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RETHINKING THE CULTURE OF

TOLERANCE I

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Editorial

Rethinking the culture of tolerance

The Special issue of *Dijalog* concerns the problematic notion of tolerance, and aims to analyze and discuss theoretical concepts of toleration, respect and recognition, and their practical significance within the growing complexity of contemporary Europe. The meaning of these specific types of action – to tolerate, to respect, and to recognize – was questioned here with regard to their potentiality to oppose and resist structural and political forms of violence, but also in their ability to strengthen social integration through novel models of interaction and communication in everyday life practices. The framework of the research that we present here deals with the idea of a European space in construction, in which a basic understanding and sharing of the fundamental principles of living-together is required. The process of Europeanization – not necessarily equated to ‘becoming a member state’ of the EU, but promoted and guided by the Europeanist élites – seems to be its main instrument, as declared in the Copenhagen and Madrid criteria of integration. It operates, as such, as a deepening of the political and economic, but also social and cultural integration, and as a widening, through enlargement towards new aspirant member countries and citizens. Both of these complex, nonlinear, and conflictual processes (Kauppi 2013), deeply interwoven, clash with the resistance of the national states’ order, contrasting the goal of ‘harmonization’ with the norms and rules defined by the *Acquis communautaire*, and imposing claims to re-define more severely the norms and rules of access to national and European citizenship and hospitality. New kinds of politics emerged across the EU member states, Western and Eastern, in forms of populism and anti-politics, but also of belligerent Right-wing parties, hostile towards the idea of a multicultural society, and towards European integration. On the other side, new kinds of established structural violence, through the politics and policies of exclusion and discrimination, has been evolving throughout Europe, exasperated by the ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ crisis from 2015 on, and fueled by the financial, economic, and political crises of the EU.

At the same time, in this political constellation, the limits and the liminal zones of uncertain borders of the European continent still need to be explored in this perspective, as the multifold barriers defining rules of inclusion, and thus also of exclusion, are constantly re-discussed and imposed from the center

to the European periphery. The ‘Western Balkan’ countries as a specific European space-set, and their citizens, are directly involved in this dialectics in its different aspects and dimensions, that heavily affects a difficult and controversial effort to reconstruct the destroyed basis of their specific social and cultural patterns of living-together (Sekulić 2017).

However, the question of ‘how to live together?’ within a shared space, and sometimes in spite of ‘irreconcilable differences’ (Derrida in Weber 2013), turns out to be our starting point, where the ‘traditional virtue’ of tolerance becomes a ‘political value’ (Kearns and Balister 2012), claiming for responsibility of the concrete political and civic action in context. In that sense, it becomes crucial to rethink and re-conceptualize what Thomas Forst defined as a shift from the hierarchical and power based ‘permission conception of tolerance’, towards the horizontal, ‘respect conception of tolerance’ based on reciprocity and generality, where the citizens are considered as equal arbiters of the political power (Forst 2004). Yet, for the author, the basic moral right to justification of every individual remains the essential element of toleration, seen as a ‘normatively dependent concept’ practiced in a desirable ‘political context of justice’ (Forst 2012).

If and to which extent the European Union can be considered such a political context, able to *really* guarantee political equality, and social justice and inclusion for *all*, seems to be a legitimate question here.

The *Treaty of Lisbon* nominates the notion of tolerance at the very beginning, Article 2°, together with other EU ‘common values’:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. (The Treaty of Lisbon, Article 2°)

The goal of understanding if and how the principles of pluralism and inclusion integrate tolerance, in demanding moral and political virtue in the growing complexity of the European societies, guided our research from the very beginning. Elisabetta Galeotti sustained that tolerance, understood as mutual recognition fundamental for contemporary pluralism, required a public and reasoned justification, as it presupposed the indication of what cannot be tolerated: the limits of intolerable were hence contextually re-defined within the boundaries of the principle of damage (Galeotti 2013). In that sense, we may recall the words of Gajo Petrović, who sustained that the limitation of the tolerable, as historically determined, was related to “those human actions and opinions that meet at least the minimum criteria of humanity”. Thus, such forms and acts of violence that “can be neither the subject of tolerance, nor

the subject of intolerance” may only “be the subject of our practical struggle.” (Petrović 1986)

In fact, the *World Day of Tolerance* – 16 November – was established by the United Nations in 1996 with Resolution 51/95, following the proclamation of 1995 as ‘the year of tolerance’. The historical context in which the UN deliberated such a decision were the conflicts of the 1990s marked by the genocides of Rwanda in 1994, and in Srebrenica in 1995, revealing the inability of international and European institutions to prevent and stop overwhelming violence in both cases. The resolution defines the principle of tolerance not only as a moral duty, but also as a political obligation (Article 1, first paragraph), placing much emphasis and a lot of trust in education “as the most effective tool against intolerance, of which the first step is to teach people to be bearers of shared rights and freedoms, and how to respect and enforce them” (Article 4.1). Furthermore, education to tolerate was considered here in terms of an “urgent imperative” (Article 4.2); the educational effects, however, can only be observed in the long term, and certainly do not have an immediate impact.

The effort to rethink the culture of tolerance, as the basic conceptual framework of this Special Issue, was born as an educational project of the International Summer School promoted by the Universities of Milano-Bicocca, Sarajevo and East Sarajevo, thanks to which in the last four years a network of scholars, young researchers and students was created. The discussion on tolerance and toleration concerned, each year, a different specific perspective, putting together diverse European contexts and experiences, and going far beyond the goal of teaching about tolerance, or educating somebody to the culture of tolerance, or just making one learn something about tolerance. The intent was to create an environment, a framework, in which everyone may talk and discuss together about different aspects of the culture of tolerance, mutually exchanging their own knowledge and experience. And, in that way, practice day-by-day toleration in its most important dimension of respect and recognition of each other.

The articles of this Special issue will approach the topic of multiculturalism in its mainstream perspective, and regarding the current crisis of the Western European societies, with a focus on everyday practices of encounter of diversities in a complex pluralistic society. At the same time, it will introduce the topic of the legacy of the Yugoslav wars 1991-1999, and the reconstruction of the post-conflict societies, considering it as a highly controversial process.

The contribution of Ilenya Camozzi, “Outlining a new Politics of Recognition: The significance of the everyday dimension”, will focus on the concept of recognition as inclusive of respect and tolerance, and as grounded in the everyday experience of difference. The author develops the discussion arguing with Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth, concerning both the everyday practices

of recognition, and the ambivalent nature of late modern institutions; the final reflection regards the need for a new politics of recognition.

Enzo Colombo's chapter, "Everyday Multiculturalism. The mundane uses of cultural difference", discusses the topic of multiculturalism starting from the everyday interactions among individuals and exploring the ways in which 'cultural difference' is used by the actors. The author starts from the premise that the use of categorical distinctions, and the moral and symbolic orders generated through them, always involve both enabling and constraining functions.

Roberta Marzorati and Michela Sempredon wrote about "Encounters and inter-group relations in diverse urban contexts: Reflecting on research fieldwork in Italy", based on a qualitative sociological research on migration narratives, practices and policies regarding several cases embedded in Italian urban space. The concept of encounter is considered by the authors as a key for overcoming the idea of cultural incompatibility, and thus indispensable for fostering not only social integration, but also social justice.

The following two chapters, written by Fabio Quassoli and Marcello Maneri, deals with the question of forced migrations and their consequences from two different perspectives. The first one, "Border security and asylum rights: The questionable construction of a European asylum regime", explores the transformation of the political and legislative approach towards asylum seekers in the last thirty years in Europe, which has become ever more restrictive and criminalizing. The authors addresses the question regarding the generative power of borders, the scholarship-produced conceptualization of human mobility, and finally the interconnection between the reworking of a European cultural and ethno-racial identity, and the process of policy reframing, with regard to the new 'migrant' crisis.

The second contribution, "Humanity and security under siege. European discursive politics on immigration and asylum", focuses on public discourse on immigration, displayed along the two poles of the axes – humanitarianism and securitization. The authors demonstrates how the first one, that follows dramatic events, is often forgotten almost immediately, leaving space for the second one, justified by a paradigm of siege, and normatively institutionalized, producing inhuman practices and tragic effects on people in the move.

The last chapter, "Language and resistance", written by Asim Mujkić, shifts the argument to the political and cultural controversies regarding the former Yugoslav societies and citizens. The author starts from the analysis of the possible impact of the recent *Declaration on common language*, where the same polycentric language appears as a source of conflict, and at the same time as a source of everyday border-crossing communication and interaction among

people in different social spheres. In that sense, the language is seen here as a means of resistance to the oppressive and particularistic political regimes.

Finally, thinking and talking about tolerance gets meaning through the effort to understand, as Wendy Brown said, “what tolerance could do in modifying existing power relations, towards more justice-oriented directions” (Brown&Forst 2014). In the meantime, we may only agree with Jacques Derrida’s words:

“At a moment when our world is delivered over to new forms of violence, new wars, new figures of cruelty or barbarity (...), at a moment when hostilities are breaking out, no longer resembling the worst that we have ever known, the political and historical urgency of what is befalling us should, one will say, tolerate less patience, fewer detours and less bibliophilic discretion.” (Derrida 1997)

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Outlining a new Politics of Recognition: The significance of the everyday dimension

ABSTRACT

The multicultural nature of contemporary societies has sparked much debate around classical concepts such as toleration, respect and recognition as suitable analytical and political tools when it comes to defining normative principles to regulate multicultural societies, engaging with the collective identities of marginalized and oppressed groups, and analysing the everyday co-existence of different cultures.

Specifically focused on the concept of recognition – here conceived as including toleration and respect - the article aims to offer a critical outline of a new politics of recognition, more grounded in everyday, lived experience of difference, with less of a focus on the normative elements of co-existing with diversity.

Starting from some critical elements of Taylor's politics of recognition – a significant proposal within the multiculturalism debate, despite the way it risks reifying culture and identity – the article proposing examining both everyday practices of recognition, and the ambivalent nature of late modern institutions, in order to gain insight into the key elements that a new politics of recognition should take into account.

Key words: Politics of recognition, cultural diversity, everyday multiculturalism, multicultural societies, power

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary societies has led scholars of different disciplines to reconsider classical concepts such as toleration, respect and recognition as analytical and political tools when it comes to defining normative principles to regulate multicultural societies, engaging with the collective identities of marginalized and oppressed groups, and analysing the everyday co-existence of different cultures.

In contemporary political discourse, above all, the debate around these concepts – often viewed as intertwined – appears to be divided into two camps.

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While some scholars feel that toleration, recognition and respect are the right notions to focus on in order to achieve equality and inclusion for all, others view them as concepts that conceal elements of power, domination and exclusion.

The notion of recognition, conceived as the public and political outcome of social practices based on respect and toleration¹, has played a central role in multicultural debate for at least the last two decades. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1990s, Charles Taylor's proposed politics of recognition stood at the heart of the complex debate on multiculturalism. The Canadian philosopher's reflections on the dimension of identity in *Sources of the Self* (1989) – and that of recognition, in *The Politics of Recognition* (1992) – were enthusiastically received within the scientific community which addresses the issue of coexisting with diversity in contemporary societies.

This article offers a critical analysis of the concept of recognition – and indirectly those of respect and toleration – in reference to multicultural societies, intercultural relations and collective identities. I intend to show the 'dark side' of this concept, especially in terms of how it risks hypostatizing differences and identities. I will start by highlighting a number of critical elements in the approach formulated by Taylor (section 1), who is known as a prolific author of literature on recognition and the pressing need for a politics of recognition in normative terms, and I will then outline various dimensions which in my view are of key importance when it comes to defining a new politics of recognition in which collective identities and cultures are viewed as dynamic elements. Briefly, I will try to outline a new politics of recognition that scales down the normative approach which usually characterizes the debate on multiculturalism (Colombo, 2015).

My focus is on the need to connect the new politics of recognition to both the everyday, intersubjective dimension of recognition, and its public/institutional aspect. To this end, my reflections will revolve firstly around the ambivalent nature of the institutions of the first age of modernity and will examine power, an element which characterises the dynamics of recognition (section 2). I will subsequently address the importance of the everyday dimension when it comes to formulating a new politics of recognition (section 3).

In view of the fact that devising a genuine politics entails identifying specific political actors and institutional programmes – which is impossible on this occasion – it should be noted that the following observations merely represent a starting point. I do not intend to design a new politics of recognition, purely to identify a number of issues that a new politics of recognition should take into account.

¹ With regard to the relationship between recognition, toleration and respect, see Forst (2003), Galeotti (2002), Habermas (1996), Modood (2013), Walzer (1997), among others.

2. THE RISK OF REIFYING IDENTITIES AND CULTURES

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Taylor's considerations on the formation of identity (1989) and the politics of recognition (1992) soon became a point of reference for the analysis of multicultural societies, not to mention a turning point in the debate on multiculturalism, lending legitimacy to the latter².

Focussing on the idea that the formation and definition of identity is mediated by the fact of belonging to a specific social context, Taylor's analysis offers key insight into the relationship between identity and recognition. The Canadian philosopher repeatedly highlights the importance of the social context in the process of identity construction, as well as the significance of the sense of belonging to a specific collective dimension.

The intention, and need, to understand the relationship with cultural differences and the implications of pluralistic societies subsequently led Taylor to analyse multicultural issues in depth, in search of answers compatible with the communitarian perspective. His ideas on recognition and his politics of recognition spring from this analytical frame.

Beginning with an analysis of Quebec, Taylor set out to comprehend not only the role that difference plays in the formation of identity, but also the issues connected to cultural pluralism, from a communitarian point of view. The call for recognition of different cultures is about more than just ensuring their survival: it is also concerned with raising awareness of their rich diversity and value. The individual characteristics of different cultures therefore need to be safeguarded by means of an authentic politics of recognition.

Taking his cue from Hegel, Taylor analysed the semantics of contemporary recognition, taking account of the demands for recognition made by members of oppressed and marginalized social groups. The first aspect he underlines is that humans are socially situated and therefore deeply vulnerable to the ways in which they are perceived and characterized by others. The second element is the need to establish norms of equality capable of regulating the distribution of recognition. To this regard, he argues that contemporary democracies must assure public recognition for all their citizens, as human beings and as bearers of distinctive social and cultural identities.

In Taylor's work the role played by the dimension of recognition in relation to identity formation and the cultural mosaic, not to mention its political implications, exerted a significant influence on multicultural debate. Nonetheless, it presents various ambiguities.

² For an overview of the debate on multiculturalism, see Habermas and Taylor (1998); Mo-dood (2013); Parekh (2000).

In his musings on identity, the philosopher appears to posit the existence of an a-priori, pre-set form of identity. While acknowledging the dialogic potential of the process of identity formation, he assumes that identity is a construct which needs to be exposed to its full extent, thus framing it as a specific, previously existing entity: in Taylor's view, recognition is the process by which identity is revealed in full. From this perspective, recognition therefore plays a sort of instrumental, auxiliary role. If we view recognition as merely a process that sheds light on the specific characteristics of the other, we run the risk of hypostatizing and setting in stone an identity that does not correspond to reality. Taylor's perspective not only underestimates the fact that identity is always dialogic and constantly evolving, but also fails to do justice to recognition, not acknowledging that the processes of identity formation and recognition run parallel to one another.

In Taylor's work this monolithic idea of identity corresponds to an equally monolithic idea of culture. His reasoning appears to postulate the existence of strong, impervious, unequivocal cultures that faithfully reflect the reality of society (Benhabib 2002; Lanzillo 2006; Markell, 2003). In this direction, however, as with regards to identity, he ends up postulating entities that do not necessarily exist, and even demanding that these be safeguarded by means of acts of recognition. As Gerd Baumann observes (1997; 1999), Taylor thus formulates a biologizing conception of culture, the imperative of which is self-preservation. This operation makes culture an entirely sterile element, depriving it of its rich, processual nature. The construction of authentic identities and cultures inevitably gives rise to borders and barriers among them, reproducing dominant discourses (*ibidem*).

It is in these terms that Taylor outlines the multicultural question and puts forward his proposed politics of recognition, formulated as an active, non-neutralizing form of political action designed to capture and safeguard authenticity (Lanzillo 2006). In Taylor's proposal, the concept of recognition loses its strength. It becomes so wide and general that it starts to feel excessively complex; moreover, it seems to assume a sort of 'magic power'. The Canadian philosopher appears to view recognition as the crucial element with regard to the idea of strong identities and cultures; an element capable of settling the entire multicultural question. (Baumann 1999). This entire issue is therefore reduced to the issue of recognising fixed cultural identities – identities which are traditional, archaic and contiguous, and therefore give rise to individuals' *Weltanschauungen*. In a work that is otherwise rich and complex, Taylor ends up by neglecting these very individuals, preferring to hypostatize identities and cultures that are not homogeneously represented by anyone (Markell, 2003). In my view, however, it is not identity and culture that needs recognition, but

the subjectivity of the social actor and his or her infinite capacity for change, in view of his/her status as a social subject. It follows that the concept of recognition needs to be reworked to include different values and characteristics from those assigned by Taylor.

3. ON THE AMBIVALENT NATURE OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND POWER

As Axel Honneth highlighted in *Kampf um Anerkennung* (1992)³, the intersubjective dimension is the crucial arena for recognition in general, and public recognition too. As I will attempt to show, any kind of politics of recognition should be rooted at this level. Moreover, the intersubjective dimension, which by definition regards the context of everyday practices, should also be intertwined with another dimension of recognition: the public/institutional dimension. In order to outline a new politics of recognition it is therefore opportune to keep these two dimensions - intersubjective and public/institutional - together, and consider not only the actors that grant and receive recognition, but also the dynamics of power that govern our social relationships with difference. And we cannot ignore the role played in these dynamics by the institutions of contemporary societies, political institutions in particular. In the light of this, the issue of recognition must also encompass the political sphere.

As underlined in the previous section, culture and identity risk to be considered as natural facts within the multicultural debate. Nevertheless, such a risk may involve also social actors in their social relations and characterizes the elaboration of integration politics and policies devoted to regulate the living together formally. At an intersubjective level, social actors adopt a category system, in order to respond to their ontological need to decode the complexity of social reality - also from the point of view of an increased level of ethnic pluralism. At a political/institutional level, politics and policies are characterized by the same category system, that risks to oversimplify the numerous nuances of diversity and the living together. In both cases, the act of recognition is therefore damaged by a reductive and essentialized view of culture and identity.

