Diversity in the Cities

Enzo Pace*

1. Introduction

The tension between cultural uniformity and a difference of identities can be well grasped by observing the evolution of socio-religious dynamics of cities. Most medium and large-sized European cities are a sort of an open-air laboratory in which different religious and ethnic communities cope with social solidarity amid outsiders (Habermas, 2002). At the same time, European cities are, until now, places where interreligious relations can develop and where cultural policies can be managed by local authorities to encourage the dialogue among various religious actors so as to transform religious difference into civil religion. Generally speaking, in a city, religion deals with the bolding capital, if using Putnam's concepts (Putnam, 1993; 2000): it creates cultural and social bonds (beyond faith) among citizens of a religious community. In politics, the challenge, of a multi-religious city, consists in mobilising such capital in order to develop a second one: the bridging capital. Local political authorities must therefore strive to overcome the boundaries that, as a rule, each religious community tends to trace and preserve (both in symbolic and territorial terms), to create the conditions and opportunities for leaders and followers of different religions to meet and work around a common civic project.

The project would serve to: ensure urban peace, promote the best practices in dialogue among citizens who belong to different religious faiths, but are interested in preserving the quality of their spiritual and cultural life in their area. A crucial example is: how to transform a building project of a mosque, that can sometimes become a source of symbolic and social conflict (Fox, 2002; Shadid, Van Koningsveld, 2002), into an opportunity to mobilise the inhabitants of a

* Professor of Sociology of Religion, University of Padua.

particular area to share in the decision concerning this project.

The project of a religious community could serve as an idea for all inhabitants, becoming not only confined to an area but extending to the entire city. Managing religious differences means coping with a complex political agenda that includes several aspects of social life like: areas, schools, associations, public bodies and so forth. Religion is an important pillar, that among other things involves the collective consciousness and memory: a city becomes a sort of stage on which the transformation of the place we live in, and consequently the changes of social representation of ourselves is perceived. But memory changes and draws new sacred boundaries within a city. For those who care, the level of social integration in a city is something that cannot be ignored. Therefore, religions and dialogue among religions, play a relevant role in integration policies (Pace, 2004).

The topic we intend to explore is migration and its broad framework, and diversity in European society. At least five dimensions of social process need to be included:

a) how new migration inflow changes the geography of the city;

b) to what extent do the political institutions of a city represent the various interests, taking the different levels of political regulation into account when making necessary decisions; how can a city's various actors – institutional, religious, civil, social movements and associations, volunteer groups, etc. – be involved in managing cultural and religious changes;

c) can relations between ethnic identity and religious faith add to the socio-religious complexity of the social environment (sometimes ethnic differences cross a particular religious confession, or vice versa people coming from a same country can belong to different ethnic groups, churches or religious communities) and create political problems to underline place and time where to solve the possible inter-group ethno-religious conflicts;

d) how can the diffusion of different diasporas in a city be managed from a political point of view, according to socio-economic activities and socio-religious attitudes: the new diasporas some immigrants tend to create in Europe seem to be interfaced locally and globally, because they are at the same

time rooted in a particular space (the city) and also in the global world, embodying the current economic, social and religious changes that are taking place globally (see, for instance, the tensions between Global Islam vs. Cultural Islam or between Neo-Pentecostalism vs. traditional Protestantism);
e) a multicultural society is accepted by a city as an invention of new intercultural and inter-religious activities, and considerably affects the diversity of production processes of urban culture (as is the case with religious museums, inter-ethnic festivals, including art performances, and ethnic cooking).

The city becomes a ground for trans-national and trans-cultural (and trans-religious) inventions in order to avoid possible conflict and promote an enrichment in sharing common goods (an inter-generational exchange, civic participation, mutual understanding of different cultures and religions in schools, districts, health structures and so forth) as well as inter-religious cooperation.

