influences of society and personality. Amitai Etzioni seems to extend this model to the study of organizations, suggesting the possibility to compare different organizations on the basis of a few, unifying variables, as different communities that coexist in the same urban space. In 1990, he founded the *Communitarian Network*, a totally apolitical and non-partisan organization that aims to rediscover the moral, social and political roots of society.

remodeling of multicultural relations. As Amin (2002) wrote, the project of living with diversity needs to be translated into *public micro-spaces*, meant as occasions to practice the cultural contamination, places where the *weight* of difference can be eased in the daily encounter.

Alfredo Mela writes, “urban practices rely on what we might call the infrastructure endowments of each city” (2020, 49). Starting from this premise it can be observed that intervening on infrastructures can be reached to affect the practices. Daily practices can be represented as forms of active adaptation to the urban environment. As often differences and inequalities in urban practices are at the root of social conflicts and even individual forms of group violence, in the same way create symbolic material conditions for different practices can become an instrument of encounter and recognition. The infrastructuring through the creation of third spaces in the city responds to the attempt to govern the process of “territorialization” through which a complex of relations between the subjects belonging to collective entities and the environment in which they operate is structured (Raffestin, 2012). Space is an active factor that helps to define not only the opportunities and limits of the action, but also the sense that is attributed to it (Mela, 2020). This reflection brings to the fore the concept of affordance (Gibson, 1979) which refers to the opportunities that space offers to subjects and, specifically, the potential perceived by the different subjects that define the frame within which they believe they can operate choices and act.

Re-designing the urban space is a key strategy for the implementation of inclusion processes, which starts with specific, minute and widespread structural interventions in the urban area. These *urban social acupunctures*⁶, to be included in a medium and long-term planning, aim to counteract and overcome both current and latent forms of conflict, which prevent the multicultural experience of the city from evolving into a true inclusive interculturality. These are small-scale interventions that start from the bottom, or are the result of co-planning activities between experts, administrators, citizens and other urban stakeholders, which utilise all resources present in the area and stimulate new

⁶ Urban Acupuncture is an artistic and urbanistic approach based on the insights of Casagrande, a Finnish architect and sociologist, who uses the notion of acupuncture, a practice of Chinese medicine, as a metaphor to designate the local nature of its interventions. Within this approach the complex system of the city is seen as an organism, in stark contrast with the “top down” methods of traditional urban planning inspired by the modern movement and by Le Corbusier. It promotes actions aimed at improving, as in the practice of acupuncture, the well-being, the quality of life of the city’s whole body.

ones, generating virtuous circuits of sustainable and participatory urban development.

Taking care, the sense of belonging can begin to be built from the territory you live in, from the shared space and, by this way, before the cities, are the neighborhoods that can represent real laboratories for the reconstruction of systems of care of relationships. In this way, the more complex right to the city re-thematized by David Harvey (2012) becomes possible. As Jaime Lerner argues, despite the small scale of the interventions, in terms of architectural-urban planning and, sometimes, also in terms of costs related to specific pressure points of the city, they can generate a great potential for change, a domino effect that can also cover very large areas (Lerner, 2003)⁷.

The constructed space, the building, the place prepared to be a third space may represent a symbol of an identity process and, therefore, of a project in which the territory and the whole city are protagonists. To achieve this, however, it is necessary to reflect about the conditions that make the designed spaces truly meaningful to those who live or will live in them, and to those who will use the places, thus making them meaningful. The centrality of space needs to be recovered starting from the concepts developed by Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This approach involves the critique of the traditional understanding of space and the enhancement of the social space produced in the relationship (Borch, 2002), a vision providing the knowledge to discern between perceived, imagined and lived spaces (Belli, 2013). They are not simply “other”, they are “eterotopie”, in the words of Michel Foucault (1967), that is, specifically different spaces, real places *open* to other places, whose function is to make spaces communicate with each other. The Foucauldian idea of heterotopias could be an explanation of the notion of ‘other space’ and the migrant experience (Davis 2010).

We now come to the second condition, regarding the use policies of third spaces and the necessary shared, circular planning, which is fundamental to make sure that the intentions of those who designed the urban social renewal interventions and the architectural features meet the future perceptions of users. Practices constantly change the environment that in turn adapts to the most widespread practices (Cellamare, 2011), it means that practices sometimes have significant effects on spaces and forms of sociality. The use of space the resulting modifications must not be considered as extraneous elements to the project but are an integral part of it (Chiesi, 2012). In other words, it is necessary

⁷ In this type of interventions the vertical interaction in urban planning is central to stimulate citizens’ activism and make sure that an area can find and enhance its own resources. This making the “organism capable of functioning in a different way” (Lerner, 2003) is particularly important in interventions aimed at revitalizing an area.

to go further and question any residue of spatial and design determinism, including the idea that, by designing the space, its use will be, automatically, determined. The case of the so-called Pruitt-Igoe syndrome is, in this sense, a paramount example⁸.