My proposal revolves around two points: it focuses on the ambivalent nature of both the institutions and power. It is the use made of the notion of recognition that reveals the ambivalence of the institutions and power. I will

³ With the aim of formulating an empirically anchored theory of social conflict based on Hegel's theory of recognition, in this book Honneth argues for an intersubjective view of identity and a moral interpretation of social conflict. According to the German philosopher, social struggles can be normatively evaluated by the extent to which they provide the preconditions for self-realization in the form of three distinct types of recognition: love, respect, and social esteem.

attempt to show how an examination of everyday practices of recognition and misrecognition reveals the ambiguous relationship that institutions and power have with diversity.

As we know, in the first age of modernity institutions were tools designed to guarantee social order and cohesion. Their purpose was to ensure that society functioned, by means of socialisation and the homogenisation of values and norms. While this applies to early modernity, in more recent times we have witnessed a process of de-institutionalisation (Touraine 1997). Values and norms connected to the nation, the family and religion, around which the institutions of the first age of modernity were organized, have been progressively called into question: they no longer represent predetermined entities in the life of a social actor. On the contrary, individuals are now actively involved in their own life choices (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). And in this context of de-institutionalisation, for the first time respect and recognition are emerging as central issues in an individual's life (Dubet 2002; 2006; Taylor 1992).

Alongside the decline and loss of legitimacy of modern institutions – borne out by the way in which social actors have detached and distanced themselves from the latter - there is a parallel process under way, albeit in the opposite direction. The multicultural make-up of contemporary societies has sparked defence mechanisms which set out to restore national values and reinstate the corresponding institutional programmes. This is where the ambivalence of the institutions lies. The presence of foreigners – in increasing numbers due to globalisation – appears to be eliciting a defence mechanism centred on the idea of rebuilding what the process of de-institutionalisation has weakened. This mechanism takes the form of artificially reinforcing representations concerning the idea of cultural authenticity, and the corresponding institutions. On a political and administrative level the concepts of nationality and cultural belonging thus come to the fore, and on this basis, rigid confines that exclude certain subjects are traced and justified.

Examining mechanisms of recognition and mis-recognition helps shed light on this process. Indeed in relationships of recognition that arise between “conditionals”, the concepts of nation and culture do not play a significant role: what predominates is the recognition of subjectivity, not national or cultural identity. Yet it is the latter which prevails in regulating co-existence with foreigners.

Apart from drawing attention to the ambivalence of the institutions, an analysis of relationships of recognition can also help highlight the ambiguous nature of another element in the social arena: power. As we know, mechanisms of power in society and between social actors are not always evident. In the relationship with otherness, in particular, power dynamics are multi-faceted and often concealed. Power-related discourse on the authenticity of a culture and

the sacrality of a nation (Said 1978; Baumann 1999) inevitably accumulates in the representations of social actors, i.e. in favour of some individuals and to the detriment of others. Such discourse, often masterfully manipulated by the media, translates into political decision-making. Once legitimised from a normative point of view, these decisions usually obtain the approval of social actors. This mechanism also ends up establishing the patterns that underpin the relationship of recognition: identifying both the actors who have the power to grant recognition, i.e. nationals, and those classed as recipients of it, namely non-nationals. Recognition therefore represents what is at stake, and also illuminates the hidden dynamics of power in relations with otherness.

As has been highlighted by the field of postcolonial studies, power gives rise to dynamics that enable it to be identified, and thus redefined. In other words, power, in showing its ambivalent character, can give rise to pockets of resistance and opposition which in turn become resources when it comes to defining new arenas in which power assumes a form that is more clearly defined and acceptable to social actors (Hall 1986; 1988; Hooks 1991; Spivak 1999). It is in the interstices of power structures that we can detect the contradictions of the social system and its institutions. Relationships with otherness and difference, in particular, are revealed as relationships of power that give rise to reactions of resistance and opposition, and thus enable the actors involved to draw attention to the hidden dynamics at play. And resistance to power opens up new arenas based around negotiation, thus making it possible to formulate alternative political practices.

This concept can be applied to the dynamics of recognition, which can in fact contribute to pointing up the specific power structures that govern social actors' institutional and intersubjective interactions. Where recognition is denied or only partially granted - due to power dynamics - pockets of resistance form. When they feel invisible (Bauman 1993; Crespi 2004; Honneth 2004; Pizzorno 2007), or only partially recognised, or indeed entirely misrecognised, social actors are induced to react, to take a stance and criticise the relations in question. If hegemonies and power structures are inevitable (Foucault 1977; Gramsci 1975) and an inherent part of every social relationship (Foucault 1976), weaker subjects can nonetheless use resistance to draw attention to the negative nature of the situation. In this regard one particularly significant factor, as previously mentioned, is the everyday dimension of practices of recognition.

4. EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF RECOGNITION

The significance of the everyday dimension in multicultural debate has recently been highlighted by scholars, as offering specific insight into social

practices and intersubjective relations among subjects from different ethnic backgrounds within contemporary, globalized societies. Moving away from the perceived limits of the multiculturalism debate – which primarily reduces differences to static, fixed, uniform elements⁴ - the everyday multiculturalism approach aims to analyse social conditions in which the presence of otherness calls for the active ‘decoding’ and ‘domestication’ of reified differences that are produced and re-produced on the macro level (Semi, Colombo, Camozzi and Frisina, 2009). Scholars embracing the everyday multiculturalism approach expose the gap between what theoretical approaches show or attempt to show on the issue of the co-existence with cultural difference and the results of empirical studies – especially those inspired by Grounded Theory and conducted with qualitative methods. In short, a growing number of scholars (Baumann 1999; Sarat 2002, Wise and Velayutham, 2009) is highlighting the lack of dialogue between theories and studies.

The concept of everyday multiculturalism can be used to analyse all those everyday social contexts where differences meet, are negotiated, clash and are re-negotiated; in other words, where differences concretely exist and are manifested. This perspective allows us to take account of the outcome of the categorization processes we use to decipher social reality ontologically, and the fact that social practices are also constantly fuelled by the contingent everyday social relations and the creative actions of subjects. The concept of ‘everyday multiculturalism’ is thus conceived as a category of practices – those concerning social actors who deal with difference – and a category of analysis – a ‘more sociological’ tool designed to detect differences in their formation and construction, and the complexity and multifaceted nature of co-existence (Semi, Colombo, Camozzi and Frisina, 2009).

Within the emerging approach of everyday multiculturalism, it has often been argued that - due to its normative nature - the concept of recognition plays a part in crystallizing and reifying collective identities and cultures. As previously illustrated, the concept of recognition is the basis of many attempts to formulate a politics of recognition based on respect and toleration within contemporary democracies. Nevertheless, little attention has been devoted to the significance of ‘recognition’ when it occurs within everyday interactions (Camozzi, 2008).

What we need to do is invert our point of view, throwing the focus on the processual, creative nature of everyday social practices. The creative potential of social actors (Joas, 1996) and their intersubjective practices are after all

⁴ For an exhaustive outline of the critique of the debate on multiculturalism see Colombo (2015) and Wise and Velayutham (2009).

characterized by their processual and dialogic nature, something that can not be confined by set ideas of culture and identity.

The vital role of the subject and intersubjectivity highlights the potential of the concept of recognition, including in relation to multicultural dynamics and the formulation of a new politics of recognition. Moving away from Taylor's approach, which sees recognition solely as an auxiliary tool to affirm ethnic culture and collective identities, and more in line with Honnethian's approach – i.e. more focused on the intersubjective aspect of recognition – the concept of recognition appears to be a useful analytical tool to explore everyday social practices. On one hand, it enables us to focus on intersubjective processes based on acts of recognition, while on the other, it lays the foundations for a processual analysis of collective identities and cultures. It therefore sheds light on the numerous outcomes of social interactions in encounters with diversity. These interactions might be peaceful encounters, or exhibit conflictual aspects, and can potentially reveal the tactics, or even strategies, deployed by subjects to regulate and negotiate diversity (de Certeau 1984). This kind of analytical approach highlights convergence processes (Baumann 1999), everyday episodes of multiculturalism (Semi, Colombo, Camozzi and Frisina 2009), and the unexpected outcomes of intercultural contexts that usually regulate the clash/encounter with diversity according to the categorization processes we are subjected to.

The concept of intersubjective recognition bears witness to the temporary, fortuitous nature of social interactions. In other words, it enables us to reflect on the subject. Moreover, it ensures that identity and culture are not at risk of reification, and it liberates identity from the exclusive dimension of culture.

As we argued in section two, intersubjective, everyday practices are the arena for the dialectic between the individual on one hand, and society, the institutions and power on the other: everyday practices therefore represent both a point of friction between individuals and society, and an opportunity for creativity, in which those very social relationships can be renegotiated and redefined (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Devoting attention to everyday practices and the way these come into being not only enables us to observe relationships with otherness as they arise, but also to visualise and expose the underlying power dynamics, and come up with creative alternatives. Everyday relationships with difference and the issues of recognition they give rise to can generate dynamics in which new political projects emerge. Similarly, on a theoretical level, an analysis of the everyday dimension of difference and recognition can represent an element to stimulate political reflection.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Coexisting with diversity is a fact of life in contemporary societies. Dealing with diversity is therefore a pressing concern in both political and theoretical terms. In this regard, classical concepts such as toleration, respect and recognition have dominated the humanities and the social sciences for at least two decades. They are framed as key concepts when it comes to analysing our pluralistic and globalized societies, though scholars appear to be divided on this: some enthusiastically embrace these concepts as the focus for the study of diversity and the basis for peaceful coexistence, while others believe they are ambiguous, and may conceal relationships of domination and violence.

My article aims to offer a theoretical discussion of these concepts and highlight how they are put into practice to prevent structural and political forms of violence and power. The focus is above all on the concept of recognition, viewed here as the public and political outcome of social practices based on respect and toleration.

In the debate on multiculturalism, recognition is usually viewed as a key concept when it comes to formulating policies to ensure equality and justice for all national and non-national citizens and their collective identities, yet it is also critiqued for at least three reasons. From a political point of view, the concept of recognition would be ineffective if it is viewed merely as the ethical element underpinning policy-making. Indeed, as Nancy Fraser argues (2003), to ensure distributive justice⁵ recognition must go hand in hand with redistribution, and not be viewed merely as a pre-condition for it. Moreover, a number of feminist scholars assert that presuming recognition to be universal could conceal differences and damage women's rights (Moller Okin, 1999). Lastly, as explained in previous sections, the paradigm of recognition could lead to the reification of identity and culture (Baumann, 1999; Benhabib, 2002; Markell, 2003).

Moving beyond this problematic aspect of the concept of recognition, and having sketched the critical elements of Taylor's conception of recognition and his proposal for a politics of recognition, in this article I have suggested looking at the concept of recognition from a different angle. I propose moving the focus away from normative concerns and looking instead at its intersubjective, everyday nature. This less-studied dimension of recognition enables us to formulate a new politics of recognition, more rooted in the concrete, everyday practices that social actors from different cultural backgrounds are involved in. Taking a constructive approach, it views identity and culture as dynamic elements and, with this crucial awareness, we can formulate a new politics of

⁵ See also Parekh (2004) on this issue.

recognition which intertwine micro- and macro-social dynamics. This kind of perspective requires a critical analysis of power dynamics and an awareness of the ambivalent nature of the institutions of the first age of modernity. In view of the long-running controversy between micro- and macro-approaches within the sociological field, my aim was not to provide a detailed proposal for a new politics of recognition, rather to highlight a number of issues that a new politics of recognition should take into consideration.

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Everyday Multiculturalism. The mundane uses of cultural difference

ABSTRACT

The paper supports the importance of developing a sociologically informed perspective on culture and cultural difference capable of grasping the ambivalent nature of difference: its character of ongoing social production and its effectiveness connected with the capacity to institutionalize such a construction in a social fact. A sociologically informed conception of cultural difference emphasises the fact that the use of categorical distinctions, and the moral and symbolic orders generated through them, always involve both enabling and constraining functions. To avoid the *cul de sac* in which an excessive and ill-posed attention to cultural difference have pushed multiculturalism, the paper presents the idea of everyday multiculturalism that focuses on ways in which cultural difference is concretely used by individuals in their daily interactions.

Key words: Everyday multiculturalism; cultural difference, hegemony, social constructionism, tolerance

1. DEFINING MULTICULTURALISM

Since the seventies of the past century, multiculturalism has become a widespread term in Western societies. Like all terms of common use, multiculturalism ended up becoming a rather confusing concept. In fact, it may refer to a general and somewhat abstract theory of justice – how can we arrange a just society in which all people are treated on equal basis, without exclusion or discrimination – as well as a more practical issue concerning political choices – how can we reduce discrimination and prejudice in our society. Finally, it may also be a way for describing the empirical evidence of individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages, embracing different faiths and prizing different traditions, living together in the same social and political space (Colombo, 2015).

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In general term, we can say that multiculturalism concerns the necessity of living together *in/with* difference; that is, how to guarantee a sufficient degree of tolerance, cohesion, solidarity, and common recognition without neglecting our (cultural) differences. The main questions are: can we live together as a unique political unity, as a unique community, if we have different habits, languages, faiths, ideas and ideals? How far can we go in recognizing and accepting other cultures, other languages, and other worldviews without ceasing to be a country, without ceasing to be ourselves? To what extent can we tolerate those who have different – sometime divergent – beliefs, values and habits?

The issue of ensuring a safe and protected space to (cultural) difference in democracy is as old as the democracy itself. Difference has always had an ambivalent place in democratic thought: it has been seen as both a resource and a problem. A resource because difference and pluralism are considered the necessary starting point for freedom and agency. By having the chance to choose among different perspectives, options, ideals and courses of action, people are free to manifest their preferences, to act as autonomous individuals. Only a society open to different voices and opinions is a guarantee against totalitarianism and the disgrace of integralism and intolerance (Habermas, 1994; Honneth, 1996; Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). On the other hand, too much difference was seen as the cause of dissolution of the social bond, a threat to solidarity (Barry, 2001; Putnam, 2000). Too much difference prevents social cohesion and undermines the feeling of being part of the same community, promoting individualism, selfishness and opportunism or (even more dangerous) a clash between different groups led by different, and incommensurable, values and worldviews (Huntington, 1996).

The attitude towards the ambivalence of difference in public life has often been radical, strongly supporting the one or the other of the two poles of the dilemma. The debate about the so-called multicultural societies in the last thirty years is a good example of this Manichean attitude.

This paper aims to go beyond this dichotomy and *to take difference seriously*, considering its ambivalent nature. It suggests that an empirical sensitive approach to the intercultural order, focused on everyday relationships highlights the potential uses of difference as a political tool for the definition of the situation and the organization of social interaction.

2. WHY DO WE NEED MULTICULTURALISM?

The idea of ‘multiculturalism’ emerged in the 1970s as a reaction against the failure of assimilationist policies and the ideology of melting pot: the idea that modernity would work as a big mill, transforming ‘traditions’ in ‘pro-

gress', 'differences' in 'individual distinctiveness', 'ethnicity' in 'folklore', and the ancient loyalties in faded memory of bygone and simpler times.

New social movements – social rights movements, feminist and women emancipation movements, youth movements – have been really effective in demolishing the idea of assimilation and in criticizing the ideas of equality and universalism. These movements criticised an 'empty' universalism that pays a lip service to a real equal and fair society. They denounced the fact that, rhetorically, western societies declare themselves as equal, while they are characterised by huge discrimination, institutional exclusion, racism and sexism. Especially young people criticised conformism, claiming the rights to be different and to be against the way of life of the dominant group. Being 'too equal' was seen as giving up the inner self, conforming to external patterns that hinder the expression of the true self. In order to be individuals, and not a simple number in the crowd, it is necessary to be different.

Two different issues, raised by these movements, may be relevant here. On the one hand, a significant part of these movements claimed for an effective realization of the ideal of equality and universalism. They contested that while the dominant rhetoric presented Western societies as established on the equality of all their members before the law and as able to grant all their members equality of opportunities on a universalistic basis, without any distinction based on race, gender, religion, age or other cultural traits, in fact only few member of the society – the well off, the powerful and who belong to the dominant elite – are really equal. Actually, a large part of society is excluded on the basis of their gender, sexual preferences, skin colour, language, religion or culture. Equality is only a rhetoric in political discourses; reality shows discrimination, injustice and racism.

On the other hand, more radical social movements – i.e. Black Power and some part of the feminist movement – put more far-reaching claims. Not only did they dispute that equality was not achieved at all in western society, but they contested that equality could have been a necessary and desirable goal. They claimed that what was usually presented as universal equality was nothing more than the specific point of view of the dominant. The rhetoric of equality excludes and silences other points of view, imposing the minorities to conform to the rules established by the dominant group. The idea of universal equality reveals itself being just an apparent equality built upon the specific interest of a minority, namely the white-protestant-well-off-heterosexual-educated-employed-male.

The 'equal individual' is the adapted person, because she or he is better 'fit' for the world. In this way, the idea of equal individual is well suited to the purpose of the oppressors; whose tranquillity rests on how minorities fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it.

The critiques of the new social movements towards the idea of universal equality leave room for a new meaning of difference. Against conformism and homologation – that equate to hindering the manifestation of the inner characteristic of the self – being recognised and accepted as different is the starting point for the development of a real independent identity; individual and collective difference is seen as the substantive requirement for becoming citizens and participate on a par with others in social life. Real equality does not mean sameness; it requires the recognition of difference.

Social sciences supported the criticism on universalism and equality. Post-colonial studies and critical social theory put attention on the mechanism of domination, showing how dominant group's hegemonic ideology systematically represents minorities as inferior, irrational, deprived and childlike (Fanon, 1952; Hall, 1997; Said, 1978). Represented as lacking needed qualities for being really modern or human, members of minority groups are forced to become 'normal', adult and rational, that is to become as the 'dominant' is. In this case, equality and universalism work as ideological devices that confirm the dominant position of the powerful, while reducing self-esteem and self-respect of the minorities. Claiming difference is a way for undermining the power of the strongest, for the deconstruction of the taken-for-granted that constitutes the basis for the domination and the justification for exploitation and discrimination.

Another strong support to a new idea of diversity comes from the widespread of globalization processes. Dramatic increases in financial and capital flows, labour migrations, the revolution in communication technologies, and the great ease in long distance travels have radically changed our experience and provoked important readjustments in modern social systems (Appadurai, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999). One of the most important change for our topic is the new features of migration. We cannot say that, in general, globalization has produced more migration, but we can state that global interconnection deeply changed the characteristic of migration flows and the experience of migrants (Held *et al.* 1999). Immigrants become part of the country – because they are structural, necessary and unavoidable elements of the national economy and the social life – but, nevertheless they remain foreigners – because they are denied full access to citizenship or refuse to become 'totally' equal to the 'natives'. Their ambivalent position gives new relevance to ethnicity. On the one hand, ethnical difference become a persistent mark, and migrants remain connected with some aspect of their alleged 'culture' even after a long time spent in the new country. On the other hand, the presence of immigrants who conserve their difference and are unwilling to homologate to the norms of the majority provokes the resurgence of nationalism among the 'autochthonous'.