An example of this would be one of Italy's most Arab cities Mazara del Vallo, in Sicily, where 5% of the population comes from Tunisia. In 2003 I analysed the way the town's inhabitants shifted from civic disregard to a recognition of cultural differences (Pace, 2003). The analysis was conducted in three steps:
a) an association of Tunisians in Mazara, to overcome civic disregard, began cooperating with local political authorities to open an immigration office in the city hall in order to launch cultural activities and make Tunisians a visible presence;
b) the efforts of the immigrants in cooperating with Mazara's local cultural associations and with the Catholic church to organise street events, inter-religious meetings and other similar initiatives at schools, serve to show to the local population the similarities and differences between the Arab culture and the religious world;
c) the common strategy of local secondary school teachers, Tunisian representatives and local authorities to set up an integrated teaching project that serves to rediscover Sicily's Arab-Muslim heritage.

The example illustrates that a project conducted from a mid-sized town can see people of different backgrounds (the locals and immigrants) interact: the former in order to discover and

rediscover themselves through the recognition of the cultural differences, the latter becoming active citizens and re-writing the rules of society.

The last preliminary remark involved words like immigrant or ethnic minority. In sociological jargon these two words refer to a very sharp conceptual and ideological approach. The first (immigrant) refers to individuals, in terms of their foreign nationality or place of birth, with no distinction to their different origin. As is the case with France where the terms ethnic or religious minority is avoided. The second approach, on the other hand is adopted in the Anglo-Saxon world. Consequently, in France, the establishment views the idea of second generation immigrants as a contradiction with regard to the citizenship status of the children of first-generation immigrants as formally set by the French Constitution. Hence, the social stratification of ethnic groups, and their settling in the various parts of the city have rarely been studied, yet both these phenomena could be at the origin of social and urban segregation, as well as discrimination (like demonstrated by the recent *banlieue* riots) (Simon, 2002; Husband, 2002).

Culturally and ethnically distinct communities throughout Europe have sprung as a result of post-World War II migration, or refugee and asylum seekers. Though they may be spatially dispersed, they tend to be concentrated within specific inner-city areas, thus challenging the traditional notion of nation building through the increasing homogenisation of a culturally diverse population. For instance, in Germany (Bosswick, 1999) the stratum of guest workers can no longer be realistically considered as migrants and yet, they do not enjoy full citizenship rights. Immigrants to the UK, on the other hand, because of its former colonies, ended up settling in localised ethnic minority communities as the Pakistani community in Bradford or Birmingham, whose members, *de facto*, continue to occupy a socially and economically marginalised position in British society, even though, *de jure*, they are full British citizens.

We prefer the Anglo-Saxon concept – of ethnic groups – because it makes classifying religious differences easier, at least when dealing with first-generation immigrants, which tend to recreate in a city the various religious cleavages that characterised their long-term religious civilisation.

2. Studying Inter-religious Dialogue in a City

In studying inter-religious dialogue in a city, approaching the cultural and social effects that pro-dialogue policies have on cultures and religions in EU countries we suggest using a bottom-up methodology of comparison. The choice of method should be based on the following crucial aspects:
a) instead of evaluating the national integration model obtained by each European state, based on constitutional and historical specificity that shapes and biases the features of each pattern, we analysed the impact of the interreligious relations on national policies, moving from the bottom up. The city was considered as «an open-air» social laboratory that serves to analyse the practical effects of the policies implemented at the local level; and to study and compare the way the social, political, and religious representatives of a civil society have run and are running the experiment on the best practices for dialogue among cultures and religions;
b) because the city has been considered symbolic and real, at the same time, a place of differences (cultural and religious), we suggest selecting a sample of European cities where inter-religious dialogue policies have been adopted, by trial and error, and measuring the relative distance between the national abstract pattern of integration and the local invention of the path to dialogue;
c) the «policy dialogue» formula not only stresses the role and function of politicians and decision makers, but also highlights the construction process of a civic society that involves a number of social actors (including associations of immigrants and the representatives of various religious communities) that work together to devise an integrated program of activities that mobilises school systems, public bodies, public opinion, the media, volunteer groups and peace/human rights associations, who focus on two or three fundamental points: the mutual acceptance of the various religious communities during religious events (according to the different religious calendars); new inter-religious programs at school, conceived from the co-operation between religious leaders and University authorities; institutionalisation of a religious council at the local level which plays a pivotal role in the political decision-making process that not only promotes affirmative action in inter-

religious dialogue but also works to overcome conflicts over religious symbols or differences.

