

Judy Ho
Editor



Immigrants

Acculturation, Socioeconomic Challenges
and Cultural Psychology

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IMMIGRATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

IMMIGRANTS

**ACCULTURATION, SOCIOECONOMIC
CHALLENGES AND CULTURAL
PSYCHOLOGY**

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Chapter 11

COLLECTIVE SPACES FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE: IMMIGRANTS AND THE RIGHT TO BEAUTY

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“Architecture is not only about domesticating space.
It is also a deep defence against the terror of time.
The language of beauty is essentially the language of timeless reality”.
(Harries K., 1982)

ABSTRACT

The paper reports the results of a larger research project on collective urban spaces as harmonization drivers for intercultural dialogue. The assumption behind the proposal is that, in the third millennium, the construction, rehabilitation or recovery of outdoor urban spaces should take into account the promotion of a new sense of identity among individuals and groups (Gifford R., 1987). Deep changes in urban frameworks, challenge contemporary cities, where often, common spaces formerly central, risk an indissoluble physical degradation, due to processes of social marginalization. Architectural and urban design, through the promotion of beauty, can convey new messages of dialogue and coexistence between communities (Butina G., Bentley I., 2007).

The paper, focusing on small leftover urban outdoor spaces in Italian cities, introduces a critical thinking about the links between their performances, in terms of image, practicability, accessibility, security and attitudes towards inclusivity. Urban and architectural solutions are privileged means in order to reaffirm the concept of common space as dwelling, residence of the community, with the creation of new social ties and the growth of local shared identities. There was a time in which intellectuals, architects and philosophers foreshadowed a city model where people were the centre of the building and living. Technologies supported the sizing of urban spaces on a human scale, with

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areas devoted to socializing, with walkable sites and reasonable distances, privileged places for exchanges and meetings. In a world that slowly loses the original connotations, the city is asked once again, today, to reaffirm the reasons of a forgotten identity, putting man at the centre of the polis, supporting the diversity of civil society with dialogue and coexistence.

The essay concentrates on the processes of acculturation occurred in Italian cities: in urban contexts these were always accompanied by an increase in the potential for beauty. A choral sedimentation marked the acculturation of architecture, where beauty becomes externalization of shared values: its definition is the result of physical, material elements, and intangible factors, evocative and suggestive, like the ability to put in place mechanisms of identity, respect and consideration.

Claiming the cities' right to beauty, through the commitment in planning for the recovery of ancient sites, implies a shift of attention from the design theme of safeguarding the physical system, the contrast of material degradation, to the centrality of users' in redesigning places, recognizing a priority to shared values archetype for development. According to urban planners, the city today has to be connected (rather than being a juxtaposition of segregated spaces) and transitive, viable and accessible in all its directions (and not just, for example, from the periphery to the center). The intercultural city should encourage the sharing of its sedimented beauty, to help preventing from danger and setting all inhabitants free. Beauty is the only way to rediscover the value of urban hospitality: to live does not mean either reside or stay, not occupy or preside, but to trace people' biography into the landscape (Illich I.). Affirming the right to beauty for intercultural urban spaces means marking the characteristic feature of living in having care, and saving sedimented identities.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in urban frameworks challenge contemporary cities; they are often an expression of cultural dynamics, with social and environmental relapses, that pervade built heritage identity and its potential for transformation (Butina & Bentley, 2007). Urban areas are the point of closer contact between immigrants and natives: ancient cities in Europe have been growing as places of spatial, functional, social, economic sedimentation (Botta & Crepet, 2007). As a result of long processes throughout the centuries, public sites have been often maturing special aptitudes towards flexibility and transformation, with respect to the repeated stresses due to the arrival of unexpected rulers, of wars, famine, unemployment (Altman & Chemers, 1980). Until the early decades of the '900, materials and construction techniques are a guarantee of technological, historical, symbolic continuity in the city. The aptitude to permanence is unexpectedly challenged in the European city of the third millennium, when two opposing trends mark the relationship between built spaces and newcomers: while immigrants tend to homologate to the host country culture, the Old World tends to move away from its roots, to embrace models of spatial organization devoted from other matrixes. The postmodern situation with demographic and cultural changes hardly impacts on public spaces configuration, deeply changing uses. Cities become, often, places of transit, first landing in migration trajectories, triggering untested complexities (Buttitta, 2011). In a scenario of hyper consumption and globalization, focused on entertaining rather than on growing together (Appadurai, 1990), the scientific community active on architectural and urban issues is called upon to put in place tools and methodologies to ensure conservation, mediating unknown pressures, managing the overcoming of prejudices.

