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Reshaping Identity in the Globalized World: A Case Study about International Students in Italy

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Introduction

The research aims to study the impact of globalization on identity, with a specific focus on how educational internationalization affects international students' process of adaptation in Italy. For the purpose of extending the investigation on Erasmus students in Italy, an online questionnaire has been prepared and submitted to ninety-three international students. The analysis of data and the theoretical part of the investigation are crucial to understand the continuous negotiations individual's identity undergoes in the globalized world, where space and time cease to be determinant factors for the construction of the Self. The Self and its relationship with the surrounding environment are the starting point for reasoning on how multiculturalism is encouraging a renaissance of local identities, which fight the homogenizing trend of globalization by celebrating cultural uniqueness.

The first chapter offers a theoretical framework for the introduction of culture shock, presented in all its stages and challenges for international students. This will be functional in showing the difficulties that the identity has to face in order to cope with the different Other and with the different environment.

In the second chapter, the theoretical introduction paves the way for the analysis of data collected with a questionnaire, which investigates how international students perceived some Italian cultural traits during their sojourn in Italy. The precious collaboration with Paola Baccin, Professor at Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Brazil, has allowed a specific focus on Brazilian students in Italy. The point here is to support the previous speculations about overseas students' difficulties and perceptions in Italy with a fieldwork. Throughout my research, the Italian host culture and the international students in Italy will be analyzed as two "open systems", reciprocally affecting and enriching. For this reason, the mentioned questionnaire will deal with intercultural contact as a twofold process, considered in all its complexities and implications.

Before presenting the last section, I would like to explain the link between the above described chapters and the last ones. Since the necessity of developing a sort of intercultural personhood does not belong only to international students, but also to everyone that appears at the window of the globalized world, and since nobody could avoid facing the present global trends, I think a wider analysis of how our local, particular world intertwines with the global one is needed.

The third chapter investigates the concept of cultural identity as an extension of the self; this includes the ways in which the individual is shaken by the hurricane of globalization, whose impact challenges the local niche, source of protection for identity. The present crisis of the state will be introduced as a destabilizing factor for identity, which, in front of a massive number of points of reference, is forced to face uncertainty and to adapt to ever-changing contexts.

The fourth chapter, entitled *The Deterritorialization of Identity*, makes clear the underlying question of this research: In facing the hurricane of globalization, does the individual unlearn part of his/her old particular culture or does the individual acquire new cultural, aesthetic and emotional sensibilities in addition to the older ones? The answer that follows privileges a perspective that conceives the intercultural experience as an enriching moment, in which the identity undergoes a process of negotiation and adaptation, thus resulting deeply transformed. Despite this re-contextualization, the primitive cultural patrimony is defended in face of alterity – in this sense, the original identity is not forgotten but fortified and valued.

This conclusion will be supported by a focus on Brazilian migrants in Lisbon. The idea of concentrating on this specific minority is the result of my experience in Lisbon and of my contacts with Brazilian people there. At the

same time, it works as a connecting thread for this paper: it creates a parallelism between the first part about international students' abroad – specifically, about Brazilian students in Italy - and the second part about the de-territorialization of identity, to which the case of Brazilian migration to Portugal bears testimony.

Limitations and directions for future research

Limitations to this investigation include the impossibility of analyzing the level of intercultural communication competence in international students properly. The ideal research would require the interviewer to spend some time with the students before their departure, during the experience abroad and after their coming back home. The questionnaire had to be filled up during these three phases. The data presented and discussed below are not enough to fill the considerable gap in the literature and investigation about foreign students in Italy. Future research is needed to explore the living and the process of acculturation of international students in Italy.

Chapter 1. Negotiating the Self in a Perspective of Culture Shock

You could not step twice into the same river; for other waters are ever flowing on to you.