This third option aims to cope with two conceptual questions. The first notion is integration, an increasingly problematic issue. Sometimes the failure to integrate is attributed to religious differences and the gap between immigrants (and their descendants); on the contrary, it depends on the deterioration of public housing policies, on the economic decline of neighboring sources of employment or on the rising number of drop-outs among the children of immigrant families.

Socio-economic disparity is surveyed to stress the inequality of immigrant groups, who are viewed as collective victims since: they often experience discrimination due to their lower income, higher unemployment, lesser-education, and their level of poverty. In a context of socio-economic deprivation some groups – often from former-immigrants, thus citizens coming from first-generation immigrants – who are identified by their religious and cultural diversity become special targets of a process of stigmatisation (Goffman, 1970), even scape-goats (as in the case of Muslim communities of many European countries or gypsies).

In Belgium, for instance, but the same can be said of the Netherlands, particularly due to the reinforcement and dynamic presence of the Liberty Party of Wilders, and in some cities (as Antwerp or Ghent) the impact of political discourse on public opinion is noteworthy: the party, emphasises the idea that the Flemish people are a pure ethnic community who share common values (the first, of course, being the language that is different from the French-speaking Walloons) and daily life customs, therefore making all cultural and religious diversity (classified as such) a danger capable of corrupting the identity of the original community.

As long as religious distance between national identity and the outsider's identity is emphasised, religious difference becomes the most important reason to attribute to the failure of socio-economical integration of the descendants of the first generation of migrants who share with the younger generation of locals a similar condition in term of precarious jobs, a lower income, and a discrepancy in a high level of education and a low level of employment. The risk of sleeping-walking towards segregation

involves a whole low-cost generation, that includes not only the second or third generation of immigrants but even the natives.
The second conceptual question refers to the notion of diversity and, particularly religious diversity. We are living in a cycle in which people tend to emphasise, in an exaggerated way, the differences in religions, in spite of the recognition of the common values or shared symbols that exist in at least three monotheistic religions, the Jewish, Christian and Islamic, that could easily be considered a starting point for civic dialogue (not only religious one) among them.
Often, one must pay attention to the unequal distribution of religious power in a society: who aims to represent national identity? And how do mainstream religions behave towards religious minorities? In this case, the notion of difference is more precise for it places greater emphasis on the political dimension of power and inequality which leads to an evaluation of social relations (horizontal) among the various religious communities and institutions, and alternatively the relations between these different socio-religious groups and the power (national, regional and local). Sometimes the political power prefers to establish a special relation with a religious community instead of another one (Buddhist community instead of Muslim community), or to bypass the traditional function paid by a religious historical institution to create a new public sphere that encourages other entries that represent another point of view on the public agenda. In this second case, power promotes pluralism and dialogue becomes an important issue of the political agenda. In the first case, on the contrary, we cope with a discriminatory policy.
Last but not least, some final remarks on the process of the territorialisation of religious diversity. According to the classic Chicago School studies (the well-known Sociology Group of the Chicago University of the 1930s) migration follows a three-generation model:
– the first generation tends to ghettoise itself in a city;
– the second generation moves out towards the next urban ring, it mixes with other communities and is better educated;
– the third generation becomes suburban and blends with the general population.
This model does not work in the European landscape (Peach, 1999), because in many European cities there are no real

ghettoes, only enclaves. If we can evoke the notion of ghetto when speaking about the Black, because often in a particular urban space there is a concentration of Black people only (or is almost all Black), ethnic enclaves are twice more dilute: minority ethnic and religious groups only rarely represent the majority of those that are identified with the area (the areas, for instance, of Moroccans or Muslims), and alternatively a majority of this minority does not like to be identified with a particular area (the so-called ghetto) (Daley, 1998; Friedrichs, 1998; Kempen, Van Weesep, 1998; O'Loughlin, Glebe, 1987; Philpott, 1978).