3. WHAT DOES MULTICULTURALISM CLAIM?

These processes – the political action of new social movements, the epistemological/cultural turn in social sciences, and the thickening of global interconnections – all contribute in changing the western idea of difference. From seeing it as a burden, a weight one has to get rid of it, difference ends up to be seen as the needed raw material for constructing an autonomous and fulfilling identity. Difference becomes something needing protection and recognition, rather than something we should be available to give up to become truly ‘modern’ and ‘civilised’. While, for a long time, difference was conceived as opposing modernity and equality, it is now viewed as the necessary material for resisting conformism, homologation, and dependency.

With multiculturalism, cultural difference becomes the central focus for very different claims.

First of all, respect of difference becomes the starting point for asking more and effective inclusion. It is used to support claims of participating on a par in social life, without using difference as an excuse for exclusion, discrimination and exploitation. Multiculturalism aims at strengthening incorporation and participation of immigrants and cultural minorities (Kymlicka, 1995).

The second main goal is to publicly recognize and foster cultural difference of immigrants and minority groups, valorising their specificity and avoiding asking them to become like the dominant group as a precondition for inclusion. In this way, multiculturalism recognizes the importance of cultural difference and prevents minority group from being overcome by majority (Taylor, 1994).

Finally, multiculturalism questions the rules by which public sphere is regulated; and points out that rules are always contestable, incomplete and parochial. In this way, it challenges the common sense and the taken-for-granted on which social life is based. It claims that the rules of living together are neither ‘natural’ nor ‘given’, instead, they are always the result of the point of view of the dominant group and mirror the specific interest of the powerful (Young, 1990).

Multiculturalism promotes a specific idea of tolerance. It has less to do with the social virtue to be patient with whom we consider have beliefs or practices objectionable and in an important sense wrong or bad. It implies a more reflexive and open-minded attitude: to be ironic towards our own beliefs and practices, and to be ready to criticise them and to change them by learning from others.

4. THE PREDICAMENT OF MULTICULTURALISM

In spite of the complexity and concreteness of the issues posed by the multiculturalism criticism, in the 1990s large part of the debate was monopolised by political philosophy in the effort to develop a coherent theory of justice able to include a relevant space for group rights and the recognition of cultural differ-

ence. Multiculturalism has been seen as an alternative theory to the liberal philosophy of universalism that conceives human beings as rational agents of free will, whose freedom may be granted only through identical, individual rights.

Based on a communitarian perspective, multiculturalism valorises difference and group membership. It considers the recognition of difference a necessary step to promote real equality. It affirms that recognition of individual rights is not enough because it presupposes an incoherent notion of the individual as existing outside and apart from social relations, rather than embedded within them. An appropriate recognition of both individual and group difference establishes the basis for the full development of individual capacities and for a fair and democratic participation in social life (Taylor, 1994; Honneth, 1996). It suggests that people can build an independent and self-confident identity only through dialogue with others, feeling part of a particular, distinct community. Individual agency depends on belonging to particular social and cultural groups that provide individuals with meaning. When the specificity of this community is ignored, glossed over, assimilated into a dominant or majority identity, or misrecognised, a person or group of people can suffer real damage. As Charles Taylor puts it, “the thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining, demeaning, or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (1994: 25). Due recognition of difference is not just a courtesy we owe to people. It is a vital human need and an indication of equal and fair society. Being recognised as different is not only a rights, it is a human necessity. (*Ibid.*: 25). Recognition of difference becomes the necessary, basic requirement for a democratic society, and equal recognition of difference is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society: its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it.

As Sheila Benhabib (2002: viii) observed, focusing on recognition and respect of alleged well-defined, coherent, evident ‘cultures’ and ‘differences’, multiculturalism ended up with an up-too-quick reification of given group identities, evidencing its failure to interrogate the meaning of cultural identity and the meaning given to cultural diversity in everyday interactions.

A too strong emphasis on the specificity of cultural difference, the need for its recognition and defence is likely to turn the difference into an essence. A reified vision of difference, culture and identity transforms these social constructs into finite objects, stable entities, something that people ‘have’ (rather than something that people ‘do’ in interactions), something that should be protected

and preserved from contamination and change. When difference, culture, and identity are perceived as 'given', 'objective', 'natural', they become elements that determine individual and collective thinking and action. The difference is perceived as something that people own, inherit: a cultural substitute for instinct and genetic heritage that orientates and binds to a particular behavior. Difference, culture and identity become something that people have and to which they belong, rather than processes that are continually transforming, a continuous result of mixing and adapting to contextual needs.

A reified difference is a difference to be defended: every transformation is a betrayal, every dialogue with other differences is a potential form of contamination and degradation. An essential view of difference promotes a multicultural society based on the metaphor of the museum or the zoo, where the differences coexist only if they are mummified, locked in the timeless instant of unchanged conservation, or only if there are solid and efficient cages, which prevent mutual contact, which prevent that the weakest is eaten by the strongest.

Accepting an essentialist view of difference easily leads to the idea that cultural differences are incommensurable and destined to conflict with one another. The only solution to the inevitable clash of cultures seems to consist in the erection of a fortress that resists the attack and rejects the invaders.

An essentialist view of difference tends to shift the debate from citizenship to security, from the recognition of rights to identity recognition. In this way, the political issue at stake in the multiculturalist debate is no longer the search for forms of living together that guarantee the expression of plurality without creating excessive inequalities. Instead, the main preoccupation becomes the preservation of identities threatened by the presence of radical and incommensurable otherness.

By obsessively focusing on the defense of the difference, multiculturalism has (partially) accepted only one of the questions originally posed by criticism of universalism and egalitarianism.

Multicultural policies – at least in political and media rhetoric, much less in the reality of implemented policies (Kymlicka, 2012; Vertovec, Wessendorf, 2010) – have come to promote conservation of specific differences, enhancing specific elite minority and preserving the status quo. Multiculturalism has ended up promoting the idea that differences are sacred things to be protected, that any cultural change is to be considered a loss: it has privileged the idea of cultures and differences as 'roots' rather than dynamic forms of production of meaning, tools to face situations and experiences in continuous transformation. It has isolated cultures, transforming them into museum objects rather than favoring their journey, dialogue, and comparison. Consequently, this form of

‘strong multiculturalism’ (Benhabib, 2002; Grillo 2007) is blamed for promoting too much tolerance for minorities, which translates into excessive weaknesses in the majority (Barry, 2001; Goodhart, 2004; Malik, 2009).

As a result, the idea of multiculturalism seems to be not so popular nowadays. Living with diversity appears less desirable than privileging integration and social cohesion (Rattansi, 2011). Recognition and respect for cultural difference seem to be in sharp contrast with dialogue, tolerance, solidarity and cooperation. In the media and political discourses, a widespread backlash against multiculturalism blames policies oriented to sustain cultural differences on producing separateness, social conflict, urban decay and women and children discrimination. Although ‘strong multiculturalism’, providing special resources for minority group members, has rarely been implemented, criticisms blame it for giving exaggerated support to minority groups and culture. In so doing, multicultural policies would weaken the original local culture, eroding its democratic and liberal values, and would encourage minority group members not to integrate in the large society and to live parallel lives (Cantle 2001).

5. EVERYDAY MULTICULTURALISM

Strong (excessive) emphasis on recognition has neglected the relevance of a correct balance of resource distribution, the importance of assuring real participation to public and political life for minority members, the possibility of a critical revision of the rules regulating the public sphere, and the need for a constant challenge to the power and privileges of the dominant group.

To avoid the *cul de sac* in which an excessive and ill-posed attention to cultural difference has pushed multiculturalism, it seems important to focus on the actual ways in which individuals in their daily interactions use cultural difference. It seems important to develop a sociologically informed perspective on culture and cultural difference able to catch the ambivalent nature of difference: its character of ongoing social production and its effectiveness connected with the capacity to institutionalize such a construction in a social fact. A sociologically informed conception of cultural difference stresses the fact that the use of categorical distinctions, and the moral and symbolic orders generated through them, always involve both enabling and constraining functions (Sciortino 2012, p. 377).

Current debate on the relevance of difference in contemporary society often assigns two opposed meanings to difference. On the one hand, difference is conceived as a hard component, an essence that determines the existence of the individual or the group. Difference is thus seen as the most authentic and ‘natural’ core of personal identity or as a heritage forged over long periods of common history and consisting of the group’s most sacred ‘truths’. Individuals and

groups deprived of such an original base are deprived of their genuine identity and are unable to act as autonomous subjects. On the other hand, difference is seen as a pure contingency, an ongoing construction with a temporary, ephemeral and deceitful existence. The strong emphasis on the enduring capacity to mix and produce hybrids, with its focus on the human capacity to create distinctions and its effort to deconstruct any claim of difference to present itself as natural and unavoidable, risks concealing the dynamics of power that are involved in any production of difference. Focusing on the human capacity to mix, resist and produce new distinctions, risks misrecognising the relevance of the processes of institutionalization of produced differences. Thus, it ends up favouring an excessively fluid and contingent image of difference, an image in sharp contrast to the empirical observation that shows to what extent difference is perceived by social actors as a concrete element that shapes perceptions and actions.

In order to give sociological consistency to the idea of difference, it may be important to assume an informed constructivist perspective and to analyse how, by whom, in which contexts, and to what purpose, difference is concretely used in social interaction.

A first step in this direction could be by focusing on *everyday multiculturalism* (Colombo, Semi 2007; Wise, Velayutham 2009; Semi *et al.* 2009; Harris 2013). The idea of everyday multiculturalism refers to concrete situations of interactions where difference becomes, at least for some of the actors involved, an important element in constructing social reality and in the meaning attributed to it. Everyday multiculturalism invites us to go beyond the simple observation that difference is socially constructed, to focus on the ways in which such construction is possible and effective. It suggests considering difference as a *practice*, an ongoing performance, in which what is at stake consists of producing a shared meaning of contextual experience. From the point of view of everyday multiculturalism, difference is conceived as a political tool: something that people can use to produce a specific social reality characterised by a specific order and by boundaries that produce particular hierarchies of power, rules for inclusion and exclusion, forms of belonging and identities. The political aspect lies in the fact that difference can be a key factor in defining situations, and therefore in the struggle to define rules and criteria for interpreting reality that then become binding, that is that then appear legitimate and thus capable of influencing and directing the interpretation and actions of others. The creation, use, recognition, or negation of specific differences among the many possible assumes the character of political act because it is an important part of the process of making decisions applying to all members of each group. Shared ideas about what differences are, which of them are meaningful, who and when can be defined by using them, all constitute the fabric of the 'struggle

for hegemony' (Gramsci 1949; Lipsitz 1988; Sevilla-Buitrago 2017): a ceaseless discursive struggle for the production of common senses that shape forms of consciousness and define the field of the intelligible, of what can be thought and said, mediating structures of feeling, images of the world and experience on an everyday basis.

As a political tool, difference is always characterised by ambivalence, it is both a constraint and a resource. A constraint when it is externally imposed, a restrictive label difficult to remove or ignore and that can be used to justify exclusion, discrimination and exploitation. A resource when it can be used to promote identification and social action. In this case, difference can promote strategies aimed at achieving visibility, respect, justice or privileges or, more common, it is the basis for tactics that support forms of temporary resistance, acts that are not fully consciously subversive and take advantage of favourable situations.

Everyday multiculturalism can help to conceive difference as a constant and situated work of the production, translation and overcoming of distinctions. The production of difference requires a certain degree of credibility, authority and stability in order to be compelling and effectual, but it risks losing its effectiveness if it cannot continually be adjusted to the specificities of the contexts in which it is used. The capacity to socially produce difference does not depend only on the will, the creativity or the sensitivity of the individual. Instead, it suffers under structural constraints and specific hierarchies of power which transcend the rational abilities and strategies of the subjects.

Differences are the raw material of categorization processes; they should be seen as perspectives on the world (attempts to impose a hegemonic organization of the world) rather than entities in the world (Brubaker *et al.* 2004: 32). In this perspective, it becomes important to analyse interactional processes through which differences "are used by individuals to make sense of the social world, linked to stereotypical beliefs and expectations about category members, invested with emotional associations and evaluative judgments, deployed as resources in specific interactional contexts, and activated by situational triggers or cues" (Brubaker 2006: 13).

Looking at how, when and by whom – the 'micropolitics of difference' – differences are used, enables us to bring the power dimension to the fore. Precisely because it is constructed, and because it is a political resource for defining reality, difference includes a particular, situated vision of the world, it includes specific rules for looking at reality and sets up constraints, models and expectations in line with the points of view and interests of specific social groups.

A constructionist perspective that is not content with merely highlighting the constructed nature of social reality enables us to raise the issue of which concrete boundaries and distinctions, from among the many equally possible

and plausible, are really selected and drawn, by whom and why. It underlines the fact that it is of sociological interest not only to capture the dynamic, ongoing construction of difference, but also the ways in which this construction is rendered legitimate, stable and is taken for granted, as well as the specific historic and contextual conditions which make a particular difference hegemonic, that is, the result of a power struggle that tends to impose one particular point of view, albeit always in a partial, temporary way (Gramsci 1949). It is this unceasing struggle between stabilizing a specific difference and disputing it, in a context of ongoing conflict between different interests and visions of the world, that represents the main focus of the sociological analysis of difference.

Conceived as a political tool to give meaning to social experience, difference appears as both a situated social construction and a fact that imposes its logic and organises social interactions. As Gerd Baumann (1996) noted in his study on a periphery neighbourhood in London, people are neither totally free to use difference as they wish, nor are they totally entrapped in fixed differences externally imposed. They are able to use a dual competence when it comes to difference: they consider it both an essential, constitutive, reified given and a processual, ongoing, ever-changing construct.

Focussing on practices appears vital in terms of reinstating the dynamic, complex nature of the concept of difference and underlines its processual nature (as both a social accomplishment and a skill). It enables us to view multiculturalism – that is, situations of coexistence in the same social space of individuals and groups with different values and normative frames of reference, and who see their reciprocal difference as a significant factor – not only as a normative problem (regarding the theory of justice) or a juridical one (in terms of regulations). Instead, it is seen as a concrete, specific context of action, in which difference comes across as a constraint – reducing options, simplifying the scene, attributing desires and identities – and as a resource – enabling action, distinction, criticism and conflict.

The constructionist perspective invites us to capture the indexical and reflexive aspects of difference; the indexicality of difference underlines the relations with the context, the impossibility of isolating it and assessing it independently of the practices involved in implementing it. The reflexivity of difference underlines its processual nature, the links which connect the here and now of the action in question with wider spatial and temporal contexts, but which have precise implications when it comes to defining the situation. It also underlines the nature of difference as a social product, and the fact that, once produced, difference becomes a constituent part of the context, something actors have to deal with.

By looking at the processual nature of difference, its ability to act as a limitation and as a resource, to open a margin for resistance, strategic or tactical behaviours, everyday multiculturalism invites us to take a decentralized view, a view from the margin (bell hooks, 1991). The focus is not on the centre – inside the various ‘cultures’ or ‘ethnic groups’ – but on the areas where these meet, come into conflict, mix and interact – the practices involved in the encounter, the production of accounts which cite and legitimise the difference, the clashes.

6. A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON TOLERANCE AND LIVING TOGETHER IN/WITH DIFFERENCE

The point of view proposed by everyday multiculturalism may help to oppose the trends in reifying cultures and identities. It helps to avoid transforming differences into (unchangeable, competitive, incommensurable) diversities, without hindering the expansion of the democratic space of societies increasingly characterized by different stories, traditions, languages, preferences and lifestyles. It invites to engage in imagining critical forms of multiculturalism. Critical because they are both reluctant to transform (cultural) differences into ‘essential values’ to be protected without questioning and controversy and concerned to bring to the fore the question of power, the issue of responsibility, and the need to call the dominant group to justify its own choices and to take charge of the exclusion produced. A critical multiculturalism is committed to taking all three issues that gave rise to the multicultural debate seriously. First of all, the question of inclusion. It is attentive to promote *equal dignity*, widening the space for participation, stimulating the expansion of citizenship, including individuals and groups previously excluded. Secondly, it supports *equal respect*, strengthening the collective capacity to listen to different voices, experiences and interpretations. Finally, it puts the issue of *defending the dissident* as a vital value for democratic societies.

An effective multicultural, democratic society requires a commitment to support dialogue – listen to the reasons for the other – and to highlight the action of power – recognize that the rules that establish the conditions for our common life are the result of an active selection and not of ontological needs. For the dialogue to be effective, it is necessary to guarantee the expression of the dissident, the one who poses the intrusive and inquisitive question, who says what the dominant group would not want to hear, and who says what would be preferred to be silent.

To foster a multicultural space where the difference is taken seriously – recognized as necessary and as partial, unstable, the result of a power of action – requires the presence of a critical spirit that can continually question the meaning and the social effects of our choices and our decisions. Continuing

to support a multicultural orientation means then supporting a critical look capable of reflecting on the consequences of building differences and borders, on exclusion practices, and on the production of dominant group's privileges, in the constant tension of recognizing equal dignity to every human being. It means to consider tolerance not only a passive attitude, a way to put up with troublesome people. Instead, it invites to promote an active tolerance, rooted in the idea of the sacredness of other's voices and opinions, because they might be prophetic, able to reveal something about us and about the meaning of life that we have not yet understood.

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Encounters and inter-group relations in diverse urban contexts: Reflecting on research fieldwork in Italy

ABSTRACT

Increasing diversity causes preoccupation about the possibility of living together in European cities, particularly in relation to on-going migration flows. Encounter in public and semi-public spaces is considered key to overcome supposedly incompatible cultural practices and conducts and to foster a more cohesive and just society. The paper reflects on encounter by drawing from different qualitative pieces of research that dealt with migration narratives, practices and policies in diverse Italian urban spaces. To describe and interpret the forms of encounters and the dynamics emerging from these research works, three analytical categories will be put forward: possible encounter, engineered encounter, denied encounter. These categories will then be used as interpretative frames aimed at a nuanced understanding of the nature of encounter, the conditions under which it takes place and the possible outcomes associated with it, including unexpected/unpredictable outcomes. The paper will also address the question of whether such dynamics should be governed and to which extent this can promote positive outcomes. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the debate on social inclusion and social cohesion and to elaborate on the extent to which encounter can favour their improvement. In line with much literature, it will conclude that while encounter does not necessarily foster social cohesion, it can contribute to positive outcomes in this direction, also with the support of governance tools.