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Transforming the impact of new presences into an opportunity for development is a commitment which brings together the understanding of spaces' past vocations, the recovery of local resources and the satisfaction of rising needs (Cacciari, 2009). If *cities magnify humanity's strengths*, the influx of newcomers sharpens spaces and, attracting talents, starts unusual possibilities of competition (Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2009). In order to outline the creative power of residents in ancient sites (Lewicka, 2005), matter of priority becomes understanding identity invariant related to physical space and analyzing the transformation processes already carried out by communities.

Following a scientific approach, the city of Naples has been assumed as an emblematic kaleidoscope of experiences, for a piloted study on the impact of newcomers in an ancient city with a millennial tradition of intercultural dialogue, built through the conformation of small collective leftover spaces. After centuries of encounter and interaction, migration pressures from the late '70s change the interactions between buildings and environment. The chain of social coexistence is suddenly interrupted with a break in the processes of constructive knowledge sharing: migrant communities are not anymore supported by residents in starting a process of dialogue with the existing, going to superimpose improper features and solutions with respect to the built texture. Scientific research is called upon to face, therefore, a reality in which the presence of migrants becomes one of the main causes of degradation and radical negation of previous identities.

URBAN SPACES AND THE INTERCULTURAL CHALLENGE

Assuming public sites as the backbone for the city, collective spaces always behaved as a sort of primary infrastructure for social relations and interactions across communities, returning a framework of skills (Augé, 2012). Since ancient, the influx of newcomers has been impacting on spaces, often fostering the design or re-design of outdoor and indoor areas, in order to give an answer to changing needs. Migration processes affecting on spaces, bring into play the potential of human capital in reconfiguring the relationships between past and future, with the promotion or negation of sites' attractiveness, competitiveness, quality of life. As connective tissue of cities' functions, outdoor collective spaces in the Old World have been assuming the role of obliged filter, through which communities could mature their ability to dialogue. A critical analysis of collective sites, in terms of morphological and dimensional connotations and built elements' performances, can nowadays, support the comprehensive review of attitudes to social inclusion that the city can promote (Cunningham, 2011). Matter of priority among the intercultural challenges, is the attitude of sites to promote attraction, impacting on the relations between pre-existence and external influences. Western cities in the past have been giving different answers to the imperative of inducing in individuals the desire to *continue residing there*, impacting on physical features and the attitude to give rise to perceptions, influencing behaviour and implying understanding of meanings (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

Resorting to a detailed analysis on ancient cities with the disciplinary support of architectural technology, two conflicting tensions seem to challenge the evolution of public spaces, divided between permanence and innovation. The first instance connotes the processes up to the '900, with public spaces' transformations delivered with the intent of

granting sites' continuity (Frampton, 2007). Accumulating values and instances, often ancient sites were shaped through the overlap of configurations and layers of meaning, put in place with different speeds, depending upon the involvement of native communities, and newcomers. Supported by a continuity of constructive and material vocabulary, cities were enriched by the effort to hold in spaces a variety of intentions of actions, visions, plans, expressed and unexpressed variously projected toward the future (Gabrielli, 1983). The encounter between cultures throughout history resulted in terms of complexification for morphologies and organization through the design and construction of areas and buildings dedicated in social, economic forms and practices, such as public meetings, popular and official ceremonies, trade, and worship.