According to Peach (2002), if we consider the concentration of minority ethnic groups in London, in the 1991 census, results on population evolution show that a situation similar to Chicago's Black ghetto, as described by the Sociology School of Chicago, is difficult to come by Musterd (Musterd et al., 1998) has systematically compared the process of segregation in six European cities: Amsterdam, Brussels, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, London and Manchester. Segregation was measured using structural and cultural indicators (income, education, housing, stigma, etc.), Musterd's team has stressed the fact that north Africans in continental Europe, and south Asians in Britain, suffer the highest level of discrimination among the composite groups examined. Ranking second as a group – the Asians – in Britain the Bangladeshis are highly segregated (averaging 73% on the Index of Disequality, while Pakistanis scored 61%). In this case we come to the transformation of cultural and religious landscapes that some times in the first generation of migrants tends to coincide with an ethnic enclave. But this result is not obvious if the policies on inter-religious dialogue do not succeed to reduce the cultural and spatial divide that separates different religious communities.

The assumption that religious boundaries must clearly cross different religions is not necessary (as the Hindu enclaves, or the Sikh or Muslim ones), the British case shows that it is more important to be Pakistani and to live in a relative homogeneous Pakistani area or alternatively to be Bangladeshi and to live in another enclave where the majority of the ethnic group is concentrated than to belong to the same religion (Islam: perhaps to the two most important families, the Sunnite or Shiite).

3. Comparing the Multi-religious Cities of Europe

The idea is to compare a sample of European multi-religious cities, to collect case studies on policies of inter-religious dialogue that have been put into practice. The aim of the comparison being to select a set of indicators of the best practices adopted by cities, that have generated a new way for different religions to live together. This experience could be treated as a sort of pre-civic and pro-civic creation of a new social capital – a bridging capital – that encourage people to cross different symbolic boundaries to identify their different religious belonging.
The list of the sample cities include:
– Bradford and Oxford in the United Kingdom;
– Berlin and Nürnberg in Germany;
– Granada and Cordoba in Spain;
– Barbès and Saint-Denis in France;
– Novellara and Colle Val d'Elsa in Italy.
The list could be extended to other case studies. And among the important cases we find: Tilburg - the Netherlands, Goteborg - Sweden, Louvain la Neuve - Belgium, and Turin - Italy. To choose a city we suggest applying the following criteria:
– to compare large and medium sized cities of the same country and among countries;
– to compare cities of the countries that were shaped by different migration policies;
– to compare cities with high and low levels of multi-religiousness;
– to compare the policies of inter-religious dialogue in mono-religious societies to societies shaped by religious pluralism (multi-confessional vs. mono-confessional).
According to European Research Project the role of inter-cultural dialogue for the development of a new plural democratic citizenship, the case studies on religious issues could serve to start charting the data of the cities, demonstrating the way various actors interact in a civic area to promote and create a public, religiously-oriented sphere. To give an idea of the empirical research to be conducted on this topic, each case, will be summed up considering some of the elements that led to dialogue policies developed at the local

level which could prove to be a useful universal paradigm in other situations. The cases, in fact, show the positive and negative effects of dialogue policies based on the methods the social actors have been experienced to solve step by step the conflicts that, as a rule, arise from a multi-religious city that stries to reinvent and preserve a new urban space where new religions can live and interact with others that are historically rooted in the environment.

A case study could, for instance be: building a mosque or a Sikh *gurdwara*, that include customs and practices (funeral and marriage rituals, etc.) in public spaces. Negotiating the particular rules that each community must respect has always been a cause of tension and conflicts. The aim of comparative study is to observe the best practices that social, religious and political actors invented in order to avoid conflicts, the way growth of spirit and mutual understanding among religions has moved ahead, how diffusing knowledge about different creeds and practices came about, or the way the general population was involved in the building project of the new temple or in common activities shared by different religious communities under the protection of local political authorities (the city, of course).