Nevertheless, after a period in which the assumptions of the modern movement and of environmental or architectural determinism had been deeply questioned, research seems now taking again into consideration the possibility to use the space design as a tool for organizing the experiences of individuals and of entire communities, sometimes making use of a purely symbolic participation. In this regard, it seems appropriate, conversely, to recall Gans's (1968) analysis of the necessarily dialectical and non-deterministic relationships between a potential space, which exists only within the project, and its translation into actual space, that is, into the residents' choices and dynamics of utilization of places⁹. It would be also appropriate to consider how much the constructed space in its different scales may influence human behavior and how, to what an extent and under what conditions an architect can control the social environment and its procedural dynamics through the variables of design (Amendola, 1984).

Only after those managerial, cultural and organizational conditions have been identified, it is possible to develop and implement a series of suitable urban policies that allow the design space to become a living space. This applies to any architectural project aimed at designing the private as well as the public space, and, particularly, to those regarding the third space, which, for its specific functions, comes from a necessarily shared – as much as uncertain in its results – process of meaning acquisition.

The procedural nature of space planning and signification requires designers and residents to be in a dialectical relationship, which should also

⁸ “Between 1951 and 1954, thirty-three 11-storey buildings were built in St. Louis within a Public Low-Income Housing project on the basis of such a formally and technologically interesting project, that at the time, in the USA, a prestigious magazine like *Architectural Forum* described it as a prime example of public construction and as an ideal response to the issues put forward by clients. The outcome was disastrous: (...) tenants had a traumatic experience of the housing. (...) corridors and passages which in the architects' intentions had to encourage community life were avoided by tenants for fear of violence” (Amendola, 1984: 38).

⁹ “Between the physical environment and the empirically observable human behavior there lies a social system with a set of cultural norms defining and evaluating the portions of the physical environment that are relevant to the lives of the people involved, and that structure the way people will use (and will respond to) this environment in the day-to-day life. (...) the objective environment must be perceived subjectively before it can influence behaviours” (Gans, 1968: 5, 7).

include, when possible, the other users of the space, e.g. tourists. For instance, to improve the quality of the design's outcome, there should be a systematic implementation of ongoing evaluation and, also, a *Post Occupancy Evaluation*, as tools to enhance the essential *feed-back* process between experience, utilization practices and project. This points to a sort of communicative circularity as a way to encourage citizens, long seen only as users of architectural and urban planning, to become now active participants of the project itself, which is defined in the course of a broad and complex dialogical practice. «Enabling a body to function in a different way is paramount in those interventions aimed at revitalizing an area» (Lerner, 2003). This starts with the ability to address factual, material and social conditions of life, to predict possible degenerative forms that might turn into impediments to practical outcomes. The process of social inclusion is an objective that can only be pursued within this integrated perspective of multidimensional, interinstitutional, participated and shared actions. This means addressing the immigration-city binomial, taking into account both the dissonances, caused by the arrival of new social groups in the pre-existing consolidated urban balance, and the possible transformations in the city's shape. An approach of mild and responsible interventions could be the best option towards virtuous processes, because, while having a gradual impact, they hold on to a basic insight of the directions of change, invest in the citizens' learning capability and responsibility, become rooted and are all but episodic.

The challenge of governing a city lies in the ability to shape it as a bundle of practices that promote relationships and networks between the city and its surroundings, between the local and the global (Belli, 2013), and to deal with the complexity embedded in those relationships.

3. Some Italian experiences of intercultural *third spaces*

In the last twenty years, urban spaces dedicated to intercultural encounter have multiplied in Italy. In many cases, these are places in abandonment and then regenerated thanks both to the use of resources from public calls, and to the work of associations of different territories, often in collaboration with institutions. These spaces are fully configured as third-party places, having the characteristic of being placed in a point between public and private spaces. Although under the responsibility of specific subjects that coordinate their activities and operations, they are in fact places redesigned to be not only accessible to different subjects, but that have in this mission their specificity. Also from the typology of the events and services made available, it is clear that the priority objective is to be a place of exchange and intercultural

contamination in view of the objective of mutual recognition and active social inclusion.

The examples of experiences already realized in several Italian cities, transversal unlike the differences that often divide Italy, show not only the vitality of the territories, but also the effectiveness of these territorial projects that make urban spaces, but not only urban, opportunities for social regeneration also in view of complex goals of social sustainability.