Key word: encounter, diversity, migrants, social cohesion, urban space

1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is under question in contemporary Western nation-states and cities. Since the 90s, the question of whether and how living together is possible

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for people of different geographical origins has been a crucial political issue across many countries and has been very contested in public opinion. Multiculturalism as a political model, or at least its vernacular version, has been ‘sentenced to death’ (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010) and new, or supposedly new, models, such as interculturalism, have been put forward to deal with diversity, especially at the urban level (Zapata-Barrero, 2016). More recently, following terrorist attacks in European cities, the debate has become particularly heated: discourses on terrorist attacks have been often framed in terms of non-integration of individuals and groups with non-Western cultural and religious, in particular Muslim, values (Wike et al. 2016). Meeting and getting to know “the other”, doing things together, socialising and ‘mixing’ in public and semi-public spaces are widely considered key to overcome supposedly incompatible cultural practices and conducts. They have been often a-critically understood as activities capable of fostering in themselves a more cohesive and just society and of reducing, if not preventing, any risk of conflict.

In this context, we will draw from different qualitative pieces of research we conducted in the last years to contribute to debates on encounter in diverse societies. We will look back at specific spaces and situations which exemplify the necessary conditions for encounters to be possible and fruitful: urban public spaces (in general), neighbourhoods and social mix projects, small towns and asylum seekers’ reception. By doing this we intend to reflect on the potential of face-to-face encounters in diverse local settings, while pointing to critical issues that need further investigation.

Our work focused on migration narratives, practices and policies in Italian urban contexts. In particular, by means of a qualitative approach, involving ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, policy and press documents collection, we carried out analyses that, among things, looked at the forms of encounters as they emerged in the following case studies in Northern Italy: a Milanese urban park; a reception project for asylum seekers in a small town in the Camonica valley, off the province of Brescia; a social housing project in Milan; self-building projects in the Lombardy region; phone centres in Verona and Modena.

Through the paper we will elaborate on the processes that emerged from our case studies, while highlighting the multi-faceted dynamics that characterise encounters.

The paper is structured as follows. First, it will sketch out the current debate about diversity, social cohesion and living together in difference. Second, the empirical material we collected will be explored and revisited in light of the following categories: the possible encounter; the promoted encounter; the denied encounter. We believe these are analytical categories that can help illu-

minate processes, although they should not be used in isolation but rather in a 'spatial and temporal continuum', as will be discussed. Third, we will discuss the findings and provide some final remarks, by stressing the often unexpected/unpredictable outcomes of encounters.

2. ENCOUNTER AND CONTACT IN DIVERSE LOCAL CONTEXTS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Discussions on everyday multiculturalism and encounter have developed across different disciplines, often in relation to the role of public spaces in urban life (Neal et al. 2015). A very popular theme is how, under which conditions and in what kind of spaces, people belonging to different social groups can get together and engage in meaningful relations. This is even more so in times of growing fear towards 'the (different) other' and of growing worries about people living parallel lives in cities (Phillips 2006).

In the UK, following the spreading of conflicts in diverse neighbourhoods, in the 90s, a general frame has emerged in public and policy debates associating cultural difference with segregation, distrust and conflict; scholars have contrasted such discourse by proposing a "counter narrative of convivial encounter across difference" (Neal et. al 2013). Scholarly production includes studies that recognise the importance of face-to-face encounters, as a form of engagement with difference, in different kinds of places: public, semi-public, places of fleeting encounters, rather than more reiterated and regular ones. Such works follow a tradition of studies that, in line with the "cosmopolitan turn" have spent words to celebrate the city as a site of connection, hybridization, living together in difference (Valentine 2008).

Many public spaces have been objects of research, including parks (Neal et al. 2015), marketplaces (Watson, 2009), public transports (Wilson, 2011). These are sites of casual and fleeting encounters but at the same time sites where a culture of tolerance, disposition to 'social mix' and respect of difference are expected to grow.

With a view on the temporal dimension, Vertovec (2007) shows that the routinization of urban encounters, despite their passing nature, can encourage "civil integration" between newcomers and settled residents. As he defines it, civil integration regards the acquisition of "competence in conventions and norms of civility", which are "commonplace practices of getting-on with others" and "probably best inculcated informally through daily practice" (p. 32). The author claims the importance of daily interactions rather than top down instillation of knowledge about proper behaviour. Notwithstanding, he affirms that a lack of daily interactions and encounters does not necessarily translate in poor social cohesion. Amin (2013) shares a similar position and underlines

scholars' obsession with social cohesion and the need of meaningful relations. On her side Valentine (2013) focuses on the role of prejudice in inter-group social contacts. She questions the possibility "to scale up" the respect for difference that possibly emerges from everyday encounters. She prompts scholars not to confuse the latter with "urban etiquette": in fact, prejudice might remain confined within the private sphere and differences respected under the coercion of equality laws (regulating public behaviour) only.

From a spatial perspective, the focus of attention in studies about encounter and social cohesion has been often the neighbourhood. Neighbourhoods are considered as a key dimension with reference to migrants' arrival, settlement, encounter and attachment (Phillips and Robinson 2015). As Phillips et al. (2014) state there has been a "*growing interest in the neighbourhood as a setting for everyday intercultural encounters and meaningful exchanges that might promote conviviality and provide building-blocks for better social relations*" (p. 43). While the neighbourhood is still an important urban dimension in contemporary cities, for example for the emergence and development of social networks, it is not a "local community", characterised by meaningful social relations, nor a source of support per se (Andreotti 2014). In this sense research provides examples of the complexity of living together in difference and of the coexistence in neighbourhoods of meaningful and peaceful relations among different groups, but it reports also of contentious dynamics, forms of avoidance (Pastore and Ponzo 2012; Phillips et al. 2014) and different conceptions of urban diversity (Barberis et al. 2017; Wessendorf 2013).

It is well known that the eradication of spatial distance through co-presence does not lead necessarily lead to intergroup contact, meaningful relations and/or engagement with difference (Bannister & Kearns, 2013; Watson, 2006). However, the idea of fostering social cohesion by "engineering" relations and "managing" encounters is very much diffused. It includes bottom up local initiatives up to top down social mix urban and housing policies. These initiatives, all somehow inspired by the social contact hypothesis¹, are seen as possible way to overcome hostility or indifference in multicultural contexts, by proposing varying degrees of social engineering and public intervention. The position of Amin is interesting in this respect. In the wake of the 2001 streets disturbances in Northern English cities, the author recognised that encounter in urban public spaces does not equal with multicultural engagement and criti-

¹ Allport's socio-psychological theory known as contact hypothesis stated that under certain conditions intergroup contact would reduce prejudicial thinking. His theory has been criticized, reformulated and expanded by many scholars after his original formulation. This theory still resonates in studies about the role of contact in contemporary diverse cities (Valentine & Sadgrove, 2014).

cised both the idea of promoting intercultural understanding through designing inclusive public spaces and that of engineering “ethnic mix” through housing projects. He proposed the idea of “micro-publics” instead: sites of managed and regular encounter, such as workplaces, schools, colleges, youth centres, sports clubs, and other spaces of association, where intercultural understanding can be fostered beyond fleeting daily interactions (Amin 2002).

Social mix housing policies in particular are based on the rationale that spatial proximity between different groups can stimulate encounter and interaction which in turn can foster social cohesion, through the development of place attachment and the emergence of common norms (see Marzorati and Semprebbon 2015 for a review of the literature). However, scholars have been challenging the concept of social mix on equity and efficiency grounds and various studies have shown that something more is needed, beyond spatial proximity, to foster social relations and cohesion in similar contexts. Positive actions to promote residents’ participation is an example in this sense.

Community based strategies, for example, aim to encourage residents’ participation, interaction and the development of support networks, while also promoting common values and norms, improving people’s sense of safety and belonging. Nevertheless, it is not clear to which extent they can be truly inclusive and how their positive contribution can be perpetuated beyond the very moment of the activity (Marzorati and Semprebbon 2015). Additionally, Phillips et al. (2014) have highlighted that community cohesion and intercultural dialogue initiatives do have some positive effects across different groups who are hostile towards each other, but they also reported some challenges related to the possibility to scale up such developments, in a context marked by unfavourable dynamics of power. In their words: “*on-going racist behaviour, differences in material conditions and the negative effects of migration discourses are likely to infuse daily negotiations between newcomers and settled residents over space, resources and visions for their neighbourhood, and may overwhelm seemingly positive moments of encounter*” (57-58). Taking into account these factors is therefore crucial to understand how coexistence among different groups in neighbourhoods can lead to more or less positive outcomes (Marzorati 2014; Valentine 2008).

The negative effects of public discourse on migration and migrants is another crucial element affecting coexistence and it is particularly true for Italy, where migrants’ criminalization and negative politicization, alongside recurrent waves of “moral panic” have influenced the policy-making process (Colombo 2013) but also natives’ perceptions and attitudes towards immigrants and most likely encounters between them as a result. Contrary to the UK, no “communitarian” discourse and policies have emerged in Italy, but rather oc-

casional more general references to social cohesion (Barberis et al. 2017). The growing social diversity characterising Italian neighbourhoods, associated with a growing presence of international migrants, has gone hand in hand with increasing political anxiety about issue of security and order, leading to interventions aimed at repression and control (Semprebon 2012a). Social mixing inspired urban policies represent the other side of the coin: they have been an instrument to “dilute” newcomers’ presence and to reduce their visibility in public spaces (Briata 2014; Semprebon et al. 2017). The recent “refugee crisis” has in turn re-invigorated “moral panic”, but stigmatizing discourses about the “other” are more of the same we have witnessed in the last 30 years (Marzorati and Semprebon 2018).

3. POSSIBLE ENCOUNTERS

Urban space is an expression of the rationality of planners and policy-makers, but various actors can interact in and across it, thus contributing to its transformation. As anticipated, public spaces are sites of fleeting encounters. Yet they can also become the object of place attachment and identification. They can become particularly significant for the construction of social relations at the local level and for the emergence of new diverse encounters, uses and meanings. Practices of reiterated use of public spaces and their appropriation by different actors contribute to making them significant to people and to the process of construction of their identity as places. In this framework, the legitimate user of and uses in the urban space are defined depending (to a good extent) on intergroup negotiations and the perceived identity of a given place. While public spaces are formally “public”, feeling at home in a public space is a matter of intersubjective experience (Boccagni 2017 p. 91) and the necessary conditions are not always present to allow new uses and meanings to be “put to value”.

An example of this process is provided by a study of daily interactions in a neighbourhood located in a semi-central area of Milan. The object of the study were discourses and practices about living together in an urban context and they were explored by looking at Italian established residents’ interactions with neighbours, shopkeepers and public space users of immigrant origins (Marzorati 2010a, 2010b). A part of the fieldwork focused on a public garden used for different activities by different groups and yet claimed by the some of the Italian residents as “their” garden, in a process of symbolic privatization of public space (Marzorati 2013). The existence of a local community, intended as a spatialised sense of “us”, a cultural and symbolic local sense of belonging, was rhetorically evoked by them as a consequence of newcomers’ arrival in the neighbourhood and of the changes this had entailed. Established residents had

been surprised by quick and deep transformations in their living environment (such as by the appearance of many shops run by immigrants and catering for a migrant population) that had disrupted their feelings of being “at home”. Defensive reactions emerged accordingly: some neighbours created two associations with the aim of protecting their home area, by exerting control on public spaces and by establishing a dialogue with public authorities. Their discourse was rhetorically grounded in the existence of a more or less “imagined community”; and in the construction of socio-spatial boundaries shaping neighbourhood belonging and marking the exclusion, or partial inclusion, of those considered as outsiders. Neal et al. (2015) showed how parks can be places that “*elicit and animate social practices which increase possibilities of encounter, contact and proximity*” (p. 473). In the Milanese study, the park emerged as an inclusive public space but also as a place of elective choice, where a routinary use and the fact of being together with others could generate “extra-discursive senses of affinity for those spaces and a connection to others without interaction” (ibidem). While this urban garden could have been a space of encounter, it was characterised by competition over its use and by forms of symbolic appropriation that produced discourse and practices of exclusion. Some of established residents and the members of the associations mentioned before discursively constructed this public space as a parochial realm that (Italian) residents were more entitled to use than other “outsiders” – that is to say marginal groups, such as homeless people, drug addicts, undocumented migrants and migrants with different cultural/religious characteristics.

Evidence from another study is enlightening to show how urban spaces can offer opportunities for encounters but also frustrate them: it is a study on the evolution of the phone centre businesses in some Northern Italian cities (see Semprebbon 2012a). Phone centres are small family-run commercial businesses largely managed by young male entrepreneurs of immigrant origins (particularly from Bangladesh, Senegal, Morocco and the Maghreb region). They provide services, such as internet, telephone services, money transfer, mostly to immigrant customers. Over time they started providing informal, (often) free of charge support on bureaucratic procedures (i.e. permits to stay renewals), access to housing, etc. This is how they have become popular meeting spots and somehow places where the routinization of encounter has helped the integration of newcomers with more settled residents (see Vertovec 2007), although not necessarily natives. As the ‘meeting function’ of these shops grew more visible, it generated forms of “competition” (Park et al. 1999), both with local businesses and residents: the fact that customers hanged outside the shops, in the streets, often while speaking loud and consuming alcohol, was perceived, particularly by native residents, as a discontinuous form of public residential

space (Semprebon, 2012a), testifying how coexistence of different groups can result in forms of contentious dynamics (Pastore & Ponzo, 2012; Phillips et al. 2014), associated with diverging conceptions of urban diversity (Barberis et al., 2017; Wessendorf, 2013). Furthermore, forms of moral panic emerged, fuelled by an increasing criminalization of migrants (see Semprebon 2011) that ultimately influenced the policy-making process (see Colombo 2013, Maneri 2011, Palidda 2011, Quassoli 2013). In fact, in response to increasing complaints, restrictive regional and local policy norms were introduced, in cities such as Verona and Modena, in association with the growing politicisation of urban safety issues - which has characterised the most recent decades. As a result, clear-cut symbolic and physical boundaries were produced that contributed to the division of 'good' and 'bad' public spaces. Phone centre businesses remained largely excluded from the normative process. Although phone centre owners managed to find some channels to raise their voice (Semprebon, 2012), their potential innovative inputs were left unexpressed and frustrated by efforts to "re-order" and "domesticate" (public) space (Semprebon, 2017a). Many shops eventually closed down (partly due to the restrictive character of the new normative framework) and their function as "meeting" spots has largely come to an end. Immigrants still reproach the scarcity of dedicated spaces and policy-makers have missed an opportunity for institutional learning (Semprebon 2012b): they could have tried to put to value rather than just constraining their "social" function.

4. ENGINEERED ENCOUNTERS

A common political preoccupation, along with concerns for urban social and ethnic segregation, is associated with both the absence of meaningful relations in socially and ethnically mixed context and the fact that people may lead parallel lives in the city (Oberti and Prétéceille 2017). Social mix housing policies are considered as a possible solution to these issues. They aim to mix groups at the neighbourhood and building block level, with the idea of stimulating encounters. Such policies can involve specific community development initiatives, with the goal to encourage people's interaction. A peculiar example in this sense is that of ViaPadova36. This project provided refurbished affordable housing to families of Italian and immigrant origins, university students, elderly people, vulnerable individuals and families, with the aim to experiment a communal form of living and to foster social cohesion. This has been mostly done through the support of a CD Worker (Community Development Work-

er)² and the so-called “SC families” (socially conscious families): the former is a professional who matured long-term experience with vulnerable groups and who acts as a “mediator” between the occupiers and the building owners, in relation to: reparation works, permissions for the organisation of activities in the building and administrative duties. The latter are new dwellers, who arrived following the actual refurbishment and who were selected to engage proactively, on a voluntary basis, in community development.

A first analysis of the project throws light on what appears as a top-down form of “engineered encounters”, with scarce involvement of dwellers, particularly former elderly dwellers, who were already living in the building prior to refurbishment. In particular, the homogenous profile of the SC families points to the fact that insufficient “space” may have been allowed for diverging lifestyles and related needs to emerge. Apparently those of the new young dwellers emerged strongly, as opposed to those of the former elderly ones, who were used to a quiet routine. At the same time, the project is likely to face the challenge of over-labelling: in order to favour “social mix”, very different social groups have been brought together in a relatively small building, but they each carry very specific needs and vulnerabilities, along with new classifications. These can in turn result in forms of separations (Bricocoli, Cucca, 2014) and run counter the promotion of a cohesive community. They can stimulate practices of distinction (Lamont, Molnár, 2002), including for instance relationships based on “assistance”, rather than mutual help and solidarity. Notwithstanding, the role of both the CD worker and of the SC families was crucial in the promotion of encounters that would have been unlikely to occur spontaneously, among other things because of diverse lifestyles. Thus, while we do not think this project should be taken as a “model”, we suggest the role of actors, such as the CD Worker and of the SC families, should be the object of a careful analysis: they appear to carry some potential in terms of facilitating encounters and the development of relationships among dwellers that could otherwise continue leading parallel lives

At the same time, it must be stressed how the ViaPadova36 project guarantees access to good housing conditions to all dwellers. This can be seen per se as a good starting point for (encounters to take place and) symmetrical social relations to build up. In fact, unequal material conditions negatively affect the possibility to establish (meaningful) relations among neighbours (Marzorati 2014). To these, other aspects must be added, such as the social conditions of neighbours of immigrant origins, as well as prejudices, linguistic barriers and the idea of incompatible cultural practices. The latter can even undermine the

² We have opted for the term “community development worker” as the content of her role resembles, to some extent, that of British community development workers (Popple, 2006).

potential positive role of places that Amin defines as micro-publics (Bonizzoni and Marzorati 2015).