Bradford (source: the District Metropolitan Council): 485,000 inhabitants; starting 1960 a significant Pakistani population established itself there. In 2011 they are estimated to reach 104,000 (approximately a quarter of the city's total population). Today they are over 10% of the city population and 50% of them are under 18. Concentrated in a number of inner-city areas in which two areas have over 50% of Pakistani population and one over 70%. The best practice founded was the «Teaching Religion in a Intercultural Perspective» project which resulted in the co-operation of the various actors (religious representatives, University, public bodies and the Municipality) to conceive a new program aimed at providing inter-religious upbringing from the primary to secondary schools.

Oxford (source: University, cooperating with the City Hall): the best practice was the project on the development and characteristics of the Muslim mosque, Hindu temples and Sikh *gurdwaras* in England, in order to study the style of new buildings, to harmonise and reduce the impact on the cultural landscape. Therefore having the various actors cooperate in

order to decide which building materials suit the surrounding style, reduce conflicts and create a self-confident multi-religious society. In the UK there are about 1000 new religious sites of which only 20% are purpose-built.

Berlin (source: City Hall and University): among the best practices worthy of notice is the gentrification of the Kreuzberg District following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent development of new intercultural and inter-religious relations with the Turkish population, which since the 1970s concentrated in this district (with at least 70 mosques and Sufi orders) compared to Nürnberg where inter-religious dialogue policies focused on the city's political agenda, combining religious dialogue and organic and integrated housing, and unemployment policies to invest social energy in the education system, actively mobilising families, teachers, and volunteer groups to support the intercultural project.

In Paris the area Barbès, on one hand, and Saint-Denis on the other, could be compared to see what happens when local authorities reduce part of the budget to support intercultural dialogue and inter-religious coexistence in the sensitive areas: in the former town the public infrastructure continues to preserve the coexistence policy (*mixité*) it developed in the 1970s, coordinating and financially supporting the network of the associations and the voluntary groups that act as social promoters of the many-fold intercultural activities, that some times disguise inter-religious dialogue that is formally left out of the public sphere; the latter, on the contrary, in spite of the great effort made in the past to reinforce the bonds among different ethnic and religious groups, has had a lower budget alongside other structural factors (unemployment, low standards of the education system, urban segregation of some areas) which could serve to partially explain the recent riots.

In Spain, the cases of Granada and Cordoba are good example of policies of memories as part of inter-religious dialogue policies: in both towns the convergence of various actors (politicians, intellectuals, professors of local universities, local authorities, Muslim associations cooperating with local Jewish communities) to carry out the simple idea of refreshing and restoring the Muslim and Jewish roots of Spanish identity. This has been particularly striking in Andalusia when I was working on memory: it implied many important social effects. Not only

to the restoration of ancient synagogues or to building the mosque in Granada, in the Albacin area, but also to the museum project devoted to the Al-Andalus heritage and the spread of the spirit of dialogue among cultures in schools, universities and cultural festivities.
In Italy a special mention goes the little towns of Novellara (13,200 inhabitants, with 11.7% of foreigners) in Emilia Romagna, on one hand, and Colle Val d'Elsa (19,000 inhabitants, with 9% of foreigners) in Tuscany. They are small laboratories where political authorities are promoting dialogue, encouraging and coordinating the mobilisation of citizens, and facilitating meetings between «locals» and «migrants» before making any final political decisions. In the former the presence of a mosque and a *gurdwara* (the first Sikh temple in Italy) has encouraged an invention of a repertoire of the best practices among the four religious communities of the city (Sikh, Sunni Muslim, Senegalese Muslim Brotherhood, and Catholic Church); in the latter, the project of building a mosque has been gradually discussed, involving both the local population and the Muslim migrants, and prepared by a cyclic public meeting on Islam.