Heracleitus, On the Universe

1.1 Introduction

The overwhelming impact of globalization has questioned the role of universities in their main responsibility. As Yung Rui stressed in his investigation about the internationalization of higher education, the traditional task of universities is to “to cultivate the ability to understand, appreciate and articulate the reality of interdependence among nations and to prepare faculty, staff and students to function in an international and intercultural context”¹. Endowing international students with this capability entails the need for intercultural communication competence. It is now clear that globalization cannot be considered only as an economic process that associates free market, consumerism, and easier circulation of the goods: the social effects emerging from the present fragmented, disorganized and conflictual world are one of the most interesting issues for contemporary sociology. The disorder and

¹ Yang, Rui. University Internationalisation: Its Meanings, Rationales and Implications. *International Education*, Volume 13, No. 1, 2002, pp. 81-95: 86.

disorientation that the process of globalization creates is actually a real challenge for international students and for the parallel process of internationalization of university. Programmes for short and long-term study abroad are becoming more and more popular, at least among Western universities. The solid basis, on which university internationalization rests, conceives international cooperation among higher education institutions as an essential framework for the cultural enrichment of students, in a perspective of reciprocal comprehension, acceptance and exchange.

The phenomenon of educational internationalization dates back to the Second World War. The post-war period saw an unprecedented rise in the quantity and quality of programmes addressed to international aid. In particular, those worthy of note were: educational exchange programmes, migrant and refugee resettlement plans and 'Peace Corps' enterprises². In the 1950s, the successful cooperation among universities, that resulted in many long-term and short-term study Abroad Programmes, gained the attention of a considerable number of anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists, who gave prominence to the study of the mental disorders that new experiences abroad engendered in students. The latter research presented a different

² For a short explanation of the post-war international aid schemes see Baylis, John; Smith, Steve. (2001), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press.

flavour; the perspective was less clinical and more focused on the cultural implications of intercultural contact. It is in that period that the attempt to create a conceptual framework for the understanding of cross-cultural interaction gained momentum. Theoretical models were elaborated in order to analyze the findings in a integrated way and to guide future studies on the field. The effects of cross-cultural contact on international students fit quite neatly into the investigation about culture shock. As a matter of fact, the concept of *culture shock* has been widely used, and misused, in referring to the confusing and disorientating consequences that the experience of entering a new culture foreshadows. Plunging into multicultural experiences can be endangering if our social behaviour is guided by a concept of cultural identity that leaves no room to contamination. When facing different social environments, our previously well-defined and monolithic self undergoes cultural transformation, a process that is not immune from the problems that a change in our attitudes, beliefs, values and habits brings about.

1.2 The Problem of Contact with the Different Other

The structure of the self is of crucial importance in the definition of identity. The self-concept can be generally defined as the sum of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves. Besides our idealized thoughts, deriving from observations of ourselves, what we experience when entering in

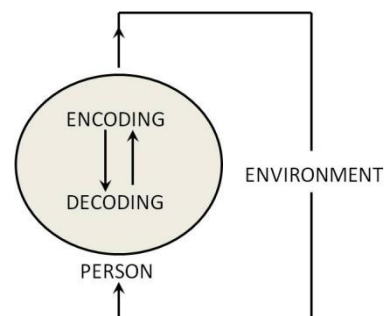
contact with a differing Other is a key element in the creation of a less idealized image of who we are. As Zaharna wrote, “Not only are the meanings of things – chairs, flags, behaviours, national anthems – products of social interaction, but we ourselves are the products of social interaction. Our self-identities are the products of social interaction”.³ While our self-views are almost unchangeable, our self-image is subjected to constant negotiation as we engage in interactions with different Others. Since there is no possibility to avoid a certain degree of interaction, the influence that communication will exert on our social behaviour is only a question of individual receptivity. At this point, the concept of communication needs further explanation; throughout this paper I will relate to this crucial issue by referring to Neuliep’s definition of communication as “the dynamic process of encoding and decoding verbal and nonverbal messages within a defined cultural, physiological, sociorelational, and perceptual environment”.⁴ Please note that no actions or no events are source of meaning as well. The pragmatism of Western cultures often neglects the importance that silence acquires in other cultures, such as in Japanese non verbal communication. The necessity of filling the empties of our

³ Zaharna, R. S. Self-Shock: The Double-Binding Challenge of Identity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 13, 1989, pp. 501-525: 508.

⁴ Neuliep, W. (2009), *The Necessity of Intercultural Communication*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, p. 13.

conversational framework may appear eccentric to an hypothetical Asian communication partner. This example may sound obvious, but it isn't. It sheds light on the question of our attitudes towards different social environment. Only when we open to a new social context, we become aware of particular habits or behavioural patterns, which could not fit the new situation. From the above depicted image, the self emerges in all its incompleteness and dynamism, resembling an unfinished sculpture rather than a monolith. These premises lead to the inevitable introduction of the generating context of the self: society. No self could exist without society, because the self is reflection, and in its turn, influencing actor of society. Through individual agency and cooperation organized within groups, networks and institutions, the self affects society. On the other hand, society influences the self through language and shared meanings, which enables the individual to interact and carve its self-image.