A second example of “engineered encounters” is provided by associated and assisted self-building projects (Semprebon and Valsesia, 2017; Semprebon and Vicari, 2016) that were recently implemented in the Lombardy region. These projects aimed to build sustainable dwellings by involving the to-be-owners themselves in the actual building. The to-be-owners were selected to ensure (geographical and cultural) diversity in the team, as the projects aimed to promote a positive form of cohabitation across diverse social groups. In associated and assisted self-building people found themselves together in facing an endeavour, the building of their own dwelling, in a context of ‘solidarity among strangers’ (Habermas, 1981). Mutual relationships of help and care developed throughout the projects, on the basis of a growing awareness of each other’s interdependency in the heterogeneous and complementary tasks that on-site works involved. Additionally, encounters were promoted by a “mediator” through the organisation of social events, to encourage communal forms of sharing beyond the building works and across all family members. However, challenges became evident in various phases of the building project. The mediator managed to ease tensions, as the self-builders themselves testified. Yet, her role was only temporary: she was meant to accompany the self-builders until the actual dwellings were ready. On the other side, conflicts need to be managed over time and solidarity needs to be “nurtured”, with no guarantee it can grow and consolidate over time, with or without a mediator. Factors such as evolving life courses (within each family) can contribute to changing dynamics, that could in turn affect solidarity bonds. Hence the long-term outcomes of these processes remain to be seen.

5. DENIED ENCOUNTERS

The current system of reception entails the “dispersal” of asylum seekers and refugees to reception localities throughout Italy, without any possibility for them to decide/or express any preference on where to be hosted. One of the critical aspects of such system is the lack of choice for beneficiaries as well as the fact it tends to “break up” existing networks and bonds. Moreover, some of these localities are rather small and isolated and offer scarce opportunities in terms of jobs and socialization, which is likely to make it more difficult for beneficiaries to integrate. A similar scenario applies to the Valle Camonica and the small town of Breno (off the province of Brescia), where a reception project has been launched in 2011 (Semprebon, 2017b). Immigration flows have occurred in the valley for over ten years: currently the incidence of immigrants on the resident population of Breno corresponds to about 10% (against 5000

inhabitants). On the other side, the reception project caters for around 10 beneficiaries and yet it is their presence to be perceived as problematic (by some native residents). This is largely due to the visibility that asylum seekers have gained on the political and media agenda. They have come to be associated with “the burden” of reception and issues of public safety and these themes have in turn been echoed by the local representatives of local anti-immigrant parties (*ibidem*). It is a discursive setting that certainly does not promote any encounter between native residents and beneficiaries, on the contrary. The same is evident more generally throughout Italy, where the reception of asylum seekers has provoked forms of resistance and opposition on the side of the local population (Marzorati and Semprebbon 2018).

Often opposition has taken the shape of protests, at times even violent ones, promoted by small purposely organised or non-organised groups of residents, against the arrival of a few migrants. Most frequently this has happened in towns and small municipalities. Similar situations and the specific features of the reception system (reception projects in big inhospitable centres, stigmatization of the centres themselves, non-integration of migrants in daily urban life, racist discourses against migrants, etc.) make it difficult to construct spaces of sociability and encounter among asylum seekers, refugees and local communities. Notwithstanding, going back to the case of Breno, the perception of native residents has been changing as they started meeting asylum seekers in the streets. Thanks to the active involvement of the municipality, some asylum seekers started engaging in jobs of public utility and this has positively challenged representations of immigrants as lazy and jobless. The role of the social cooperative K-Pax, that manages the reception project, has been equally vital in the organization of social events promoting encounters between native residents and asylum seekers, through a “soft form” of social engineering. In other words, opportunities have been created for socialization but dynamics of encounters have been largely left to the spontaneity of individuals. Through similar informal spaces some asylum seekers built friendships and found avenues of job inclusion. Some eventually decided to remain in Breno, upon completion of their reception project, as they experienced a positive path of inclusion, although it cannot be denied that racist episodes have continued emerging. In this sense, it is interesting to notice that asylum seekers, when asked, did not report feeling particularly “threatened” by them. First, it is episodes that mostly translated in anti-reception discourses - often against the actual reception structures rather than beneficiaries - that hardly resulted in physical violence; second, at least during their reception project, asylum seekers largely feel part of a “protective bubble” where any such threat hardly reaches them and where

their perception of threat is rather associated with the actual availability of any job opportunity for them in town and in the country at large.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this paper was that of reflecting back over some research works, focused on the theme of encounter in diverse societies, that the authors have been engaging in the last years. In the effort to re-read the case studies investigated, an analytic framework has been defined to describe and interpret the forms and dynamics of encounters emerging from the actual cases: possible, engineered and denied encounter. These should not be dealt with as rigid interpretative frames but rather as an instrument aimed at a more nuanced understanding of the nature of encounter, the conditions under which it takes place and the possible outcomes associated with it. Ultimately they can help elaborate empirical evidence on encounter and the extent to which it can favour the improvement of social inclusion.

When re-reading the dynamics characterising the forms of encounters sketched out in the previous sections, three main issues became evident. First, all three case studies pointed to the fact that the availability of physical spaces is crucial to allow or at least to facilitate encounters, although this is not a sufficient condition. Second, while social engineering does carry some drawbacks, it can be crucial to foster encounters and yet there is no “ideal model” that can be adopted to favour it: any intervention must be planned and implemented ad hoc, with due consideration for the specific features of every given context. Third, while each case and the related forms of encounters were given a specific categorization, we suggest that, if we take a temporal perspective, multiple categorizations can in fact apply, as they are intrinsically dynamic and evolve over time along a “continuum” affected by continuous possible transformations.

The category of “possible encounter” stresses that encounters can happen, as a result of spontaneous dynamics. Yet, such dynamics can be frustrated whereby the actual context and its resources are not understood, nor put to value, and where contentious dynamics are controlled rather than creatively governed to ensure their potential is expressed. As a result, a potential encounter can turn into a denied one, in a later phase, as it was indeed the case for encounters in phone centres in Northern Italy and in a public park in Milan. The category of “engineered encounter” highlights the nature of some initiatives, aimed at favouring encounters through an approach that actively aims to promote social inclusion. As the cases of social housing and self-building exemplify, similar initiatives do carry some drawbacks, but also some positive aspects. On the one side, they can contribute to the over-labelling of dwellers

that can in turn produce separation and practices of distinction, with a-symmetric relationships. However, on the other side, they can promote the activation of social relations that would otherwise not be likely to build up spontaneously, thus testifying that an engineered encounter can in turn evolve and take other shapes, for example of a possible encounter, over time, although this should not be taken for granted. The category of “denied encounter” is useful to represent cases where the structural conditions are missing for encounter to take place at all from the onset. As we explained with reference to the reception system, asylum seekers cannot choose where to be dispersed. Arguably, the fact they are denied any choice does run counter any positive predisposition to encounter on their side as it represents de facto a “forced” form of reception. As far as local communities are concerned, they are not given any choice either on the actual arrival of asylum seekers (when, how many, how, etc.) and are scarcely aware of the system, which often leaves them frustrated with the feeling of powerlessness. It is precisely against this background that the action of the social cooperative K-Pax has been important: against a general negative perception of asylum seekers, it has enacted a “soft” form of engineering to favour the transformation of a denied encounter into a possible one, through the organization intercultural events and opportunities for socialization.

In other words, encounter can take different shapes, that cannot always be predicted and that can pose various challenges, with different and evolving outcomes. The question remains open on what are the structural conditions that allow encounters to take place and that prevent encounters from being denied. As we have discussed throughout the paper, some forms of social engineering can be instrumental to support the goal of social inclusion, although attention must be paid to prevent its drawbacks. Other contextual factors do play a role, including the availability of common spaces and physical proximity, while factors such as negative portrayals of immigrant contribute to fuelling stereotypes discouraging encounters. Finally, we stress the need to resist the temptation to consider encounter positive per se and to adopt approaches that necessarily encourage it. To conclude, further empirical research should be carried out to continue investigating the possible evolutions of encounters, on a longitudinal time span, and to compare how different forms of encounters evolve in different contexts with more or less engineered interventions.

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Border security and asylum rights: The questionable construction of a European asylum regime

ABSTRACT

The 2015 European refugee crisis highlighted some inherent shortcoming in European migration and asylum policies. Hundreds of thousands of people moving across the borders of Schengen and seeking international protection were quickly classified by the highest institutional offices of member states as “irregular migrants”, they were associated with threats such as organized crime and terrorism and they have been exposed to the risk of being criminalized. These official reactions are both the consequence and the reflection of the European asylum system. A regime that has been created in almost thirty years - from the Schengen agreement to the most recent immigration conventions - on the basis of an obsession for border security which, on the one hand, led to the approval of increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum policies, and, on the other hand, have transformed asylum seekers from victims of political persecution, wars, natural or human disasters to disguised economic immigrants or “false refugees”.

Two interesting interpretations of this trajectory have been provided by Valluy - who explains it as the result of a competition between three political-ideological views - and Huysmans - who analyzes it in terms of a classical securitization process. In the last part of our paper, we briefly address three main points: 1) the generative power of borders; 2) the need to critically reconsider the vocabulary we as scholars use to analyze human mobility; 3) the link between the European immigration policy framework and the reworking of a European cultural and ethno-racial identity.

Key words: European asylum policies; Refugee crisis; Border control; Securitization; European ethno-racial identity

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1. INTRODUCTION

The recent events referred to as ‘the European refugee crisis’ have highlighted some intrinsic shortcomings of European migration and asylum policies. According to EUROSTAT, between 2015 and 2016, 1.2 million people applied for asylum in the EU - which was about double the 2014 number (Eurostat 2017). The top three nationalities seeking asylum were Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis. Since EU offered no legal avenues for protection seekers to access the Common European Asylum System, most of the asylum seekers crossed the Aegean Sea on little boats from Turkey to Greece and then headed for northern Europe along what has been called the ‘Balkan route’.

The first official reactions to this exodus from war-zones were telling: between September 2015 and January 2016 eight EU Member States – Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Belgium – unilaterally re-introduced internal border controls; a decision that was later partially supported by either the European Council or the European Commission that granted five Member States – Germany, Austria, Denmark, Norway and Sweden – the right to continue internal border checks on the basis of structural and “serious deficiencies in the external border management system in Greece, which put at risk the overall functioning of the area without internal border control” (Guild et al. 2016). Moreover, several Member States referred exclusively to migrant or illegal migrant flows and not to asylum seekers, and Norwegian and Swedish authorities referred to “an unpredictable migratory flow, containing a mix of asylum seekers, economic migrants, potential criminals [...], victims of crime” (Ibidem).

Why were people moving across the Schengen borders looking for international protection quickly classified as ‘irregular migrants’ and in some cases associated with threats such as organized crime and terrorism? Why did the authorities of the Member States turn them into ‘illegal immigrants’ who were committing the most typical migrants’ crime (Sayad 2000): that is, crossing borders without having fulfilled all the requisite administrative formalities? Why was the problem not addressed in terms of the obligation of Member States to provide reception facilities for asylum seekers instead of focusing on the imperative need to control borders and - if they were not able to stop this flow at EU external borders - to reintroduce internal border controls, even putting the Schengen area at risk? In fact, most of the applicants were eventually recognized as refugees or received subsidiary protection: 98% among Syrians, 63.5% among Iraqis, 57% among Afghans (Eurostat 2017). Consequently, most of them had the right to cross the EU’s borders.

Focusing on border controls and classifying those people as illegal migrants has had a twofold consequence on the public discourse on asylum rights in

Europe: on the one hand, it has allowed Member States not to take responsibility for setting up adequate reception facilities and evaluating the asylum applications submitted; on the other hand, it has overshadowed the obligation to recognize the right to asylum, exposing those who hope to find protection from Europe to the risk of being criminalized (Guild et al. 2016).

What is even more surprising is that this distortion in the interpretation of events has been promoted by the highest institutional offices of the member states and has happened in a very short time and in a completely unproblematic way.

In order to understand why European institutions have been in such a situation for almost two years, it is useful to focus on the basic characteristics of European immigration and asylum policies. As can be seen from the European Agenda on Migration (EAM)¹, at the core of European asylum policies we do not find policies aimed at helping asylum seekers to exercise their right to international protection. On the contrary, two out four pillars of the EAM deal with the impelling need to reduce illegal migration to Europe – “addressing the root causes of irregular and forced displacement in third countries”; to strengthen the EU borders control management thanks to operations coordinated by Frontex and Europol aimed at fighting smugglers and traffickers; to support “irregular migrants or those whose asylum applications are refused to return to their country of origin”; to save lives by securing an increasing militarization of external borders control.

However, the premises of the EAM framework were already present in the foundational moments of the EU institutions.

2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPEAN ASYLUM REGIME

As well known, asylum seeker’s rights were defined in the 1951 Geneva Convention (GC). GC advanced an individualistic definition of asylum and was based on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, there is a crucial difference between the UDHR and the GC: in the former rights are defined once and for all in an axiological sense (rights are bestowed on human beings as entitlements); in the latter, the recognition of some of these same rights is subordinated to the discretionary power of each nation-state (rights are bestowed on citizens as endowments). According to some scholars (Valluy 2004), from the outset, the stark contradiction between the universality of human rights and the discretionary power of the nation-states in granting international protection was bound to generate a derogatory asylum right or asylum seeker’s status.²

¹ See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en.

² It should be borne in mind that GC was approved in a particular historical moment when Europe had to come to terms with the terrible consequences of the Second World War. It was

Later, new international conventions – “Organization of African Union (OAU) Convention” in 1969 and the “Cartagena Declaration” in 1984 – extended international protection to “people who flee their countries because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order” (Cartagena Declaration, 1984). In that same historical period, with the end of the Cold War and the advent of Western globalization, the European asylum regime sharply changed. The first test was the war in former Yugoslavia, which from 1991 onwards produced a great and rapid increase in asylum applications (which reached a peak of about 700,000 in 1992) and threw the European system of international protection into crisis, highlighting all the difficulties involved in putting international asylum conventions into practice. It was on that occasion that a series of innovations - both legal and practical - were tested which would later be included in all respects in the European asylum system: temporary humanitarian protection, extraordinary and temporary reception centers, centers for internally displaced people, repatriation programs etc. (Rahola 2003). Subsequently, in light of the growing role played by Asia and Africa as the main areas of origin of the flows of people seeking international protection, there was a radical change in the definition of the asylum seeker, who from being depicted as a political dissident from a totalitarian/authoritarian country (mainly a communist one) who risked being persecuted, imprisoned, tortured or even killed for his/her political ideas was increasingly represented as an economic migrant from a poor/underdeveloped, and in many cases non-democratic, country disguised as a victim of persecution. The most important consequence of this new political situation was that the distinction between economic migrants and asylum seekers began to blur because they were both perceived as part of an excess population that was threatening Western countries (Zetter 2007).

In order to understand how in a few years a radical redefinition of the asylum seeker and asylum policies in Europe has taken place, we must retrace the main legal and political steps in the construction of the European Union as “Fortress Europe”: the Schengen Agreement (14 June 1985), the Treaty of Maastricht (7 February 1992), the Treaty of Amsterdam (2 October 1997), and the creation of FRONTEX.

a way to deal with a mass of displaced people (around 40 million) in the very heart of Europe and an attempt to cope with the risks that such a situation was posing for the fragile political and military balance of the postwar Europe. Moreover, during the Cold War the recognition of asylum rights was a weapon in the international relations between Western capitalism and the communist countries: giving protection to dissidents fleeing from communist countries asserted the moral superiority of the Western world denouncing communist totalitarianism (Guillon et al. 2003).

The backbone of the Schengen agreement was a conception of Europe as not only a large market and a monetary union but also as a space in which citizens have the same fundamental rights and where they can move freely. The other side of the coin was the need to put the external borders of the Schengen area under strict military and police control (Bigo 1996b). Therefore, the Schengen Agreement provided for long-term measures to transfer border controls between Member States and third countries to the European institutions, to harmonize both the prohibitions and restrictions on immigration and visa rules, and to take additional measures to combat illegal immigration (Brion 1996).

Along the same lines, the Treaty of Maastricht (signed in 1992) has identified a series of “matters of common interest” (Third Pillar - Justice and Home Affairs) which European institutions should address. Salient among these is the consolidation of a common policy on asylum and immigration. It includes the definition of the rules governing both the crossing of external borders (and the manner in which controls should be carried out), the conditions of residence of third-country nationals on the territory of the Member States (including family reunification and access to the labor market) and police cooperation in preventing and combating terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, and other serious international crimes by virtue of the creation of a European Police Office (Europol).

After the approval of the Schengen treaty, third countries were divided into two classes: a ‘whitelist’ and a ‘blacklist’. A two-stage process was started: the first stage concerned the classification of the third countries according to whether they might be a *prima facie* threat to the EU. Threats here did not concern danger to EU in the realm of international relations but were mainly defined as the possible arrival of massive flows of immigrants - many of them claiming to be asylum seekers - trying to cross the European borders. Once such a classification had been made, only a decision concerning an individual application for asylum – that is, the second stage of the process - could reverse the implicit negative assumption and call the preliminary exclusion into question (Bigo and Guild 2005). Moreover, air and sea carriers were charged with duties to check passengers from mass emigration countries.

Cuttitta (Cuttitta 2007) has noted that these innovations created a sort of external flexibilisation of state borders, partially devolving, at the same time, crucial sovereignty powers like border controls to private actors such as carriers (Wihtol de Wenden 2005).

Furthermore, the Schengen Agreement:

- 1) introduced the Schengen Information System (a crucial device for asylum seekers’ identity checking and mobility control) whose main purpose is to

preserve security in the Schengen States in the absence of internal border checks.

- 2) defined state competencies concerning asylum procedures to prevent so-called ‘asylum shopping’ (the practice by asylum seekers of applying for asylum in several states). This problem has been directly addressed by the Dublin Convention (1990-1997) – then Dublin I-III Regulations (2003-2013) – that assigns exclusive competences concerning asylum-seeking procedures to the first EU country entered by the applicants (the country in which he/she is first identified). Although the Dublin Convention has limited the ability of states to pass the baton in the event of an asylum application, thereby improving the situation for the asylum seeker, it has made it impossible to submit asylum applications in several Member States, thus reducing the possibility of obtaining refugee status.

In 1992, a new legal concept was also introduced by the London Convention in order to prevent asylum applications in the EU: the safe third country principle. According to this concept, once a country has been recognized as safe, i.e. formally democratic, any asylum application submitted by people from the country in question will be considered unacceptable by definition.

As regards the legal status of persons entitled to international protection, a milestone in the reduction of refugee rights was the introduction of provisional humanitarian protection. The new provision defined a weaker/temporary form of international protection under which beneficiaries can be repatriated when EU authorities decide that the crisis in the country of origin has been resolved. The provision leaves those who benefit from international protection in a sort of legal and existential limbo and has been collectively implemented? By applying ethno/national criteria similar to those used to select the countries that were included in the EU blacklist for asylum applications. Together with the ‘subsidiary protection’ approved in 2004 (Directive 2004/83 / EC), it has increased the chances of asylum seekers to obtain international protection, while (Bigo 1996) reducing the range of protection normally provided. For these reasons, Roger Zetter (2007) spoke of “more labels, fewer refugees”, stressing that the multiplication of the labels generates a further precariousness of the status of asylum seekers. Moreover, it has also become a useful rhetorical device with which to justify so-called ‘humanitarian military interventions’ in many areas of the planet (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010).