Below some of the more or less recent experiences made in Italy will be presented, which are a part of good practices on which to initiate shared reflections between territories.

In the city of Lecce, a private home, abandoned for some time, has been transformed by the association Cameraasud¹⁰ in the space for the multicultural center Crossroads, public space for the sharing of projects, ideas and energies, for a new model of welfare and social regeneration, capable of bringing together, third sector, institutions and civil society. Within this project were born “Culture world”, the counter “No one is a foreigner” and the project FARI dedicated to cultural linguistic mediation in the health sector, through which the Association has provided mediation services to more than 1,800 foreign citizens, in 25 different languages, and trained about 500 employees of the ASL of Taranto, Lecce and Brindisi, which in various ways have to deal with migrants. Furthermore, in March 2020, in the midst of a health emergency, the FARI project did not stop but rather rethought its formula, transforming linguistic mediation services into multilingual communication services, to explain in 9 languages different hygiene rules and restrictions that needed to be adopted to combat infection by COVID-19. Today it continues to be a multidisciplinary space and a urban refuge, within which it is possible to find a desk for psychological support, counseling and psychotherapy; a legal desk for the protection of their rights; a social garden and a multicultural event space.

Bari has already realized for many years an interesting experience of third place through the establishment of the Intercultural Center Abusuan¹¹. The Centre, established in 1996, is primarily a physical space in which different cultures and ethnic groups meet for specific events, as well as for convivial moments. It organizes a series of activities such as “The Festival of Peoples” that through music and food promotes mutual knowledge and encounter, the Balafon Film Festival, the Bari Jazz Festival and the Makossa Soul Festival and then a series of workshops attended by Italian and foreign citizens and that often arise from shared reflection paths. In Bari was recently built the first

¹⁰ www.cameraasudaps.it

¹¹ www.abusuan.com

Intercultural Community Library¹² of the city in the spaces of the House of Cultures, the stable multifunctional center of aggregation, reception, orientation and intercultural dialogue located in one of the peripheral areas of the city. The aim is to stimulate the cultural liveliness and participation of the residents of the district in the activities of the center through the creation of opportunities and spaces for discussion and intercultural training.

In the city of Modena the House of Cultures¹³ was born, as a place for numerous associations of foreigners, mixed or Italian. The Center is a space that guarantees welcome and training, advice for the procedures for setting up associations, hospitality for associative activities. Currently, the main themes of the Centre's activities are: social cohesion in the neighborhood of the House; education for recycling among migrant communities; second generation; intercultural activities with civic museums; education for pregnancy, childbirth and childbirth; education to diversity (workshops for children and young people); school dropout; training to associations; memory (critical) of the colonial past of Italy. his space represents only one of the third spaces that the Emilia Romagna region has been endowed with and that involve, among others, the cities of Bologna¹⁴, Reggio Emilia¹⁵, Cesena¹⁶.

In the city of Turin The Intercultural Center of the City of Turin¹⁷, opened in October 1996, is a place of cultural exchange dedicated to all native and immigrant citizens, with the aim of offering opportunities for intercultural training as well as opportunities for meeting, dialogue and discussion on issues of common interest. Among the priority objectives of the Intercultural Centre there is the training carried out through training courses to produce changes in the attitudes and behaviors of people. The Centre deals with: organizing intercultural training, promoting seminars, conferences, thematic work tables; producing intercultural materials; organizing, in collaboration with the National Cinema Museum, the Permanent Territorial Centres and other city bodies, the film festival "Mondi Lontani Mondi Vicini"; enhance the realities of groups and associations present in Turin through events, meetings and workshops; host the CILS exams (Certification of Italian as a Foreign Language issued by the University for Foreigners of Siena) and Ditals (Teaching Italian to Foreigners). For some years now, the Centre has focused its attention on the theme of

¹² www.comune.bari.it

¹³ [www. http://www.casadelleculturedimodena.org](http://www.casadelleculturedimodena.org)

¹⁴ Centro interculturale "Casa di Khaoula",
www.bibliotechebologna.it/luoghi/62013/id/51650

¹⁵ www.mondinsieme.org

¹⁶ www.movimenti.altervista.com

¹⁷ www.Interculturatorino.it

second-generation young people and the reference places where to build a common youth culture between Italian and foreign young people. As others, this Center joined the National Network of Intercultural Centres.