4. Conclusion

Although many European societies have become increasingly secular over the past 300 years, religion remains an important aspect of social and political life, and has re-emerged as beacon of fundamental social and personal values, since strongly related to human rights paradigm. High volume migration flows, that increase ethnic diversity, have also led to a growing religious minority trying to organise itself in visible and structured communities (sometimes competing among themselves, making the European cultural and religious landscape quite unusual and unfamiliar for the natives. In many European countries, this factor has increased the potential of social conflict, including with the respect to the demarcation between public and private sphere. New kinds of religious and ethnic discrimination and intolerance, combining and reinforcing economic inequality and social marginalisation are possible risks.

Therefore, inter-religious dialogue becomes an increasingly strategic issue on the political agenda. But instead of moving from the top, and studying the impact of dialogue on society as a whole, we suggest to start from the bottom, analysing what is happening at the *glocal* level, where the local meets the global (local: means the experience of coexistence among different believers in the everyday individual and social life; global: is the movement of immigrants that move religion around the world, des-embedded and embedded in a new social environment): a city, for us, is the place *par excellence* to understand how to implement and improve inter-religious dialogue policies.

References

Bosswick W., 1999, *Minorities, Policies and Strategies in Europe: Germany*, in D. Turton, J. Gonzalez (eds.), *Ethnic Diversity in Europe: Challenges to the Nation State*, Bilbao, Humanitariannet, pp. 51-56.

Daley P.O., 1998, *Black Africans in Great Britain: Spatial Concentration and Segregation*, in «Urban Studies», no. 35, pp. 1703-1724.

Fox J., 2002, *Ethnoreligious Conflict in the Late Twentieth Century*, Lanham, Lexington Books.

Friedrichs J., 1998, *Ethnic Segregation in Cologne, Germany, 1984-1994*, in «Urban Studies», no. 35, pp. 1745-1764.

Goffman E., 1970, *Stigma*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Habermas J., 2002, *Solidarietà fra estranei*, Milano, Guerini e Associati.

Husband C., 2002, *Diasporic Identities and Diasporic Economies: The Case of Minority Ethnic Media*, in M. Martiniello, B. Piquard (eds.), *Diversity in the City*, Bilbao, Humanitariannet, pp. 153-168.

Kempen R., Van Weesep J., 1998, *Ethnic Residential Patterns in Dutch Cities: Backgrounds, Shifts and Consequences*, in «Urban Studies», no. 35, pp. 1813-1834.

O'Loughlin J., Glebe G. (eds.), 1987, *Immigrants in Western European Cities*, Stuttgart, Steiner Verlag.

Musterd S., Ostendorf W., Breebart M., 1998, *Multi-ethnic Metropolis: Patterns and Policies*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publisher.

Pace E., 2003, *Mazara del Vallo. The Most Arab City in Italy*, in D. Turton, J. Gonzalez (eds.), *Ethnic Diversity in Europe: Challenges to the Nation State*, Bilbao, Humanitariannet, pp. 111-118.

Pace E., 2004, *Sociologia dell'Islam*, Roma, Carocci.

Peach C., 1999, *London and New York: Contrasts in British and American Models of Segregation*, in «International Journal of Population Geography», no. 5, pp. 319-351.

Peach C., 2002, *Ethnic Diversity and the City*, in M. Martiniello, B. Piquard (eds.), *Diversity in the City*, Bilbao, Humanitariannet, pp. 21-42.

Philpott T.L., 1978, *The Slum and the Ghetto*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Putnam R., 1993, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Tradition in Modern Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Putnam R., 2000, *Bowling Alone*, New York, Simon & Schuster.

Shadid W.A.R., Van Koningsveld P.S. (eds.), 2002, *Intercultural Relations and Religious Authorities: Muslim in the European Union*, Leuven, Peeters.

Shadid W.A.R., Van Koningsveld P.S. (eds.), 2002, *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union*, Leuven, Peeters.

Simon P., 2002, *When De-Segregation Produces Stigmatisation: Ethnic Minorities and Urban Policies in France*, in M. Martiniello, B. Piquard (eds.), *Diversity in the City*, Bilbao, Humanitariannet, pp. 61-94.