Another crucial moment for the erosion of asylum rights was 9/11, which paved the way for the birth of Frontex, the agency established in 2004 by the EU to advance cooperation among the different national border guards. The creation of Frontex made the link among terrorism, security, migration, and border control even more explicit with the argument that human rights and the

asylum system could be exploited by actual or potential terrorists. If, as many commentators put it, the Europe of Schengen and Maastricht was already a ‘police Europe’ where immigration was a danger in the same way as terrorism or drug trafficking – because of Frontex this framework has been definitively established (Brion 1996, Guild and Baldaccini 2007, Bigo 1996b, Huysmans, Dobson, and Prokhovnik 2006).

More than three years passed before Frontex was launched. It is interesting to note that in 2003 the term ‘security’ had largely disappeared from the main objectives of the external border management plans. The plans lacked the sense of ‘urgency’ initially present in September 2001. Instead, the management of the common external borders appeared to be a largely technocratic project. The link among security, terrorism, migration, and borders present in the 2001 and 2002 documents was that of being institutionalized and largely taken for granted (Neal 2009).

Also considering what was added after the launch of Frontex, we can summarize the main steps towards both a European asylum system and a European border regime as follows (Mountz 2010, Andersson 2014):

- 1) Introduction of a common visa policy (definition of a whitelist and a blacklist of countries);
- 2) Introduction of carrier sanctions and mandatory transmission of passenger data;
- 3) Creation of the Schengen information system (database for checking the identity of asylum seekers and mobility control); subsequently strengthened as EURODAC, a European dactyloscopy database for the identification of irregular asylum seekers and border-crossers;
- 4) Clarification and specification of the criteria for the allocation of competencies to the EU Member States on the assessment of asylum applications to prevent the purchase of asylum (Dublin I, II and III);
- 5) Introduction of two attenuated forms of protection: temporary humanitarian protection, and subsidiary protection;
- 6) Introduction of the principle of the third safe country close to the crisis areas (e.g. Turkey, Libya and many other African countries in the very near future), with the task of managing the flows and asylum applications in exchange for economic aid;
- 7) Implementation of projects relating to the relocation or outsourcing of asylum (e.g. humanitarian operations in crisis areas to keep potential asylum seekers as close as possible to their area of origin and, above all, far from the EU borders);
- 8) Joint patrolling in the Mediterranean basin and readmission agreements with the countries of the southern shore;

- 9) Increasing role of the army, alongside different types of national/transnational police forces, in border control.

3. IMMIGRATION, ASYLUM, AND SECURITY: A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

In the previous section, we highlighted how some sort of obsession with security has shaped EU immigration and asylum policies over the past three decades; an obsession that has led to the approval of increasingly restrictive policies and the implementation of a plethora of prevention, containment and repression devices in regard to asylum seekers. Moreover, the latter have increasingly been represented and perceived, not as victims of political persecution, wars, natural or human disasters but rather as disguised economic immigrants or ‘false (bogus) refugees’ from which EU countries must be protected.

To provide an interpretation of this trajectory we can refer, among others, to the work of two important scholars: Jerome Valluy and Jef Huysmans.

3.1. European asylum policy as the outcome of an ideological competition

Valluy’s analysis starts from the following question: what was the role played, respectively, by political elites, technocrats, pressure groups and public opinion in transforming asylum seekers from victims of political persecution into disguised economic migrants to be subject to strict control and confined in camps?

According to Valluy, current policies on asylum in Europe can be interpreted as the result of a clash among three different political cultures and value systems that shape the behavior of politicians and bureaucrats at European, national and/or local level: a nationalist-securitarian ideology, a utilitarian ideology, and a humanitarian ideology. (Valluy 2008)

Around these ideological blocs, experts, civil servants, and politicians who share the same perspective have proposed and sought to implement common immigration and asylum policies.

The security coalition is characterized by a deep-rooted representation of foreign migrants as a threat on both a personal/physical and a symbolic level; a representation that in many cases has been shared by centre-left and centre-right politicians, immigration experts, and state executives.

The utilitarian coalition, by contrast, considers immigration to be a key resource for the labor market, demographic balance, welfare system, and the wealth of the nation. Open-door immigration policy should be related, according to those who adopt this view, to the economic system’s needs. This view

is shared by centre-right and left-wing politicians and has been promoted by high-level bureaucrats and by the associations of manufacturers.

Finally, the Geneva Convention, together with the subsequent asylum declarations, is the cornerstone of the humanitarian coalition which encompasses NGOs, left-wing activists, small parties and political groups. These contest the idea of immigration as a threat and criticize the 'hydraulic' metaphor of mass flows, waves, invasion, etc. At the same time, they are sensitive to multiculturalism and believe that immigration can enhance societies culturally.

Over the years, the securitarian perspective has become the predominant discursive frame on immigration in most EU countries. The humanitarian perspective has lost ground. It is now propounded by a tiny minority of people and is largely excluded from nationwide media debates (King and Wood 2001). Moreover, it has been shifting from a juridical sub-frame - granting rights established by international conventions and charters of rights - to a moral one according to which Europe has the moral obligation to help and support people in need due to war, natural disasters, authoritarian/totalitarian regimes, and so on (Fassin 2001). The utilitarian ideology is always a card to be played in order to justify temporary openings to immigration and asylum.

A widespread explanation of the growing importance of the securitarian coalition is that populist movements and right-wing parties have acquired large consensus by exploiting the supposed threats raised by mass immigration (especially from former colonies) to scare public opinion and justify increasingly restrictive immigration laws (such arguments are widespread in Europe, and they dominated the Brexit as well as the last French and Austrian electoral campaigns).

On the contrary, Valluy maintains that the transformation of asylum seekers into threatening illegal immigrants took place and gain ground before the 'populist turn' because of what he calls 'technocratic xenophobia'. Harsher measures and decreased protection for asylum seekers were not the consequence of the electoral success in the late 1980s and 1990s by the populist/nationalist/right-wing/racist parties. The role played by academic experts, ministers, high-level bureaucrats, lobbyists, and the media was much more important. If we compare the time when more restrictive immigration laws were passed with the time when populist parties increased their consensus, the causal nexus is the other way round. In a sense, the new laws and the debates that led to the approval of increasingly restrictive immigration policies paved the way for the electoral success of anti-immigration parties. And this apply to France, Italy, Austria, UK and other EU countries.

Therefore technocratic and governmental xenophobia anticipated populist protests in the same way in which racism by the elites has always created the

vocabulary and the legitimization framework for the diffusion of racist attitudes and behaviors among the majority of the population (van Dijk 1993).

Finally, the weakening of the humanitarian coalition is due, again according to Valluy, to the increasingly important role that EU institutions have played immigration and asylums policies, together with the insistence on the imperative of border control. The author who has provided the most comprehensive and convincing interpretation on this point is undoubtedly Huysmans.

3.2. The securitization of immigration and asylum policies

According to Huysmans, since the very beginning migration has been mostly linked – in official documents, normative provisions, political statements at the EU level – to representations of societal dangers: “As a technocratic and politically manufactured spillover of the economic project of the EU internal market, immigration and asylum have been integrated into a policy framework that defines and regulates security issues arising from the abolition of internal border control” (Huysmans 2000: 752-753). The fear has been that the free circulation of people and goods within the Schengen area would not only improve “free movement of law-abiding agents but would also facilitate illegal and criminal activities by terrorists and international criminal organizations, as well as by asylum-seekers and migrants” (Ibid.: 760). Since the early 1980s discourses already circulating at national level, mostly among the political and technocratic elites, and that represented migration and asylum as a security question had penetrated the Europeanization of migration policy and found a sounding board in the European meetings and documents, thus reinforcing and legitimizing national debates (Bigo 1996a).

Moreover, specific institutions and expectations had to be mobilized in order to turn an issue like migration into a security problem (Bigo 1996a, Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998).

Since the preparatory work for the Schengen Agreement was carried out by the ministries of the interior of the countries that would subsequently join the treaty, the institutional actors in the security field played a central role in focusing policy-makers attention on the relationship among external borders control, the security of the future European Union, and the need to govern international migrations. Thus, the framing of immigration as a security concern has been a logical consequence of the role played by national security apparatuses in the regulation of migration: “For the police, it is part of their profession to produce security knowledge. They have a professional disposition to represent and categorize a policy concern in a security discourse and to propose security measures to deal with it”. (Huysmans 2000: 757).

Moreover, security policies are a very specific way of mediating membership of a political community whose political and social identification as well as its way of life develop in response to an existential threat and are defined in purely negative terms. Social bonds are supposedly created through collective victimization by referring to the threats raised by hordes of dangerous aliens at the gates. However, insofar as a sense of community does not rely on a process of social and cultural integration but on a collective shock, those who are considered as threats to collective safety perform the crucial function of reconnecting people and places through the defense of a territory (Garland 2001). Again quoting Huysmans (2000: 757), “such a process excludes by definition migrants from the normal fabric of society, not just as aliens but as aliens who are dangerous to the reproduction of the same social fabric. The <dominant> discourse frames the key question about the future of the political community as one of a choice for or against immigration. But, of course, it is not a free choice because a choice for immigration is represented as a choice against (the survival of) the political community”.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, we would underline three problematic aspects that, in our opinion, deserve more scholarly attention.

1) Firstly, we can consider the enduring metaphor of Fortress Europe, which since its introduction has been criticized and needs to be reconsidered with regard to three aspects:

- a) the externalization of both control and asylum facilities projects European power outside its borders, something that sharply contrasts with a Europe entrenched behind militarized and fortified borders. The European ‘model’ of migration control can be better described as a series of concentric rings (Pastore 2006): from police control within the EU countries to border checking, from open water patrol activities much beyond its external borders to the devolution to third countries of repression and prevention actions that involve the direct participation of European and international authorities. Via partnerships, financial help, promised investments, and diplomatic favors, European countries confirm and sometimes extend their previous colonial asymmetric relations using new leverage to assert their influence (Rodier 2012) and sending troops where, until a few years ago, it would have been unthinkable;
- b) the management of EU borders establishes, in contrast to walls, different levels of porosity, using a growing set of administrative categories matched by different sets of rights (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, Garner 2007). In contrast with skilled workers from selected countries, who are granted

greater rights, and with unskilled ones, who are still allowed to move freely and legally in the labour market, a large proportion of the immigrant population is forced to live in a condition of a-legality (Dal Lago 1999), always at risk of being deported and prone to accept harsh work conditions and a high level of exploitation (De Genova 2002, Palidda 2009: 200). Therefore, far from being bastions against invasion, borders are devices for differential social and economic inclusion;

- c) borders are not only barriers, they are indeed symbolically productive. The very existence of a line in the sand, a frontier that is controlled by the force of arms, attracts a great deal of interest by the media, allowing a theatrical staging of the sovereignty of the state (De Genova, 2013, Cuttitta, 2015) where power is defied, reasserted, and legitimised. The illegal immigrant, the ‘clandestine’ – who by definition is unworthy of citizenship and can be treated by violating rights that are usually taken for granted and considered inviolable – and the asylum-seeker – who is a symbol of the loss of state control and at the same time, once subjugated by the increasingly constrictive norms of asylum, is under the total control of an interdictive power – are key figures in the new system of symbolic exclusion. We shall return to this topic.

2) A second issue concerns the need to conduct critical appraisal of the vocabulary used to talk about human mobility. We refer, first of all, to the distinction between ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘economic migrant’, which, starting from the Geneva Convention, has been the basis upon which two distinct fields of policies, as well as two autonomous areas of research, have been created. As we have tried to show in our paper, this is an increasingly problematic distinction for two main reasons. Firstly, as a result of changes made to the definitions of ‘asylum seeker’ and ‘refugee’ in the agreements signed at international level since the Geneva Convention, which extend the right to international protection to people displaced by war, victims of gender-based discrimination, minors whose basic rights are denied?, without forgetting the recent debate on the opportuneness/need to extend the granting of refugee status to ‘climate refugees’, i.e. people fleeing areas hit by environmental disasters (Bell 2004); (Black et al. 2013). In this way, an increasing number of people that emigrate from their country because of impediments to their pursuit of a decent life can be entitled to – which does not mean granted – international protection.

The second reason relates to the growing political and pragmatic overlap that has been created within the European Union institutions among asylum seekers, refugees, economic immigrants and illegal/undocumented ones; an overlap that, in recent decades, has worked in two directions. On the one hand,

it has legitimized relief and protection initiatives in transit countries in relation to the recognition of the mixed nature of flows to the European Union. On the other hand – to the extent that the emphasis has been placed on the economic drive of migration – readmission agreements with countries of origin, joint interdiction carried out in international waters, and agreements with third countries of transit have made the exercise of the right to international protection practically impossible (Gregory and Pred 2013).

However, a critical awareness of the assumptions and implications of the analytical vocabulary should also include a broader distinction that divides immigrants into two even more controversial categories introduced in order to overcome the limits of the distinction between asylum seekers and economic immigrants: we refer to the opposition between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ immigrants. The former are people fleeing from really dangerous situations, to whom we do not recognize any agency and who are mere victims that we have the moral obligation to help. The latter are people who intentionally try to cross borders driven by their desire to improve their life chances, whom we have the right to stop (and whom we reluctantly do stop), and whose agency is condemned on moral grounds.

As Mezzadra (Mezzadra 2014) suggests, in order to avoid the risk of being trapped in ideologically, politically and bureaucratically burdened categories we should “reveal that contemporary regimes of ‘migration management’, thanks also to much of the mainstream research work on international migration, constantly redraw the boundaries between different types of human mobility and organize systems of political and legal positions that distribute mobile subjects across a varying scale of abjection and protection, economic promotion and exploitation, belonging and temporariness, access to rights and deportability”.

3) Finally, we believe that more research is required on how the present immigration policy framework – which grants contrasting treatments to different categories of humanity on the move, producing stratified layers in the continuum between inclusion and exclusion – reworks European cultural and ethno-racial identity. This latter has been particularly understudied, due to the present taboo on the category of race that inhibits both policymakers and European academics from making explicitly use of racial categories. Nonetheless, the limits to movement imposed on citizens from outside ‘Schengenland’ (Garner 2007) privilege, *de facto*, Europeans, i.e. whites, in the ongoing racial hierarchization. Moreover, racialized preferences, while not explicitly asserted, are coded in immigration policies, i.e. in institutional practices that draw on old racial hierarchies. Whereas in the past, immigration control identified, in

both the United States and some European countries, racially desirable and undesirable migrants, today's selection is more subtle, but still sufficiently clear (Fox, Moroşanu, and Szilassy 2012). One example is the Schengen 'white' and 'black' lists, later relabelled 'positive' and 'negative', which distinguish non-EU countries whose citizens need a visa from those whose citizens are allowed entry without such restrictive conditions and controls. The characteristics shared by the nationals from the 'blacklisted' countries are non-whiteness, Muslim religion, and poverty (Commissioner for Human Rights 2009).

However, 'bordering' means 'othering' in many ways (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002). The extremely difficult – if not illegal – conditions of entry and settlement of people from Africa, Asia and the Middle East, the spectacle of their interdiction, internment, and deportation, construct them as undesirable 'others' and – by way of media representation – frightening people, criminalising them and thus popularising the essentialisation of juridical inequality (Maneri 2011, De Genova 2013). This differential treatment attaches an undesirable social meaning to nationality and ultimately to skin color, racializing a segment of the immigrant population while, by contrast, potentially whitening the other (especially light-skinned Eastern Europeans and, to a lesser extent, people from South America).

In light of the prodigality of the European immigration policy machine, we are going to have plenty of avenues for future research.

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Humanity and security under siege. European discursive politics on immigration and asylum

ABSTRACT

In recent years, European politics and public discourse about immigration and asylum have been permeated by a humanitarian stance. Yet the same political representatives who speak up humanely often produce merciless statements that imply inhumane treatment for people on the move. To explain this contradictory regime of humanitarian and security discourse we start from the early securitization of European borders, which has established a link between immigration, crime, and terrorism. The securitization of the issue of immigration, with its related rhetoric of fear and security, has made the metaphor of the siege seem natural, credible, and validated by facts. After illustrating the pendular regime of humanitarian/security discourse, we show how while the first is deemed inevitable after high profile shipwrecks, but is soon forgotten, the second is justified by a paradigm of siege and institutionalized in norms, bureaucracies, technologies, and doctrines that privilege security over human life.

Key words: Humanitarian discourse, Paradigm of Siege, Securitization, Security, European asylum policies

1. INTRODUCTION

On 25 January 2016, in an informal meeting in Amsterdam where EU interior and justice ministers were exchanging views on the current state of the refugee crisis, the Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration Theo Francken said to his Greek counterpart, ‘do push back in the sea, go against the law, I’m afraid, I don’t care if you drown them, I want you push back’¹. This astonishing statement was reported to the general public two days later by the same Greek Minister of Immigration Policy, Yiannis Mouzalas, during

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¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-35420967/belgium-said-push-migrants-back-to-sea-greek-minister>.

an interview with the BBC. Even if the Belgian Minister denied what he had allegedly said the day after, by all journalistic standards this should have been considered a major news story, imbued as it was with scandal, conflict, topicality, and unexpectedness. However, despite the authority of both the source and the news organization and brief circulation among social media, mainstream news outlets and public figures did not pick up the news.

How can a political representative go so far as to press – even if only at an informal meeting – for the (illegal) death of people whose sole fault is that they have attempted to cross a border? How can such a shocking event go unnoticed amid the absolute indifference of the media environment? Furthermore, as we will see, this is not a unique case, for political statements that call for the inhumane treatment of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have become increasingly frequent in recent years. This raises the question of why an important part of the mainstream European political and media elite so openly sets aside the humanitarian principles that had been solemnly proclaimed with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

A growing body of scholarship has already shown how the securitization of the European borders (as well as of the US/Mexico border) has led to the deployment of every kind of tactic and technology to stop undesired human mobility (Payan 2016; Vallet 2014). The effect of this strategy has been an exponential increase in human suffering and death (Ferrer-Gallardo and van Houtum 2014), the legal production of collective indifference (Basaran 2015), and the denial in fact of the principle of non-refoulement. This form of ‘necropolitics’ (Mbembe 2003) has been conducted out of sight, maintaining silence on mass expulsions, torture and abuse in detention facilities in Libya, and especially on the causal relationship between increasingly sophisticated border surveillance and more deaths in the Mediterranean (Aas and Gundhus 2015). However, especially in the past ten years, politics of security and humanitarian politics have been paradoxically integrated (Bigo 1998; Fassin 2005; Walters 2011), helping to foreground a caring side and a – sometimes – benevolent approach while persisting within the framework of securitization of the border. This is part of a general shift towards a “military and humanitarian order” (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010:17), an order where a state of exception to the rules, resting on both a logic of security and a logic of human protection, is progressively established at a global level in interventions after (civil) wars, natural catastrophes, and health emergencies. At the same time, the emergence of humanitarian politics in the context of border management, or at least of a humanitarian discourse, can also be interpreted as a response to the criticisms brought by NGOs, EU agencies and human rights bodies against the role of European institutions in the deaths at sea.