Figure 1. Communication Scheme Person-Environment



Following the analysis of Adrian Furnham and Stephen Bochner⁵, I will consider societies in their two main different dimensions : internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity .

The concept of *internal homogeneity* refers to the extent to which the people belonging to a specific society share the same values, language, ethnicity and religious system. This definition appears quite inappropriate for the present phenomenon of world globalization. Probably, no totally homogeneous society exists today. For this reason, that of heterogeneous societies is the most powerful image nowadays.

External heterogeneity includes all the dimensions – climate, geography, economic, political and socio-cultural patterns – that underpin differences among cultures. Why has the last perspective become so much influent? As noted earlier, the globalized world is imposing its disaggregating will on societies; it is evident that the first societal imprinting is no more sufficient to create a complete self-image. The culture in which individuals have their primary socialization is progressively abandoning its function of protective

⁵ Furnham, Adrian; Bochner, Stephen. (1986), *Culture Shock. Psychological Reactions to Unfamiliar Environments*. Methuen & Co. Ltd, London.

niche, while instilling in the human *open systems*⁶ new personal and social needs. Such a society can no more ignore the unavoidable contamination that globalizing forces bring about. The challenging question of how to face the present puzzling scenario has piqued the interest of intercultural communication scholars, who are not only investigating the negative impact of incompetent interaction, but also theorizing several approaches to cope with the uncertainty and stress deriving from it.

When individuals change reference frame and tackle the new conditions of the host environment, a lot of effort is required to get their personal and social goals achieved. With reference to how outsiders can be perceived by the host community, Kim (2001) reports Simmel's (1921, 1908/1950, 1955) interesting definition of the term "stranger", referring to someone who can be near and far at the same time.

The unity of nearness and remoteness in every human relation is organized, in the phenomenon of the stranger, in a way which may be most briefly formulated by saying that in the relationship to him, distance means that he, who is also far, is actually near. . . . The stranger . . . is an element of the group

⁶ *The Open-Systems Theory* conceives the individual as always in interaction with the surrounding environment, and, for this reason, deprived of a stable internal structure. The lack of stability brings each person to a constant revision of its self-system.

itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves being both outside it and confronting it⁷.

Further researches have introduced narrower conditions: the individual can be considered a stranger when experiencing a primary socialization in one culture and then moving to a new unfamiliar environment, on which he/her depends for the satisfaction of some basic personal and social needs, and which requires at least a minimal level of interaction.

1.2.1 Major Challenges to Successful Interaction: Personal Communication

As theorized by Kim, the extent to which the individual manages to engage in positive interaction depends on crucial elements of personal communication. As a matter of fact, successful social communication with natives entails the skilful use of communicative tools – namely, natives' language and speech mannerism as well as non verbal communication and behavioural patterns. Cognitive components, affective components and operational components are of paramount importance for a proper understanding and appreciation of the host environment.

⁷ Kim, Young Yun. *Becoming Intercultural. An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*. Sage Publications, Inc.; Thousand Oaks, California, 2001, p.33.

The cognitive components allow the individual to understand the meaning of messages despite ever-changing senders or contexts. In order to be well-equipped when facing different cultural contexts, strangers need to know the receiving culture: its language and pragmatic use in everyday life – that is, host language competence. This competence includes critical aspects of non verbal communication, such as body movements, pitch and vocal patterns, spatiotemporal use and perceptions, and so forth. These implicit codes are as essential for strangers as codified linguistic rules. In the attempt to understand the host culture, the knowledge of local language is pivotal but not the only challenge; conversely, some semantic nuances cannot be understood without handling culture and its implications for linguistic proficiency. In this sense, linguistic knowledge cannot transcend cultural understanding.

