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*GLOBALISATION AND
RELIGIONS IN
MULTICULTURAL CITIES*

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Introduction :

As we all know, Metabolizing globalization means to metabolize a multicultural ‘living-together’ of different people, with shared or competing agendas, often within a single urban space. In which can be represented by cities or urban frames where globalization affects local daily life, with visible effects on social, economic, political spheres.

In particular, Cities could equally become the place where ‘religious advocacy’ can be translated into ‘Habermasian’ forms of participation of public life and where conflicts can both deflagrate *from* or *towards* a large national scale or find pragmatic, local, accommodations. To identify more about this matter, Primed school aimed at investigating, on one side, the role of ‘city-religions’ in some Mediterranean contexts and, on the other, the role of national and local public authorities in guaranteeing a pluralistic frame where people of different convictions live side-by-side. By using the didactic approach, in which is based on the alternation of theoretical lessons held at Insubria University, in addition to laboratory and guided study tours in Como and Milan.

Findings :

1. Rebbio (Como)

Key words: migration, integration, share experiences, integration, parish, volunteering, civic engagement, Italian language, school, prayer, interfaith dialogue, have dinner together.

During our visit to Rebbio, we met don Giusto, priest of the local catholic parish, the volunteers who work in the local school of Italian language set up by don Giusto, migrants who arrived in Italy during these last years and the representative of different migrant communities which have in Rebbio parish their meeting place. After a brief self-introduction, don Giusto and the volunteers told us about the project of Rebbio parish which is aimed at giving assistance to migrants, teaching them Italian language and helping them integrate into Italian society.

Sofia, as a teacher of Italian, she helped in creating the organisation, where they received at first 80 students. She expressed her way of dealing with diversity and how to manage coexistence between her students by saying : “we are open-minded about diversity, we have to adapt and at the same time let our people adapt too”. And she adds: “Religion is not everything, yet it’s an opportunity to share ideas and cultures”. And that shows clearly in some acts, like for example in dinner, each person pray in his own language, or as Sofia mentioned that the Lebanese Muslim community often takes part in celebrations of the Catholic Christmas in don Giusto’s parish and, at the same time, Catholic representatives from Rebbio take part in the festivities organised by the Lebanese Islamic community for the end of Ramadan. Sofia insist that they should be very careful to adapt their activities to Ramadan and make Muslim people comfortable.

An Italian volunteer, for 7 years, he has devoted his free time to work in Rebbio community, his engagement with helping migrants comes from his own experience as a migrant in Belgium. Having experienced how difficult could be to migrate to another country without knowing the local language and without having opportunities to integrate himself in the local community, the volunteer decided to actively take part in don Giusto’s activities to help migrants in their process of integration. His motto : “ we should live in exchange ”, that’s why he thinks that solidarity has a big importance in humanity.

After him, a Buddhist monk from Sri Lanka spoke about his experience of migration and the importance of don Giusto’s community to help him after his arrival in Italy. Then, he shared with us some of his philosophy, focusing on the search for a “peaceful mind” to reach interior happiness. His streets on the concept of “peaceful mind” and “be happy” deeply impressed all of us.

The representative of the Lebanese Association in Como talked about his experience, when he came to Italy over thirty years ago because of war, now he is well integrated into Italian society. His friendship with don Giusto now involves interfaith dialogue and coexistence. The Lebanese Muslim community often takes part in celebrations of the Catholic Christmas in don Giusto's parish and, at the same time, Catholic representatives from Rebbio take part in the festivities organised by the Lebanese Islamic community for the end of the Ramadan.

Finally, some migrants from different African countries share their experiences. They all attended the Italian classes in Rebbio and they are now working or looking for a job in Italy.

During the evening, students, teachers, migrants and volunteers all had a dinner cooked by a Pakistani migrant.

The Rebbio bottom-up experience made us get in touch with people who actively work for the promotion of integration, interfaith and intercultural dialogue in their everyday life.

2. “Legami”

The Italian experience is marked by many steps towards a system of tolerations and formal agreements (between the Italian state and religious confessions). Italian Constitution places the individual (person) at the center of the treatment even if we cannot consider our constitution like the individualistic concept. Whereas The Constitution text is a middle way between single people and person in the association / group. That brings us to another important point: the growing role of local authorities.

The local level is the most level to be able to create a dialogue through the closeness to the citizens. Starting from a local level, local authorities can develop a new model of integration, based on tolerance and cooperation through a constant confrontation.

All this brings us to be more aware of the diversity and common aspect, in a perspective of inter-religious and inter-community dialogue.

Local authorities are very important because they're much closer to the citizens, which helps to provide the best concretes and specific solutions for people.

A significant milestone for Como city is “Legami”, a group of people that helps homeless, bringing them basic necessities such as, drinking water, cold tea, food and clothes. This team works twice a month since 2001 from the initiative taken by “Oratorio della Parrocchia di Tavernola”, based in Como. The name of this charity group, “Legami” was chosen owing to the link between the helper and the homeless. In another meaning, They are constantly giving and receiving gratitude and love.

