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## Inclusive cities for intercultural communities. European experiences

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### Abstract

Multiculturalism is an emerging issue in research and in the political agenda, especially with regard to the recent migratory waves in Europe. The pivotal role of urban policies in intercultural integration has been increasingly recognized and today cities represent the forefront for improving cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Against this background, the paper explores what some cities are doing to be more inclusive, and points out the main challenges that communities are facing in order to provide for equitable outcomes in terms of social and spatial justice. Many initiatives and projects demonstrate the role of bottom-up initiatives and of community engagement. These are often activated by local policies that encourage the work of cross-cutting networks and embody clear visions of land development in an intercultural approach. The local scale represents both a privileged point of view to measure the level of inclusion in contemporary cities and a field for testing multicultural urban project.

In this perspective, urban planners can contribute to the identification of the needs of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural groups, thus transforming urban spaces and services for an intercultural local development also through community engagement and participation in regeneration processes.

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## 1. Immigration and cultural diversity in contemporary cities

The paper aims to analyze experiences developed in European cities for the improvement of intercultural integration. This focus is part of the multidisciplinary research “Città interetnica e cittadinanza inclusiva: il caso della Campania” coordinated by Bianca Petrella at the Second University of Naples (Italy), within the funding scheme L.R. 5/2002, 2008 of the Campania region.

Intercultural integration is a key issue both in political and in scientific debates because of urban societies. These are, for reasons linked to the international flows of people and cultures, increasingly multicultural (Sassen, 1991; Sandercock, 1998; Sen, 1999; Martiniello, 2000; Germain, 2002; Allam et al., 2004; Balbo, 2005; Grandi & Tanzi, 2007; Hutchinson & Krasem, 2007; Clemente & Esposito, 2008; Martinello & Rath, 2011; Lo Piccolo, 2013; Clemente & Oppido, 2015).

Producing an inclusive city is a shared goal in the international political and research agenda. This is defined as «[...] a place where everyone, regardless of wealth, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities cities have to offer» (UN-HABITAT, 2002:5). In this scenario, international migration is the most important factor affecting city populations (Oc, Tiesdell & Moynihan, 1997; Castel, 2000; Wood & Landry, 2007). Gebhardt, 2014).

Recent approaches focus on the role of a bi-directional and symmetrical dialogue as well as mutual learning between host and immigrant communities (Marconi & Ostanel 2015). This is also consistent with the concept of intercultural dialogue as an «[...] open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect», defined by *The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*, adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the 47 member states in 2008.

Today multiculturalism represents the fourth dimension for a sustainable development: in the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, UNESCO points that «[...] As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature » (Declaration, article 1) and that «it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence» (Declaration, article 3).

In this perspective, the intercultural city is an equitable city (Madanipour, 2011; Michelangeli, 2015) that ensures equal access to services and housing to all citizens. Above all, it is a city where all inhabitants have the same opportunities and all ethnic minorities can participate in the decision-making process. Urban equity was also the central theme of the World Urban Forum (WUF), held in Medellin (Colombia) in April 2014.

Many projects and initiatives in Europe deal with integration challenges in urban contexts. These aim at identifying conditions that facilitate the interaction among individuals and groups who have different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, such as EURO CITIES Integrating Cities Processes and Intercultural Cities Programme of the Council of Europe. Intercultural Cities Programme supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies for managing diversity and producing advantage from cultural diversity: «Interculturalism is a concept that promotes policies and practices that encourage interaction, understanding and respect between different cultures and ethnic groups» (Wood, 2009:11). The Programme proposes a set of analytical and practical tools for helping local stakeholders throughout the various stages of the process (Wood, 2009; Consiglio d’Europa, 2009). These initiatives stem from the principle that increasing cultural and ethnic diversity is not only a challenge but also a huge opportunity that cities must grasp.

Starting from this scenario, the research focuses on urban initiatives for multicultural integration that seek to create socially inclusive urban environments and thus to respond to the needs, challenges, and opportunities posed by new residents (Grandi, 2008; Wood, 2012; Ambrosini 2013; Fabbriatti, 2013; Briata, 2014). Therefore, the survey identifies initiatives with a specific focus on the urban organization of in terms of uses and services.

The study aims to offer useful insights to policy makers, city managers and planners for managing diversity and creating conditions for improving urban inclusiveness. Besides, the analysis of European case studies provides valuable insights to the discussion of more general concepts related to integration issues. These issues are particularly relevant if considering recent increase in migration flows. Indeed, recently, the wide refugee emergencies are creating a more challenging atmosphere, even in countries that were traditionally engaged in

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