Along with cognitive components, strangers' willingness to change or review some aspects of their primitive identity facilitates competent interaction and, consequently, successful adaptation. This willingness mirrors a certain degree of interest in the new culture and a desire for becoming familiar with new cultural patterns. In this context, the concept of empathy – namely, the ability to understand other people's feelings and problems – plays a key role for affective engagement with natives. In addition to empathy, the motivations that drive individuals towards adaptation are significant affective

components and refer to the degree of propensity to integrate in the host environment. The same degree varies a lot in relation to temporary sojourners and definitive settlers, since in the first case no real interest toward the host culture is required, while, in the second case, a low level of propensity to integration could cause severe problems for strangers' psychological stability in the new context of reference. Associated with motivation for adapting, identity flexibility implies great openness to new cultural experience, and requires the abandon of prejudices and stereotypes. This attitude entails the acceptance of the identity of the host culture and the willingness to explore it. As many scholars have evidenced, if an individual feels that the identity of his or her in-group is menaced by external out-group ethnocentrism, a propensity towards defence and distance emerges as inflexible identity orientation, attitude that shows a great degree of diffidence and closeness towards the different Other.

Kim Young Yun defined the operational competence as “the capacity to express one’s cognitive and affective experiences outwardly through specific behaviours. This capacity allows strangers to carry out successful social transactions in the prevailing cultural and subcultural norms operating in specific situations”⁸. Technical skills are crucial tools for dealing properly with

⁸ *Becoming Intercultural. An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*, cit., p. 114.

social roles, and range from language to job competences; their link with synchrony guarantees adequate interaction with native. As a matter of fact, synchrony requires the consistent use of paralanguage, language and spatiotemporal patterns, with no discrepancies between these elements. For example, what is said must be followed by the right facial expression. Please note that, since non verbal communication is not universal, gestures can carry different meanings according to different cultures, and for this reason their association with linguistic expression cannot be taken for granted.

Now that these personal variables have been introduced, a further step can be moved in the presentation of major threatens to positive interaction. For this purpose, the following section will deal with factors that relate to the host environment.

1.2.2 Major Challenges to Successful Interaction: Host Environment

With respect to Kim's analysis of personal communication, the authoress sheds light on the variables that depend on individuals' psychological and temperamental traits as well as competences.

In this sense, not everybody experiences troubles associated with personal communication. Conversely, external menaces coming from the host environment affect strangers, even if with different intensity and implications.

These destabilizing factors are commonly known under the name of host receptivity, host conformity pressure and ethnic group strength.

Host receptivity is considered the index of the local community openness toward the stranger. The willingness to accommodate the stranger and the offered possibilities to participate in the social life of the hosting community are expressions of welcoming foreigners. Host receptivity can vary from a maximum of complete openness to a minimum of rejection and hostility. The positive attitudes toward the stranger result in associative communication behaviour, that discloses the attempt to understand, accept, cooperate with, and support strangers on their adaptation to the new social environment. This behaviour affects language as well: native speakers will try to use simpler expressions, to slow down the speed of the conversation, and to select topics that do not require high communication skills. On the other hand, hostility is linked with dissociative communication behaviour, which includes subtle forms of psychological non-engagement. Along with the preference for complex syntactic structures and phonological variants, native speakers will adopt non verbal distance in the attempt of creating a perceivable barrier between them and the foreigner. This results in psychological isolation; such a phenomenon can provoke uncertainty and anxiety in the stranger. Through communicative manipulation, the host community can decide to adopt an

open, comforting attitude toward the different Other, or to create a protective curtain in order to obstacle interaction.

The host culture can have a reshaping influence on strangers' primitive identity: host conformity pressure is emblematic of this process. Host conformity pressure drives the stranger toward the acquisition of new, differing patterns of behaviour, thus abandoning or adapting his or her original self. In exerting this pressure, natives can be aware or unaware, and their reorientation can be operated implicitly or explicitly. This attempt mirrors natives' expectation of changing some aspects of the cultural background of incomers and feeds off prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination. The impact it has on strangers varies accordingly to two dimensions:

- ✓ The motivations behind stranger's migration. If the stranger moves for a short-term sojourn, probably he or her will not put under discussion his or her cultural patterns; but, if on the contrary, the stranger aims to resettle, he or her will feel the need for integration, thus undergoing a process of adaptation. As a matter of fact, the same adaptation will be crucial for reaching personal and social goals in the new contexts, goals that require the interaction with at least some segment of the host society.

- ✓ The hosting environment. Some scholars have showed that the level of conformity pressure varies a lot when moving from metropolitan areas to rural districts. Metropolises are point of convergence for different ethnic groups, and their heterogeneity fosters a higher level of tolerance towards strangers and their cultural patterns. On the contrary, rural areas are more homogeneous and show stronger orientation towards conformity pressure.