In fact, this condition of aid creates an interchange of good feelings.

The same as Parish organizes lunches and dinners for needy people. Legami is an example of how local level creates an integration work.

In addition, we should focus on children: helping the men and women of tomorrow to grow with an always greater attention towards cooperation and integration of different religion. How to do all this? For example, The countries could introduce “integration and citizenship” like school subject.

3. Milan

Key words : multiculturalism, neighbourhood, religious and ethnic differences, coexistence, religion, culture, respect, street/urban art, Islamic mosque, Catholic Church, urban renewal, multicultural marriages.

Our bottom-up experience in Milan was mainly focused on “Via Padova”, a multi-ethnic district in the city, which a strong presence of different migrants’ communities.

The first stop of our tour was the Islamic Mosque of via Padova, where we met the president of the local Islamic Cultural Association. The Mosque is located in a large hall on the ground floor of a building. The representative of the Islamic community told us his experience in Italy as a migrant and the activities organised by the association.

The second stop was the Catholic Church of the John Chrysostom parish which hosts the Catholic community of Filipinos living in the neighbourhood. We did not meet any representative of the community.

The third stop was the mural representing Sarita Colonia, a Peruvian girl who lived in the first half of the XX century and who had become a symbol of hope and peace for Peruvian people. This mural was painted 3 years ago and represent a combination of multicultural street art and use of public space to transmit a message of peace and non-violence.

The last stop was the “Parco Trotter”, a former racecourse which now hosts an elementary school (about 1200 child). the activities set up by the association "La città del Sole - Amici del Parco Trotter - onlus ", in which promotes projects of urban renewal in the Trotter park and activities aimed at promoting cultural and social cooperation and integration of migrants into Italian society.

In the afternoon, we moved from via Padova to the Church of the Coronation of Saint Mary, located in the city centre. There we met don Giampiero Alberti, the priest of that parish, who is engaged in multicultural and interfaith dialogue and ecumenism. He spoke about his activities in the parish and the diocese of Milan. Also how the church represent a symbol of Multi-diversity, how it was used by Monks before and now it’s place for Muslims, Jews and Christians to pray.;

This bottom-up experience was very interesting and rich; the walk around via Padova under the guide of Migrantour was an opportunity to find signs of religious faith and multicultural coexistence in a multi-ethnic zone of Milan, a city which experienced different waves of migrations of people who belong to diverse culture, ethnicity and religion.

Impressions :

- ☞ Spiritual leaders have an important role on constructing an inter-religious dialogue.
- ☞ Integration is action.
- ☞ There is a genuine desire to create an intercultural/inter-religious community.
- ☞ Dialogue, religious education, knowledge are essential for fighting against religious illiteracy and radicalism.
- ☞ Religious pluralism is a fact; How to create a peaceful coexistence is the challenge.
- ☞ Cooperation network is important for to build an inter-religious society.



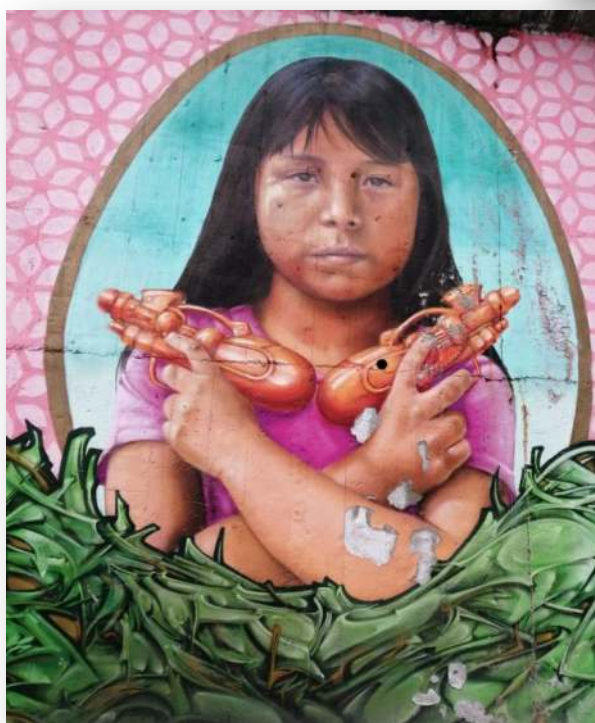
Rebbio, Como .





Mosque – Via Padova,
Milan (“invisible”
place of worship).

Chiesa di San Giovanni
Crisostomo, Milan.



Sarita Colonia: mythical
character of peruvian popular
folklore – street art, Milan.
(identity, tradition, connection,
latin culture).

“Parco Trotter”,
Milan.



The Church of the
Coronation of Saint
Mary, Milan.