The results already achieved in the framework of these experiences have shown the effectiveness of these hybrid territories, capable of generating opportunities for meeting and contamination. It is equally clear that strong and structured conditions for active inclusion processes could be created only in the everyday urban experience. It should also be recognised that these conditions require structured processes and opportunities and not episodic paths, within a long-term cultural and political planning.

4. Conclusions

Today's cities are far from being regulated by the policies of distancing between "urban differences". On the opposite, they are protagonists in an inclusion process that takes place, mainly, on the urban spatial level.

Within these processes, the third space, or better, the set of third spaces plays a key role in laying down the conditions for the acknowledgment of differences, and for their mutual recognition. This would be the first step towards a more comprehensive way to build the "inclusive arrival city", that is, a place embodying the German concept of "Heimat", where a large number of different people could "feel at home". The need for small spaces along the road, creating opportunities for meeting, is one of the many features that a city of arrival must have in order to be inclusive (Cachola Schamat, Elser, Scheuermann, 2016). Among these characteristics, the possibility should be also mentioned for the creation of "network of immigrants", in other words, an ethnically homogeneous area that may promote community networks, underestimating the risks of segregation processes, self- and hetero-ghettoization and isolation. In this sense, the *third space* can represent a strategy against these kinds of risks and an effective opportunity to act as a place of recognition and contamination of differences. In other words, it could be an important physical and symbolic space to tackle the sense of social invisibility (Honneth, 2002) where everyone can affirm their own difference and their right to be there and in order to achieve the objective of interethnic coexistence (Augustoni, Alietti, 2009).

At first, the third spaces might appear as "counter-spaces", a sort of "located utopia" (Foucault, 2004: 13). According to Michel Foucault, "heterotopias" are those "different spaces (...), other places, a kind of contestation of the space in which we live, which is mythical and real at the same time" (Foucault, 2010: 13). They might be seen as ontologically hybrid

territories, suspended between the real and the imaginary. Among the different kinds of heterotopies related to passage, transformation and regeneration, Michel Foucault focuses on those that make possible an encounter and mixture between several places, which would be otherwise incompatible, such as the theatre, “which creates a whole series of places that are foreign to one another within the frame of the scene” (Foucault, 2010: 16), or the cinema. We may, thus, be led to consider the third spaces of heterotopies for their ability to interconnect the cultural, religious and linguistic spaces that different subjects experience and carry with them.

The third space can be, then, conceived as a differential space, able to offer hospitality to the foreigner, to welcome differences and grant them full legitimacy, starting from a spatial one. Here, the right to a “differential multitude” can become effective, that means the right to preserve the social, cultural and historical identities is guaranteed without being translated in inequality.

To describe racism in spatial terms, Edward Soja draws upon Hooks’ analysis (1990) of homeplace as a site of resistance, a crucial site for organising, forming political solidarity. Similarly, the third space could be imagined as a space of cultural and social change towards a new social and political project. According to this, a post-national citizenship must place particular emphasis on the fact that citizens are people, not just holders of rights deriving from their membership to specific political communities (Zanfrini, 2015). This citizenship model will be, therefore, based on the project of a new national community, which will be the outcome of a shared path towards common aims and values, rather than of a common historical and cultural identity. The city takes care from a path of recognition that leads to the construction of a feeling of belonging to the common (Magatti, 2020). As Walter Benjamin wrote, talking about the need to listen to the “story of the other”, only when the different stories have been known the listener can re-perceive and re-define himself in a new, different and common way.

References

- Agustoni A., Alietti (2009), *Società urbane e convivenza interetnica*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.
- Albrow, M. (1997), *The global Age*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Ambrosini, M. (2012), *Governare città plurali. Politiche locali di integrazione per gli immigrati in Europa*, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Amendola, G. (1984), *Uomini e case. I presupposti ideologici della progettazione architettonica*, Bari, Dedalo.