During the post-war reconstruction, a significant fracture in urban configuration processes is induced with the creation of new residential and social gathering places and the abandonment of old spaces. This phenomenon expands its average threshold in Italy in the '80s, with the arrival of the first migratory flows. The re-proposition of consolidated social differentiations, with a cultural segregation and the denial of past values, relapses on the built heritage, in terms of morphologies and constructive choices. Historic centres show the greater power of attraction for external communities, both for the easiest access to private homes at a relatively lower, and for the presence of services. While the penetration within the residential areas does not cause severe transformations in the ancient settlements' identity, much more significant is the impact caused by working activities. The presence of foreign communities that work in the centre often gives rise to unused conditions of weakness affecting the built. Generally, a new fragility is induced by actions of fragmentation of the constructive local culture through the recourse to homologate technical vocabularies for the delimitation of spaces and inappropriate finishes (Pallasmaa, 1994). Next to the aging processes related to an inner deviation between the traditional construction processes and current craftsmen capacity, spaces often experience a sort of technological erosion, due to the loosening of ties between components, finishes, furnishings, and accustomed culture in terms of elements and devices' specific attitudes and performances. In the ancient Western city, reconnections and mediations between settled cultures are complex processes that can permanently alter past qualities in the name of globalization. In order to face the intercultural challenge, the city must learn from its ancient attitudes to integrate technical and spatial new elements to the existing ones in accordance with the cultural vocations of all the settled communities and local constraints. The intercultural city rejects any break with the past and opens up new common denominators among performances and social values.

SPACES' PERFORMANCES BETWEEN PRESERVATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Committed to combining the efforts of remembrance with the projection to an expected future, Naples shows over the centuries a permanent capacity to balance culture with external impacts. The city due to an inner dynamic *genius loci*, has the capacity to accommodate and reorganize cultural influences with users needs (Norberg – Schulz, 1980). Public spaces return two tensions: on one hand, an attitude towards membership as sites' abilities to increase in users the feeling of belonging, sharing values, on the other an attitude towards

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social relationship promotion, as sites' capacity in mediating conflicts. This specificity accounts, over the centuries, in the natives and newcomers' feelings: it finds reason to be, in the physical and environmental identity of the city. Especially the ancient part of the layout shows through construction, technologies, morphological and distribution choices, traces of a tradition rooted to the specificities of local technologies. A condition of recurrence connotes the construction process, based on the use of local materials, by virtue of the continued presence of settled workers merging with others coming after the dominators. The construction process offers the city an opportunity to share knowledge as a result of the encounter between different wisdoms and leads to unexpected technical and procedural choices. Architectures are not the result of external penetrations but opportunities for spatial concepts' maturation and technical solutions innovation. Built environments become emblematic expressions of sites' attitude, recurring for centuries, to communicate, to contextualize foreign influences with localized potentialities and knowledge. Buildings express cultural and social developments reached in different periods, as direct evidence of the changes that the needs of dominating courts and local patrons suffer, due to the political and economic organization. This approach is supported by a critical review on the constructive processes occurring since the Angevin age, when Charles I decides to build new churches, placing side by side the French masons who realized the great cathedrals and the Neapolitan builders. The church of San Lorenzo Maggiore in Naples, commissioned by Charles I (1270 - 1275), for example, complaints through the planimetric structure and the openings' layout, the interaction between cultures and workforce: while the apse area recalls slavishly to French cathedrals (especially the Abbey of Royaumont), the nave is unique and covered by wooden trusses, expression of the indigenous workers emancipated from the French style. Later, the Duomo, the churches of Santa Chiara, San Domenico and San Pietro a Maiella, built by the three generations of Angevin Kings (from 1266 to 1343), testify the mediation efforts to give rise to an original constructive, architectural and artistic code.

In the same way, the process of cultural interaction comes back in the Aragonese or Spanish Viceroy era: the architectural culture matures as a result of the encounter between different wisdoms. Places like the courtyard of Castel Nuovo or the Sala dei Baroni (1450) are, on the constructive, regional responses, effective mediation of external impacts. Conversely, technical solutions when not mediated by a conscious awareness about their opportunities and performances, do not penetrate in a stable manner in the technical lexicon. Thus, for example, in the mid '700, the use of bricks to strengthen the tufa performances adopted by Ferdinando Fuga in the Real Albergo dei Poveri (1743), despite the size and role of this realization, does not affect the building practice.