Therefore, the intensification of the military management of the borders² by dominant state and supra-state powers goes hand in hand with the employment and display of humanitarian politics, which are often remedies for the damage that their same control policies have procured. To re-contextualise Agier's expression (2003), the right hand of Europe strikes, the left hand cures. There is no practical contradiction between these two ethically opposed processes, as securitization of borders and their humanitarian management mutually reinforce each other (Williams 2016). Emergency is key to this self-reinforcing dynamic: the definition of a situation as a crisis – its “catastrophization” (Ophir 2010) – imposes new priorities that legitimise the use of force and exceptional measures that prevail over ordinary norms. In turn, the human suffering preceding or caused by this extraordinary intervention – the right hand – becomes itself an emergency that requires the left hand. As crises oblige and justify the use of power, they are carefully downplayed or evoked, resolved or created (Cuttitta 2015).

If these two regimes of practice – military-securitizing and humanitarian – and their interplay have been increasingly scrutinized, the relationship between the corresponding discourses is less clear: whilst politics of care and politics of security sustain each other, the discourse of care and the discourse of fear are in clear contradiction. Cuttitta (2015) has shown how, in the management of asylum seekers on the island of Lampedusa, there alternates a register of fear and a register of reassurance, a discourse of border closure and one of humanitarian aid. In different stages, and in relation to different political gains, the enforcement of border security or the provision of humanitarian reception may gain public prominence. In addition, the two regimes of discourse may also hybridise: hundreds of political statements and documents use a humanitarian rhetoric to justify border enforcement, for example by claiming to save lives by (militarily) combatting illegal migration and people smuggling.

What is more difficult to understand is why a strategic operation on the image of European institutions and agencies, which can take a high moral ground with their growing attention to human rights in public statements and documents (Aas and Gundhus 2015; Vollmer 2016), is gainsaid by frequent exhibitions of mercilessness – like the one that we used to open this discussion – in the general acceptance. On 3 March 2016, when the war in Syria was still violent and hundreds of thousands of people were leaving the country, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, made an official appeal to “potentially illegal migrants”, saying “do not come to Europe, do not believe the smugglers. Do not

² As an example, consider the budget of Frontex, which increased from 6.3 million euros in 2005 to 238 million in 2016, with a proposed 322 million in 2020. See http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-15-6332_en.htm.

risk your lives and your money. It is all for nothing”³. This amoral intransigence is at odds with the “benevolent morality” (Chouliaraki and Musarò 2017:545) sometimes considered to be the prevalent posture of European public figures. The contradiction should be explained. To do so, we will start with assessment of the origin of this intransigence in the EU and its representational consequences; we will analyse its offspring, which we call the ‘paradigm of siege’, and describe its operation; then we will illustrate the pendular movement between compassion and fear, a ‘flip-flop’ regime of humanitarian/security discourse that alternates and at the same time hybridizes care and dismissal.

2. SCHENGEN AND MAASTRICHT TRANSLATED

An argument often invoked to defend, or to account for, the resoluteness displayed by political representatives on the topic of immigration and asylum centres on a response to public fears, also in order to impede the growth of far-right and anti-EU populist parties. Although these parties certainly benefit from ‘immigration crises’ of every sort, this idea shifts the focus away from the actual key players of security politics. As many authors have observed, security is a political technology of government whereby politicians and public officials assert the sovereignty of the state and their own authority by protecting the inviolability of its borders. This ‘governmentality of unease’ (Bigo 2002), which fosters fears against an elusive enemy, re-legitimizes political action, providing protection against external dangers instead of social welfare. In parallel, private contractors and public agencies, whose wealth and power depend on security politics, engage in lobbying and furnish their expertise to ensure that European policies and expenditure go in the ‘right direction’ (Bigo 2005; Rodier 2012).

While this political and economic logic explains much of the ‘everyday maintenance’ of security, the origins of this political approach in the context of the EU should be considered more thoroughly. According to Brion (1996), after the first inter-ministerial meetings that laid the foundations for the Schengen Agreement (1985) a clear and stringent link was established - later confirmed by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 - between international migration and transnational criminal organizations like mafias and terrorist groups. The strengthening of security through intensification of controls on external borders – the best example of which was the Schengen Information System – was, in fact, considered the necessary corollary of the abolition of internal borders. This abolition, alongside the creation of a free European market, would certainly have favoured both a transnational reorganization of criminal networks and the emergence of channels of illegal mass immigration to Europe (Bigo 1996).

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/03/donald-tusk-economic-migrants-do-not-come-to-europe>.

This framework was implemented and further developed in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), the Tampere Summit (1999) and The Hague Programme (2004) that defined four pillars for European-level policy: the creation of specific channels for economic migration; the narrowing and harmonization of asylum policies; the fight against illegal immigration; forms of cooperation and assistance between the institutions of the Member States responsible for border control through the transfer of technologies and the financing of programmes for the repatriation of illegal migrants to their countries of origin (Zaiotti 2011). Border control cooperation at the European level was further improved with the creation, in 2004, of Frontex, which should have enhanced the militarization of borders through tight and widespread patrolling throughout the Mediterranean basin.

Thus, more than twenty-five years after the Maastricht Treaty, it can be said that the safety of the European political space has been achieved, at least to a certain extent, thanks to a strong politicization of international migration, which has benefited from the constant assertion of a continuum among crime, terrorism and immigration, as well as the obsessive use of war/hydraulic metaphors like ‘invasion’, ‘waves’, ‘uncontrolled flows’, ‘siege’, etc., which evoke an external threat to the stability of the European economic and social system (Maneri 2011). Immigration has thus become a sort of political meta-issue encompassing questions such as the internal security of the Union, the crisis of European welfare systems, and the ethnonational identity of European states (Huysmans 2000).

Security politics in Europe have constituted the material source of how sense has been made of immigration and asylum, as their public narrative and representation has relied on documents, statements, and accounts that were part of procedures of control implemented in the framework of the Schengen agreements. These procedures have made immigration visible to observation and mentionable in discourse only from a given standpoint, that of the organizational imperatives of the institutions that control immigration, with their priorities, perspectives, definitions, and subjects. The priorities and practices of these institutions – Frontex and national border patrols, intelligence agencies, the police – set the frame of media accounts about the management of immigrants and asylum seekers. The media translation of this discourse, with its priorities, has become an important part of the ‘immigration vocabulary’ used in people’s everyday lives, with its connotations, metaphors, and scripts. In this way the categories through which we give sense to our experience and can talk about immigration make control practices self-evident, legitimizing them (Maneri 2011).

We can therefore speak of a translation of Schengen-Maastricht into common-sense categories by the media, which determine the position of non-EU citizens in the mainstream mindset. This is not a denial of the persistence of the colonial heritage, which continues to nurture ideas, categorizations and hierarchization of the subjects of the former empire(s). Nevertheless, the current experience of othering and alienation starts from the juridical framework that develops from these founding acts, from the many frontiers where immigrants/refugees are organizationally treated and controlled, and from the political and mundane commentary that complements these operations.

This nexus between security practices and public discourse and representations needs to be borne in mind if we want to shed light on the apparent contradiction between the discourse of amoral intransigence and the one of 'benevolent morality'. The nexus itself can be one of apparent contrast. On discussing contemporary borders, (Bennafla and Peraldi 2008) underlined the paradox between an architecture of impermeability – with walls and barbed wire that 'stamp the mark' of the border, staging identity and closure – and a social and economic reality of continuity, integration, and interdependence between the two sides of the border. Despite their architecture, it is evident that walls do not stop mobility, appearing instead as an appeal to transgression because by their very nature borders are porous *articulations*; they are disobeyed and crossed.

Nonetheless, as we have seen, the Europe of Schengen and Maastricht has from the outset conceived the illegal trespassing of its frontiers as a threat to its very existence. In other words, Europe has securitized its borders, with far-reaching consequences that we now discuss.

3. THE PARADIGM OF SIEGE

The securitization of an issue justifies and calls for the use of exceptional means to confront an existential threat (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). Because the threat of border trespassing is inherently permanent, exceptionalism is provided with enduring foundations. In his historical reconstruction of the state of exception, Agamben (2005) sees its modern emergence in revolutionary France with the decree of 1791, which established for the first time in modern Europe the state of siege as the moment when powers pass from civil to military authorities. Today's Europe does not need this transfer of power, despite the increasing involvement of military technologies and strategies in its border management, but the metaphor of siege is nonetheless pertinent. After all, also the authorities that, during the past two centuries, have declared a state of siege to tackle social protests, rebellions, and natural disasters, have considered the definition appropriate. Siege is a powerful icon of our historical imagery and a formidable sign of threat.

The securitization of borders, with its correlated rhetoric of fear and security, has made the metaphor of the siege natural, credible, and validated by facts. In fact, the ‘border spectacle’, the relentless scene of the enforcement and therefore the violation of the border, renders dramatically visible not only migrants’ inherent illegality (De Genova 2002, 2013) but also the repeated challenge to the intangibility of ‘our’ territory and identity. The experience of the state, provided by a dramatically narrated border, is that of its penetration by exasperating ‘uncontrollable’ ‘aliens’. This oppositional reality, mediated by visual and verbal accounts, symbolises and asserts a social relationship between besiegers and besieged, people who raise a threat, whatever it is – crime, terrorism, disease, ‘flood’, cultural annihilation, welfare scourge – and people who must defend themselves. Internment in and escapes from reception centres, police raids on informal settlements, patrols, rescue operations, repatriations, and crossings of walls colonize representational frames showing what ordinary people should fear and what political actors should do. If the declaration of a state of siege suspends the ordinary for a given period, the constant renovation of the metaphor of siege ordinarily legitimizes the exceptional. The border, or better the process of bordering (Newman 2006), is not only a theatrical stage where European governments develop their representation of state control over immigration or of their humaneness; it is the symbolic act where the spectacle of siege structures the uncompromising way in which the ‘immigration emergency’ should be dealt with.

The metaphor of siege is renewed repeatedly, both as political praxis and as representation. We are given a scene, with fortifications – walls, barbed wire fences, and sea and land patrols – that are constantly violated and challenged. We are informed about defence strategies and devices: new and reinforced bastions, more intelligent systems of surveillance, allied forces like the Libyan ‘government’ that are responsible for the first line of defence. We are kept updated on attempts of infiltration – as in the 2015-16 denunciations of a supposed ISIS strategy to smuggle terrorists among refugees – and about successes in the battle when our defenders seize so-called human traffickers and expose them as agents of enemy infiltration. We are frequently reminded of the stakes in this fight for survival both by the accusations against others who have opened a breach (those bleeding-heart political opponents, inefficient neighbouring countries, or complicit NGOs) and by the celebrations of one’s own results. Fear of capitulation sets the emotional colour of the spectacle of siege, with recurrent alarms by governments, intelligence, and EU agencies about ‘millions’ of migrants ready to take to the seas, which inspire, but we should say dictate, the typical keywords that announce arrivals: ‘alarm’, ‘invasion’, ‘emergency’, and ‘assault’.

According to the metaphor of the siege, border porosity is an existential threat and requires a prompt and tough reaction. This has led to decisions that are increasingly lethal but decreasingly susceptible to creating a sensation. To follow the grammar of siege means making obvious, natural, if anything insufficient, all the deadly devices already at work, plus those that fantasy makes available. Radar systems, drones, and satellites to track migrants are fatal weapons, forcing refugees and migrants towards increasingly dangerous routes and strategies. As the news and research reports show⁴, political and other agencies' decision makers often deliberately decide to pay the cost of more deaths in exchange for not taking in more shipwrecked people.

But again, what is most striking is the discursive level, where politicians competing for the coveted role of defender-in-chief pronounce war-like statements. When, on 27 March 1997, one of the best-known figures in the Italian xenophobic party *Lega Nord* proposed her way to deal with incoming refugees from the Albanian civil war ("Let's throw them overboard and sink their ships")⁵, her call caused an uproar. Nevertheless, on 19 April 2015, a few hours after a shipwreck in the Sicilian sea that claimed hundreds of lives, a leading member of the Italian Parliament of the Centre-right party *Forza Italia* reiterated the idea: "It is necessary to sink the boats [...] An act of war is better than losing the war"⁶. In her statement, she approvingly, if vaguely, recalled the sinking of an Albanian boat by a corvette of the Italian navy that in the spring of 1997 killed one hundred people. Two days later, on 21 April 2015, the Minister of the Interior, clearly inspired by that 'authoritative' idea, declared "We need to sink the smugglers' boats, prevent their departure [...] A negotiation with UN and EU is underway to have, in a framework of international legality, the authorization for this intervention"⁷. The prime minister and leader of the centre-left Democratic Party, Renzi, soon echoed him: "Let's study how to bomb the boats"⁸.

Bellicose statements have entered the mainstream discourse (Maneri 2010), although substituting ships at sea with boats in ports. The hegemonic nature of the securitization of the border, guaranteed not only by EU policies but also by the strategic position of the professionals of security as routine sources for

⁴ See "New evidence proves EU policymakers knew reduced search-and-rescue operation would cause mass migrant deaths" at <https://www.gold.ac.uk/news/death-by-rescue/>.

⁵ http://www1.adnkronos.com/Archivio/AdnAgenzia/1997/03/29/Cronaca/ALBANIA-DIRITTI-CIVILI-DENUNCIA-IRENE-PIVETTI_174100.php.

⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/04/19/daniela-santanche-barconi_n_7094910.html.

⁷ <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Alfano-affondare-barconi-prima-che-partano-440b0a63-d14d-4f49-980f-f9b4367f1dbf.html>.

⁸ http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/topnews/2015/05/12/renzi-studiamo-come-bombardare-barconi_d3250729-d37e-423c-aa20-e8a182c945b9.html.

the media, makes the politics of siege – the implementation of control and ‘defence’ measures and the correlated discourse of invasion and fortification – the only ones that reconcile with ‘reality’. The application of more security-oriented measures and the issuance of more intransigent and aggressive statements are deemed the only political choice (Bigo 2005).

4. THE REGIME OF HUMANITARIAN/SECURITY DISCOURSE

But then a ship full of people founders and hundreds of people die. If deaths exceed a given – gradually higher – threshold, the tragedy becomes major news and is assumed to break down the indifference of even a hardened audience. Faced with images of corpses aligned on a beach, or of just one – a cute, light-skinned, well-dressed, smartly-photographed, Twitter-propagated Alan Kurdi⁹ – turning the back or exhibiting intransigence is no longer the most rewarding posture. Heads of government and their ‘court’ bring flowers to the victims and make touching speeches. It is time for humanitarian discourse. Indeed, the politics of care (Ticktin 2011)¹⁰, those humanitarian exceptions dedicated to the few deserving-because-more-vulnerable victims, have become a stable part of the governmentality of immigration, but it needs the sudden occurrence of tragedy to take the siege discourse off the stage and enact the full spectrum of humanitarian discourse. This entails the planning of ritual moments for the expression of empathy and sorrow, resorting to rhetoric of compassion, publishing more stories that foreground refugees’ suffering and aspirations that mobilize sympathy, activating and displaying measures of protection.

The new regime may have some lasting effects, both in practice – as in the case of the one year-long Mare Nostrum operation launched after one of the deadliest shipwrecks off Lampedusa, which brought patrol missions closer to the area where most people die – and in discourse – as in the case of the substitution of the word ‘clandestine’ for ‘refugee’ in the Italian debate on immigration and in google searches¹¹ after the death of Alan Kurdi; but its glory is by no means durable, nor are its implications unambiguous. New words can be inflected with new negative meanings, like the well-known refugee-as-un-deserving-burden in European public discourse; the increased attention to suffering, in its turn, can hide the responsibility of security politics and be used as a precautionary story about the dangers of migration for people who are deemed in this way responsible for their fates (Chouliaraki and Musarò 2017).

⁹ See Vis and Goriunova (2015).

¹⁰ For a more general framework on the ‘politics of protection’ see Huysmans, Dobson, and Prokhovnik (2006).

¹¹ <http://openmigration.org/analisi/quello-che-google-trends-ci-puo-insegnare-su-clandestini-e-rifugiati/>

In general, the passive subjects of the politics of protection are dispossessed of their voice, political agency and dignity, being paradoxically de-humanised (Fassin 2012). On the contrary, the ‘humanitarian-soldiers’ (Musarò 2017) are celebrated and decorated. This, together with ‘their’ gratitude towards ‘us’, confirms a hierarchy that reproduces the colonial order.

As the politics of protection tell this moral tale, they allow for the reconciliation of a humanitarian approach to refugees with the rejection of ‘illegal immigration’, providing aid while generally refusing asylum and recognition of rights. As refugee rights are subordinated to migration control, it is not surprising that humanitarian discourse, albeit prominent in the ‘after-tragedy’, is easily superseded by a discourse of fear and control. The politics of protection and the politics of siege have the same capacity to play out their priorities – care and security – to conjure up different emotions – compassion and fear – and to be sustained by actors able to reach the public arena – NGOs and other non-state players and governments (agencies) – but cannot be said to be involved in a fair competition, like that between feminized and masculine endeavours with which they are easily associated. The siege paradigm resulting from the European founding pillars, which establishes a dualized structure between the rightless & dangerous and the fearful & rightful, has a superordinate status that no politics of protection can undermine (indeed, as long as protection is performed too close to the securitized space, its visibility is a factor that aggravates fear). In the politics of siege, asylum is a threat and every concession is a capitulation. The humanitarian posture is the opening of a breach and is likened to treason.