- Amendola, G. (1990), *La città postmoderna. Magie e paure della metropoli contemporanea*. Bari, Dedalo.
- Amin A. (2002), *Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity*, in "Environment and Planning A", 34, 6, pp.959-980.
- Augustoni A., Aletti A. (2009), *Società urbane e convivenza interetnica punto vita quotidiana e rappresentazioni degli immigrati in un quartiere di Milano*, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Bauman, Z. (2004), *Intervista sull'identità*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Belli, A. (2013), *Spazio, differenza e ospitalità. La città oltre Henri Lefebvre*, Roma, Carocci.
- Bhabha, H., (2001), *I luoghi della cultura*, Roma, Meltemi.
- Borch, C. (2002), *Interview with Edward W. Soja: Thirdspace, Postmetropolis, and Social Theory*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2002.9672816>, pp.113-120.
- Bridge G., Watson S. (2003), *A companion to the City*, USA, Blackwell Publishing.
- Cachola Schamat P., Elser O., Scheurmann A. (edited by), (2016), *Fostering intercultural collaborative encounters*, <https://www.wusgermany.de/sites/wusgermany.de>
- Carrera, L. (2015), *Vedere la città. Gli sguardi del camminare*, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Cellamare, C. (a cura di) (2011), *Progettualità dell'agire urbano. Processi e pratiche urbane*, Roma, Carocci.
- Chiesi, L. (2012), *Il doppio spazio dell'architettura. Ricerca sociologica e progettazione*. Napoli, Liguori.
- Ciaffi D., Crivello S., Mela A. (2020), *Le città contemporanee. Prospettive sociologiche*. Roma, Carocci.
- Crosta, P., (2010), *Pratiche. Il territorio è "l'uso che se ne fa"*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Davis, T. (2010). *Third spaces or heterotopias? Recreating and negotiating migrant identity using online spaces*. [Journals.sagepub.com](https://journals.sagepub.com).
- Dioguardi, G. (2017), *Per una scienza nuova del governo della città*. Milano, Donzelli Editore.
- Foucault, M. (2001), *Spazi altri. I luoghi delle eterotopie*, Milano, Mimesis.
- Foucault, M. (2004), *Utopie Eterotopie*, Napoli, Cronopio.
- Foucault, M. (2010), *Eterotopie*, Milano, Mimesis Editore.
- Gallino, L. (2006), *Italia in frantumi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Gans, J. (1968), *People and Plans*, New York, Basic Books.
- Gibson, J.J. (1979), *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston, Houghton.
- Gieryn, T. F. (2000), A space for place in sociology. *Annual review of sociology*. annualreviews.org
- Halford, S. (2004), Towards a sociology of organizational space, [Journals.sagepub.com](https://journals.sagepub.com)
- Honneth, A. (2002), *Lotta per il riconoscimento*, Milano, Il Saggiatore.
- Hooks, B. (1990), *Outlaw Culture*, New York, Routledge.

- <https://www.wusgermany.de/sites/wusgermany.de>
- Ikas K., Wagner J., (edited by) (2009), *Communicating in the Third Space*, London, Routledge.
- Koser, K. (2007), *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford.
- Lefebvre, H. (1967), *Le droit à la ville*, Paris, Edition Anthropos.
- Lefebvre, H. (1970), *Le manifeste différentialiste*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Lerner, J., (2003), *Acupuntura Urbana*, Rio de Janeiro, Iaac.
- Magatti, M. (2018), *La città convivio*, in Giuliani I., Piscitelli P. (a cura di), *Città*, sostantivo plurale, Milano, Feltrinelli
- Magatti, M. (a cura di) (2009), Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Martinelli, N. (2009), *Per un atlante della città pubblica di Bari*, Bari, Adda editore.
- Martinotti, F. (2017), *Sei lezioni sull'urbanistica*, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Mazzette, A. (a cura di) (2013), *Pratiche sociali di città pubblica*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Mela, A. (2020), *La città postmoderna*, Roma, Carocci.
- Mongardini, C. (2004), *Le dimensioni sociali della paura*, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Perec, G. ([1974] 1989), *Specie di spazi*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri.
- Queirós, M. (2016), *Edward Soja: geographical imaginations from the margins to the core*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2015.1130447>, pp.154.160.
- Raffestin, C. (2012), *Space, Territory and Territoriality*, in “Environment and Planning D: Society and Space”, 30, pp.121-141.
- Sandercock, L. (2003), *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century*, London, A&C.
- Secchi, B. (2013), *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Simmel, G. (1903), *La metropoli e la vita dello spirito*, Roma, Armando Editore.
- Soja, E. W. (1989), *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London New York, Verso.
- Soja, E. W., (1996), *Thirdspace: journey to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*, Malden, Blackwell.
- Soja, E. W., (2007), *Dopo la metropoli: per una critica della geografia urbana e regionale*, Bologna, Patron.
- Tocci, W. (2019), *Postfazione* in Lelo K., Monni S., Tomassi F., *Le mappe della disuguaglianza. Una geografia sociale metropolitana*, Milano, Donzelli Editore.
- Urry, J. (2001). *The sociology of space and place*. Wiley Online Library
- Verdirame G., Harrell-Bond B., (2005), *Rights in Exile: Janus-Faced Humanitarianism*, New York, Berghahn Books.
- Zanfrini, L. (2015), *The Diversity Value: How to Reinvent the European Approach to Immigration*, McGraw-Hill.