The direct examination of two emblematic small leftover places of Naples, affected by the presence of migrant communities, can bring to light differences in terms of interculturalism in ancient times and in recent transformations. The first surveyed public space is Piazza San Gaetano, agora in Greek times and Forum with the Romans, for long centuries the centre of public life, place of meeting of the established community with newcomers. Under the Angevin and Aragonese dominations as during the Spanish viceroys' period, the square reports through its forms, materials and construction solutions, the complexity of social interactions. The place is marked on one side with the columns of the Tempio dei Dioscuri shooting in the San Paolo Maggiore Basilica, on the other by the complex of San Lorenzo Maggiore. Several reorganizations affect the built environment, united by the wish to make this place the privileged meeting point between different cultures.

Tangible sign of this will can be found at the bell tower of the Basilica of San Lorenzo Maggiore, where there are eight coats of arms representing the same number of seats in Naples, as administrative institutions within the city. The processes of conservation and transformation put in place in this area of the city, through centuries, denounce the efforts to decline continuity, strengthening the instances of texture integrity despite irregularities that are submitted to distributive, dimensional and material choices. Space's morphologies and technical equipments are assumed as privileged chances for mediating multicultural presences, promoting elements' attitude in coping with changes, favoring dialogue, identity respect, and the creation of common references. Design arrangements aim to grant respect for the original genesis and consequent transformation of spaces, showing shapes and distributions coherent with initial features and formative rules.

The design approach developed over the course of the twentieth century towards public space is strongly influenced by the presence of *in transit users* who introduce into the settlement areas, temporary functions. In a city traditionally of emigration as Naples, immigration acquires visibility during the '70s and more fully in the '80s, affecting those areas served by mobility infrastructures. According to these processes, the second public space taken into account is the district near the central station and the harbour, historically devoted to trade, become, in recent years, a pole of high ethnic concentration. Outdoor spaces, squares and paths, in Corso Garibaldi, where pedestrian mobility meets mass transport, become crucial crossroads in the development of the multicultural city. This area accommodates in the last decades, a wide outdoor ethnic market that attracts both Neapolitan citizens and migrants. With advertising signs, colours and materials unrelated to the tradition, commercial activities impact negatively on texture, distorting the image of ancient buildings, affecting particularly the basement area of the ancient roads. Resorting to wild design choices and not withstanding the instructions of the municipal regulation, eateries, Internet points, travel agencies, money transfer modify shapes and sizes of openings and windows, invade the sidewalks, alter the traditional built identity, connoting this district as a kind of globalized site. Its uneven texture lacks of a structured set vision and is strongly characterized by urban and architectural decay, with function's overlaps and loss of coherence. In the absence of conservation efforts, the transformation actions undertaken are not able to respond to instances of reception and inclusion. Direct consequence of these distortions is a switch in spaces and elements' integrability in terms of appropriate and well-designed equipments, compatible with previous characters, accessibility in terms of spaces' attitudes to stimulate the use of public areas (paving and sidewalks), and security.

THE RIGHT TO BEAUTY

In the history of Western Civilization, the processes of intercultural dialogue - declined in the strategies of reception, integration and inclusion - have been often, accompanied by an increase in the potential for beauty (Pallasmaa, 2000). In a theoretical dissemination on strategies and measure to govern the transformations induced by migration processes on the city, key factor becomes sites' capacity to trigger potentials for cultural sharing and growth. Taking into account the studies on the habits and vocations of migrants in Europe, an impacting reflection should come from the observation of the development opportunities that

the contemporary intercultural society can project over the city. Take up the path of beauty is possible acting on the processes of social interaction and cultural growth, promoting the rediscover of hospitality: to live does not mean either, reside or stay, not occupy or preside, but to trace people' biography into the landscape. There was a time when intellectuals, architects and philosophers foreshadowed a city model where people were the centre of the building and living. Technologies were devoted to dimension squares and roads on a human scale, with areas devoted to socializing, with walkable paths and reasonable distances, privileged places for exchanges and meetings. In a world that slowly loses the original connotations, the city is asked once again, today, to reaffirm the reasons of a forgotten identity, putting man at the centre of the *polis*, supporting the diversity of civil society with dialogue and coexistence.