The siege paradigm is institutionalized in norms, bureaucracies, technologies, and doctrines that structure the acquisition of knowledge (one of its most recurrent outputs being estimates about ‘illegal immigrants’ wanting to enter the Schengen area or already present in a given country), the interpretation of information (consider the ‘risk analysis’ professed as the “starting point for all *Frontex* activities”¹²), decision-making procedures (the ‘care but there’ that prioritizes the minimum possible migrants’ intake), and the responses to challenges (whereby a humanitarian ‘refugee crisis’ sooner or later resolves in a tightening of security).¹³

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Behind the different forms of contemporary bordering across the world, some scholars see the logic of the reproduction of a disposable and exploitable workforce by way of its illegalization (De Genova 2002; Mezzadra and Neilson 2012). In this regard, the obstinacy that characterizes the closing of borders

¹² [Http://frontex.europa.eu/intelligence/risk-analysis/](http://frontex.europa.eu/intelligence/risk-analysis/).

¹³ For a similar argument about fear, see Crawford (2014).

– or better, the ‘revolving door policies’ (Cockcroft 1986) that reject or expel people while importing others at the same time – is functional to a racialized differential inclusion in both the workforce and citizenship. While it is hard to deny that a racialized differential inclusion is the ultimate outcome of most forms of present-day and previous processes of bordering, in our opinion the political agency that performs it often responds to a smaller scale rationale and to a range of specific interests, which require legitimization.

The siege paradigm provides a framework for action and a source of legitimization that keeps these different local strategies together. It is about institutions and their everyday practices, but it is also a cultural formation, one that frames reality within powerful combinations of practice and representation. It moulds symbolic boundaries and leaves a mark on the way immigration and asylum are conceived, perceived and believed, creating a reality that orients and constrains actions. The strength of the paradigm derives from its being an offspring of the foundation of the European Union; hence, we are afraid, it is difficult to think of its dismantling without the project of a different Europe.

This self-validating power/knowledge nexus has an inertia that blocks every attempt to reform EU policies profoundly, despite their admitted failure and the evident contradiction between the goal of ‘protecting’ Europe as the ‘cradle of human rights’ and the stark undermining of the principle of non-refoulement established by the Geneva Convention that results from this aim. Instead, after the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in the summer of 2015, several European countries began to suspend the Schengen convention – which had been previously dismissed temporarily in the event of top-level summits, terrorist attacks or demonstrations – for new reasons, this time formulated as the “threat of a big influx of persons seeking international protection”¹⁴, and for longer and repeated periods of time, going much further than the “temporary reintroduction of border control” permitted by Article 25 et seq. of the Schengen Borders Code. In other words, the politics of siege, whose most solid foundations were laid by the Schengen agreements, prevail over and cannibalizes their putative father: you can betray Schengen as long as you do not betray the siege paradigm.

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¹⁴ [Http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/docs/ms_notifications_-_reintroduction_of_border_control_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control/docs/ms_notifications_-_reintroduction_of_border_control_en.pdf).

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Language and resistance

ABSTRACT

Author attempts to explore emancipatory and political potential of the Declaration on common language behind its scientific and benign cultural claims. The reference to the commonness of this particular, polycentric language seem to function in the two – mutually exclusive – paradoxical ways: a) the commonness appears as the source of aggression and conflict, and b) the commonness appears as the source of everyday's conducting 'business as usual' among common citizens of these states in the spheres of economy, culture, science, media communication, small-talk interacting, and therefore as possible means of resistance to a particularist regime. Viewed in the light of the first way, the language together with other 'identity markers' reveals itself as an ideological instrument for preservation of contemporary hegemony. However, author argues that to take language from the control of ethnonationalist elites is to take an important instrument of the oppression from their hands which is political act in itself.

Key words: Language, identity politics, ideology;

„One must not regard language as a lifeless *product*. It is far more like *reproducing*“
Humboldt in Heidegger, 1993: 404.

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Declaration on Common Language*², signed by more than 200 linguists, intellectuals, academics, artists of the four ex-Yugoslav republics, in March 2017 bluntly stated that one common language is spoken in these new states. This common language – previously in socialist Yugoslavia named Serbo-Croat - is „common standard language of polycentric type, that is, the language spoken by few peoples in few states with its recognizable variants. Štokavian represents the dialect base for a standard language“. The level of mutual understanding between users of its variants is more than 75%. Writers of the

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² <http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/deklaracija/>

Declaration point that the political „insistence upon the lesser number of the existing differences and forceful separation of the four standard variants“ into separate languages „brings forth a numerous of negative social, cultural and political consequences such as the utilization of language“ as a tool of „segregation of schoolchildren in multiethnic communities, meaningless translations in administration and in media, of inventing the differences where they had not existed previously, of bureaucratic enforcements and forms of censorship – including self-censorship“. Such practice establishes the language articulation as basic criteria of ethnic-national belonging and a mean for justification of political loyalties. Authors do not question the individual’s right to belong to social groups of his or her designation and consequentially the right to name and codify his or her spoken language, that is their variant, in the way she or he freely chooses. But, based on the empirical and scientific fact that the language spoken in the four ex Yugoslav republics is one common polycentric standard language, the Declaration writers demand that all the forms of language discrimination in their respective states were abolished; that practices of forceful mechanisms of language separation, including rigid definitions of variant standards were ceased. The Declaration demands the freedom of individual choice and respect for language diversity, full linguistic freedom in literature, arts, media and education.

2. LANGUAGE, NATION, AND STRATEGIES OF EMANCIPATION

The harshness of reactions by dominant ethno-nationalist political and cultural elites to this document detects – in my opinion – significant ruptures in the ruling nationalistic hegemonies. How come, that after almost 30 years of ethnopolitical domination in these four states, after decades of symbolic and material investment in the means of production of nationalist symbolic order, political elites react in panic? Does that mean that the foundation stone of particular national identity which is national language, overprotected by institutions, constitutions, laws and the established network of administrative and non-formal practices – is not somehow exactly secure? Does this mean that there are still repressed shadows of doubts? Does the commonness of language somehow call forth uneasiness and reluctance among the political elites?

In the process of production of a nation, Blommaert and Verschueren point that the task of language is to undoubtedly play a role „of a clear identity marker...“ together with „descent, history, culture, religion“(Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998: 192).. Yet unlike most of these elements that are subject to constant re-interpretation and ideological interpretation in general, the language is ‘empirical’, that is, it becomes a part of empirical experience as soon as a word is spoken – it is immediately understood, or not understood by inter-

locutors. As such, language is immediate, literally physical marker of identification which either bridges the communication, or stands as an unbreakable wall between the two language users. However, function of the language in so-called national-identity cluster is, according to these authors, to „imply separability of ‘nations’ and ‘peoples’ as natural groups“ (Ibid., 192). In the case of these four ex-Yugoslav states, to question the distinctiveness of a particular national language equals to the questioning of reality of a nation. The reference to the commonness of this particular, polycentric language seem to function in the two – mutually exclusive – paradoxical ways: a) the commonness appears as the source of aggression and conflict, and b) the commonness appears as the source of everyday’s conducting ‘business as usual’ among common citizens of these states in the spheres of economy, culture, science, media communication, small-talk interacting, and therefore as possible means of resistance to a particularist regime.

Few points on the first function: to the minds of ethnic-nationalists in these four states, the sameness, or commonness of language is something unbearable, firstly because it prevents Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks and Montenegrins to appear to one another as unambiguously and truly Other, that is, foreign or distant enough. The distinctiveness has to be forged, or produced simply because “the absence of the feature ‘distinct language’ tends to cast doubts on the legitimacy of claims to nationhood” (Ibid., 192). This production occurs directly during the national revolution (1990s) by means of armed force which resulted in massive scale ethnic cleansing and genocide. Second, indirectly, during the imposed peace, by means of legislature, administrative procedures, ethnopolitical strategies by the developed network of the ideological nation-state apparatuses – in other words: to maintain the state of *distinctness*. Still the possibility of clear understanding of utterances of the other, the possibility to read, watch, listen to each other’s media, books, cultural products, or subsequent impossibility to establish one of the fundamental identity markers ‘beyond any reasonable doubt’ remains to this day constant source of frustration among ethno-nationalist elites.

This identitarian gap unpleasantly opened – even after a quarter of century of ethnopolitical devotion to production of its distinctiveness, or ‘self-othering’ - by the commonness of language had to be somehow filled by ethno-nation-state-building elites by all political means. In the absence of language distinction beyond any reasonable doubt, the ethno-nationalist regimes in the region, and especially in BiH, had been involved into the political production of language and generally, cultural differences. This twist is somewhat unique in the theory of ethnopolitics, according to which, usually, cultural differences substantiate different political claims. In the region, and especially in BiH, it

is the political differences, interests that substantiate different cultural claims, especially in language. This is specific ‘U-turn’ of local ethnopolitics. So it is the ultimate matter of political correctness in the region to talk about Serb, Croat, Bosnian, and Montenegrin languages therefore revealing that the political production of languages, that is a political construct, and not some empirical fact, is at the core of domestic ethnopolitics. According to Boris Buden, „the name of language is apparently not a matter of purely linguistic facts, nor their scientific reflection, but, on contrary, it is a matter of political will, that is, the result of struggle of political forces for power and hegemony in entirely concrete historical and social conditions“ (Budén, 2017). This ethnopolitical struggle for hegemony is revealed in so called dogma of *homogeneity*: Blommaert and Verschueren define homogeneity as the view, held by ethnopolitical elites that „the ideal model of society is monolingual, monoethnic, monoreligious, monoideological. Nationalism interpreted as the struggle to keep groups as ‘pure’ and homogenous as possible is considered to be a positive attitude within the dogma of homogeneity“ (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998: 195). Commonness of spoken language reveals however, that the very foundation of ethnonational homogeneity is far from ‘natural’ and ‘concrete’, but it displays itself as merely political project, as an ideological construction. The foundations of dominant political order seem to be sinking deep into the quicksand of contingency of power relations. The entire ideological superstructure is now revealed as contingent political strategy of domination over the meaning of social and political world. Therefore Buden concludes that this „logic of homolingual paradigm produces such phantoms which are capable of causing very real fears – not from ‘denying the nation the right to its own language’, which seems to be the main point of Declaration’s critics, but a fear from the losing the positions of power and privileges enjoyed by political, cultural and religious elites of the Post-Yugoslav states“ (Budén, 2017). The language together with other ‘identity markers’ reveals itself as an ideological instrument for preservation of contemporary hegemony. In his *Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*, Friedrich Engels points the following: “the old idealistic understanding of history does not know about class struggles based on material interests at all; production and all economic relations here appear only incidentally, indeed as subordinated elements of ‘cultural history’” (Engels, 1973: 194), or put in more contemporary vocabulary – ‘identity politics’. Indeed, the results of domination of ‘identity politics’ as driving force of national statehood over the last decades, especially in the Balkans, point me to the question, namely, whether this identitarian perspective of a common language as a source of conflict, is merely a reincarnation of Engels’ conception of the ‘old idealistic understanding of history’ within which the economic relations,

the re-establishment of sharply divided class society, once again re-appear as something incidental, indeed invisible. To what extent, in such a cultural-identitarian context the entire 'superstructure': legal, political institutions, religious, philosophical representations, national-language distinctiveness appear as essences in themselves, or as ideological and metaphysical basis of 'real' hegemony of nationalistic regimes?

Viewed in this light, more than incidental become facts such as that enormous portion of population during the democratic transition had been dispossessed; that wealth gap had been tremendously widened; that life expectancy of ordinary citizens shortened for five years or so; that the level of health and social protection had reached the very bottom; that gender inequality rapidly progressed, etc. So, if these facts are understood as incidental, then the only possible resistance we could hope for is ideological, that is metaphysical. Instead of resource allocation we should strive for allocating our diverse identity into grand national-identity narrative of unity grounded in our distinctive national language. Resistance in this idealistic perspective means exactly the transsubstantiation of social conflict in metaphysical sphere of identity struggles on the background of economic relations that unfold unquestionably with the force of natural phenomenon.

So, what about the second function of the commonness of language – the function of resistance? In the long run, this commonness undermines the doctrine of homogeneity. This idea reflects Humboldt's view on language not as product, but rather as reproducing. Commonness of language refers to the idea of language as free production force versus nationalist idea of codified, solidified, that is as lifeless product. If we read this politically this approach stands for an opening of the emancipatory potentials for the possibility of heterogeneous communities, the associations of diversity and multitude – ideas still so unpopular in Europe and elsewhere, unfortunately. Still, it is generally held that homogenous political entity – the nation state - is somehow natural, it is precondition of stability, while the diverse one is prone to conflict, regardless the fact that the idea of natural nation state based on ethnic homogenous core nation and manageable minority had lead Europe into two devastating world wars, and the region of Balkans into two extremely vicious Balkan wars and took millions of innocent lives. Nevertheless, in short-term perspective, it could be said, that the Declaration on common language represents the first serious step towards the dismantling the ethnonationalist hegemony in BiH, Serbia, Croatia, and Montenegro. Why? Because common language transcends national borders just as this nationalist hegemony does. The ethno-nationalist domination in this region is maintained on trans-border level through complex network of relations between ethno-nationalist elites. Nationalism

did not break out in one Yugoslav republic, but it had occurred as trans-border phenomenon. The hegemony of nationalism is singular in its immediate expression, in terms that it reigns within borders of single national state, but nationalism is regional in its origin and function working like a power circuit, especially in the triangle between Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo. Every ethnonationalist elite is sovereign within its territory, while the mechanism that maintains their power operates on wider inter-state space within which ethnic antagonisms are constantly being generated. Language as political construct has so far played significant role in the maintenance of this hegemony. To take language from the control of these elites is to take an important instrument of the oppression from their hands.

This attack on language-identity foundation of ethno-nationalist hegemony opens up a space for further strategies of anti-nationalist resistance both on regional and on national levels. Other means of production of ethnonationalist order could be exposed to similar reconstruction as well. For example, history. If the writers of Declaration had been inspired by common interlocutors of this common language in all of its variants, progressive historians could find – and we find numerous examples that they do - their inspiration in the experiences and narratives of marginalized and the oppressed groups whose voices were silenced in the official heroic histories. Anyway, it is hard to tell history of one ethnic-people in full separation from histories of other ethnicities, especially in BiH. Separate histories turn out to be political projects just like separate languages, when it comes to this region. Similar space could be opened for literary critics and writers, legal theorists. Parallel to the political production of separate political languages there goes, unnoticed live production of common language confirmed in hundreds of thousands of daily interactions in the region between ordinary people, business-people, social and natural scientists on their conferences without services of translation. When language, history, science, literature and arts are expropriated from the hands of their temporary political usurpers, when they are returned to their real agents, or owners, when united in our political projects of homogeneity we fall, and yet, as diverse, different in multitude we stand, conditions of true reconciliation will be met.

3. CONCLUSION: THE DECLARATION AND ITS LIMITS

And this is exactly the point where Declaration meets its borders. It cannot simply be, as well-intentioned writers and supporters of this document try to point, purely scientific, that is non-political statement. The political elites of the region more than correctly, of course for their own particular, self-interested reasons, demasked the Declaration as political attack. How could it be possible, Buden asks, that “the conception of common polycentric language

within homolingual paradigm, can escape the issue of its own subjectification and culturalization?" (Buden, 2017). The *Declaration* declares the commonness of one polycentric language, but language requires its empirical positioning, and the *Declaration* seems to call-forth such positioning which is political act *par excellence*. This community who shares this language is, at this moment, specific. Buden argues, that "although it meets the criterium of understanding, it does not have its delineated territory, its outside borders... it does not have its own cultural or educational institutions, its monolingual dictionaries, its mainstream media, therefore, it does not have its own state. This, however, does not mean that it is incapable for its cultural and cultural subjectification" (Buden, 2017).

This is emancipatory subtext of the apparently 'scientific' *Declaration*. But where to situate this subjectification? Maybe exactly in this, for ethnonationalist elites unpleasant, gap between the one spoken and four unspoken ideological languages that are in the core of identity politics. If identity is indeed the relation, and not a 'thing-in-the-world', then as any relation it relies on agents and their mutual interactions within context of particular relations of power. These relations of power in the situation of hegemony assign an individual his or her position in a social space. The ethnonational identity politics assigns, or distributes positions discriminately by subsuming the individual under certain identity markers thus alienating him or her as much as possible from everyday's context of production of life which among other things, presupposes the interacting in one language. The alienation is visible in the fact that citizen within such a context appear to another only in a reduced way, as a member of this or that ethnonational identity group. The expropriation of identity by assigning the particularly reduced position in social space coincides with the expropriation of power, or as David Harvey points 'dispossession'. This gap of alienation is sustained by means of ideology and of coercion. This alienation however is two-way process, as the ideological grip continues to maintain the relations of alienation it tends to become alienated itself. This is the point when, according to Antonio Gramsci, ideology ceases to allocate social positions unambiguously. The ruling class realizes however, confronted with the *Declaration*, that its "unified coherent ideological discourse which will be the product of the articulation to its value system of the ideological elements existing within a determinate historical conjuncture of the society in question" (Mouffe, 1979: 195) is articulated in a 'foreign', alienated common language, language not their own. The recognized heterolingual practices by the *Declaration* already undermine homolingual paradigm and could accommodate different life forms beyond strict ethnic confines thus contributing to the possibility of birth of a new democratic counter-power. I believe that every signatory of the *Declara-*

tion therefore, signed the document for political, and not for scientific reasons. Signing the *Declaration* is political act that calls-forth and new democratic body politic. If nationalist subject is clearly situated on one side in the form of, let me paraphrase Buden, four-headed Leviathan, then there simply has to be a counter-subject, on the other side, internally fragmented, diverse, and internally confronted as it is, yet interwoven by threads of common language. This potential should not be neglected, because exactly by everyday's interactions, the common language, and common in general is being produced, and "the production of common involves the production of subjectivity, a subjectivity which includes a new and radical form of social wealth" (Harrison, 2014: 80). This interaction and cooperation's products have a certain 'surplus value' that defies appropriation by respective regimes. Through productive activities emerges the multitude, the diversity that stubbornly resists. Resistance based on the production of common is the initial field of the affirmation of particular political subjectivity. That is why, Buden points, "the Declaration should have instead of informing the public on objective linguistic 'truths' and requesting from the four-headed regime the linguistic freedom and tolerance, supported this language of resistance and openly call the people to confront the repressive nationalist standard", it should have been the open call for linguistic disobedience on all levels of society and culture, in schools and faculties, on courts in parliaments, in cinemas and theaters, in the street and in media" (Buden, 2017).

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 - Graphs and tables: Tables and graphs should contain the number, title and source (all in the lower right corner). In electronic form using formats .jpg, .tiff and .ai. If necessary, graphs are sent in a separate document.
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