Spatial and social dialogue for immigrants comes under the notion of a 'right to the city' advocated by multilateral organizations and referred to by various scholars (Brown & Kristiansen, 2009) who share in the assumption that every newcomer, by exercising rights and fulfilling duties like every other citizen, helps to build a civilization. The welcoming city has public spaces where differences are perceived but merge on the basis of equal respect, thus generating a revolutionary imaginary through a collectively accepted idea of beauty as the starting point for a new sense of belonging. Claiming the city the right to beauty, through the commitment in planning for the recovery of ancient sites, implies a shift of attention from the design theme of safeguarding the physical system, the contrast of material degradation, to the centrality of continuity and sedimentation in redesigning places, recognizing a priority to training and sharing archetypes for future development. Architectural and urban recovery, through the promotion of beauty, can convey messages of dialogue and coexistence between communities. The migrants' *demand for the city* features behavior that are rather at odds with those of settled population, eliciting social and cultural differences that can be difficult to reconcile and may become sources of conflicts. Diversity is not accepted easily and can be sensed as a threat, in particular, by the most vulnerable groups.

In a reality that slowly erodes its original connotations, the city can find in beauty the reasons of a forgotten identity, new common denominator among qualities, materials, values. Refer the concept of beauty to a settlement, calls into question at the same time the physical, economic and social features and skills that characterize it. The beauty of an ancient place, not only is returned from the elements in it that already exist or are in the past, but refers to the relationship between past and future. It is deeply marked by manufacturers who worked and work: designers, master builders (De Botton, 2006). The ways to modify space, to choose materials and process them, to and implement technical solutions, determine qualities and performances. The conditions and time of use, profoundly affect places, impacting significantly compared to the evolutionary dynamics, with the possibility to insist slowly and deeply on features. It becomes a call to unexpected values, a condition of membership and promotion of inclusion, flywheel of positive impacts on the social and economic capacity to attract business investment users. Built environment recovery can give rise to changes in the potential for beauty: the presence of migrants, affecting the symbolic value of spaces, can specifically connote and redevelop certain areas, temporarily, sequentially, or in a more stable manner contaminating them, with the rhythm of religious festivals and collective rituals, with the adaptation of settlement sites.



Figure 1. Naples, Piazza San Gaetano, architectures as expressions of cultural sedimentation.

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Figure 2. Naples, Corso Garibaldi, built environment transformations in the *transit area* near the central station and the harbour.

Assuming beauty as an expression of subsequent sedimentations, due to constructions' structural concepts, morphological articulation of space, overlapping of pathways, potentialities of glamour, balance, harmony, attraction can come from synergies between cultures. The importance of this theoretical assumption is to be found in the link between knowledge and earnings. The intercultural city can become richest, because it puts to good use its sedimented beauty. Favoring immigration, attracting smart people that are enabled to work collaboratively, urban sites become places of strong human interaction and education. Municipal density creates a constant flow of information from observing other people's successes and failures. Affirming the right to beauty for intercultural spaces means betting on a new role that architectural technology can play in the governance of the transformations. Emblematic in this regard is the effort put in place in Naples in recent years, for the realization of the underground stations along the metro line 1. In particular, the station Toledo recently opened can be taken as an expression of the commitment to hold together present and future, within a project that in urban recovery sees an opportunity for social regeneration. Designed by the Spanish architect Oscar Tusquets, the station with sophisticated devices to ensure access to tracks placed -50 meters above the street level, is a testimony about the role that technology can play in a recovery design. The action takes on an exceptional character when it becomes revelation of past beauty, today denied through the reinterpretation of the transformations, for a reacquisition of sites' specificities (Eco, 2011). The works have highlighted parts of the Aragonese fortress of the late fifteenth century and beginning of the

sixteenth century, in particular, a bastion that disappeared under a blanket of traces attributable to Don Pedro of Toledo, walls that incorporated structures from the Roman era of tufa blocks with brick bands, probably relevant to a thermal building, a paleosol characterized by traces of cross-plowing, associated with some ceramic fragments related to the facies of Diana, framed in the final Neolithic (late V - early fourth millennium BC). Within the recovery experience the design invests in beauty, not only for shapes, values, past behaviour, but mainly to envision the potential for development. Pass on the beauty of a site is imperative that in addition to calling into question the protection of traditional characters, contrasts the obsessive contemporary focus on forgetting history (Settis, 2004). In particular, a privileged access to the underground network is planned in conjunction with via Toledo from the Montecalvario square, in an area of the ancient *quartieri Spagnoli* crowded by newcomers. On the decorative, the attention to intercultural instances is highlighted by the decision to complete the connecting corridor, still under construction, with a photo installation by Oliviero Toscani entitled *Human Race / Italy*. The photographs depict the faces of natives and newcomers who wished to participate in the initiative and decided to pose for the famous photographer. Spaces pursue qualities, overcoming a condition of marginality, with the support of a technological visual focus.

CONCLUSION

Alongside the processes of slow growth, ancient cities are today, called to search for meaningful and effective responses to migration emergencies, working on spaces' individualities and dynamics. Raising opportunities for mending interaction between materials, cultures and contexts are offered by recovery approaches towards public spaces. This could be assumed as the intercultural way for cities' development, with the aim to promote an active social regeneration. Outlining the tracks for recovery becomes the condition to redefine design approaches able to balance preservation and innovation issues, with the support of creativity (Bandarin, 2011). Assuming ancient cities as evolutionary and complex systems, unexpected visions for built and un-built spaces offer the opportunity to redesign the fields of forces that insist on tangible and intangible values and protect the sedimented identities (Fusco Girard, 2003). Intercultural dialogue does not only need open mind, absence of prejudice, shared principles, cognitive flexibility, but also specific attitudes towards accommodation and welcoming put into play by physical space. Architectural design, arts and creativity can help to counteract the tendency of Western societies to entrench themselves in closed identities. The re- design of places opens future scenarios of innovation: focusing on the enhancement of the specific building culture, cities can today recover the ancient attitudes observed in the case of Piazza San Gaetano. Transforming the impact of external presences into an opportunity for development brings together the understanding of past vocations, the recovery of regional resources and the satisfaction of contemporary needs. In this perspective, spaces of collective uses can aspire to become experimental contexts in which to sketch measures to mitigate the effects of global and regional crises. Taking into account the metastatic growth of the city, the future of urban collective spaces undermines the experiences of the marginal areas as Corso Garibaldi, working on the possibility of raising sites' performances, deeply investing on residents' awareness towards newcomers, through

the promotion of accommodation and integration processes. Reinventing rules and behaviour for public space through recovery experiences, as in the station of Oscar Tusquets, is an opportunity to overcome any risk of homologation, highlighting memories, creating empowerment and development towards integration. Through the promotion of new technologies, architectural design can convey messages of dialogue and coexistence between communities. Solutions assume, under this perspective the role of privileged means in order to reaffirm the concept of common space as dwelling, residence of the community, with the creation of social ties and the growth of shared identities (Heidegger, 1971). Betting on the beauty of the city is the answer that the architectural culture can borrow from its past, with respect to the challenges of migration. The reacquisition of beauty becomes a means for establishing practical responses to globalization, able to ensure impacting relationships between natural and human resources available at the local and global market. To the demands posed by the dynamics of migration, the ancient city responds by bringing into play spaces and buildings. Through the ability to return priorities, reinventing technical solutions, distribution, functions, recognizing the continuing relevance of values, the ancient city moves towards new scenarios of prosperity.

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