The extent to which conformity pressure tendencies are perceived depends on the strength of the ethnic group. This strength lingers on the status that belonging to a group assures and is related to three crucial factors, such as ethnic prestige, institutional completeness and identity politics. High ethnic prestige affects the capability of a group of attracting strangers' interest and acceptance, thus reducing host conformity pressure, stereotypes and fostering positive attitudes between groups.

If an ethnic group is accepted and supported, its stabilization in the society can stretch from economic to institutional and political fields: this accords institutional completeness to it. Once its presence on the scene has been assured, a moment of strong self-imposition follows, in which the group will exploit the existing political framework to grow in power.

The last element is that of identity politics, which entail the codified and formal attitudes towards ethnic groups and will find proper description in the fourth chapter, with reference to the relationship between majority and minority groups.

1.3 Allport's Contact Hypothesis

The most influential social perspective in proposing a theorization about contact is Allport's "contact hypothesis". In 1954, Allport investigated how contact between members of different groups stimulated intercultural interaction and reduced negative stereotyping. With later research, the factors that result in positive contact situations have been identified with: equal status contact (Cohen, 1972; Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Watson 1950); opportunity to get to know outgroup members and disconfirm negative stereotypes (Amir & Ben-Ari, 1985; Desforges at al., 1991); co-operative rather than competitive interaction (Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak & Miller, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1984), explicit support of relevant authority figures (Schofield, 1995) and situations with equalitarian social norms (Hewstone & Brown, 1986)⁹. The "contact hypothesis" focuses on the possibility of reducing the negativity of stereotypes in order to allow a more positive perception of unfamiliar

⁹ Nesdale, D.; Todd, P. (2000), Effect of Contact on Intercultural Acceptance: a Field Study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 24, pp. 341-360: 343.

individuals and environments. At this point, a definition of stereotype is needed, Xiuzhen, Ren; Hongwei, Wang pointed out that “the stereotype refers to some inflexible statements about a category of people, and this stereotypical statements are applied to all members of the group without regard for individual difference”¹⁰. In his recent work, Snows interestingly points out that the danger the stereotype brings about can be identified with the fact that it gives us the illusion of understanding our communication partner, while, on the contrary, influencing how we process information: if we stereotype, we mind only the information that fit our thought and we neglect data that appear inconsistent. This passage influences the perception of the Other because it loosen our desire to formulate a coherent judgment of our communication partner. In a perspective of positive contact, Ting-Toomey sheds some light on the best ways to avoid stereotyping: they include the awareness of possible stereotypes, and the necessity to being open to new information in order to redefine the above mentioned “inflexible statements”¹¹. If positive contact stimulates intercultural openness, it also increases the interest in the possible differences and similarities of the unfamiliar Other. This crucial attitude averts the danger of ethnocentrism, that

¹⁰ Xiuzhen, Ren; Hongwei, Wang. (March 2006), A Study of Cultural Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication, *Sino-US English Teaching*, Volume 3, No. 3, pp 44-47: 45.

¹¹ Ting-Toomey, Stella. (1999), *Communicating across Cultures*. Guilford Press.

is, the evaluative preference for all aspects of one's own group with reference to other groups. Ethnocentrism, as stereotypes, influences cultural communication since it affects the way in which we process information, filtering incoming and outgoing verbal and nonverbal messages. More precisely, ethnocentric people clearly use their own cultural standards in their judgments about the communication partner, thus limiting the scope for mutual comprehension. The risk here is that ethnocentrism may lead to a certain degree of indifference, or even worse, of disparagement¹².

The barriers to effective interactions concern not only stereotypes and ethnocentrism, but also person-related variables such as past experiences, personal values and goals, demographic profile and linguistic skills. All these variables provoke in the foreigner a certain level of anxiety that can compromise successful communication. If the individual is too anxious, he/her will try to avoid any situations that engage him/her in communication with a different other: experts of intercultural communication identify this tendency toward avoidance with Intercultural Communication Apprehension. Since it is possible to avoid uncertainty, the international student needs to develop what

¹² "The distance of disparagement is communicated to openly express contempt for persons of different cultures and is communicated through ethnophaulisms such as "nigger", "nip", "chink", and so on". Neuliep, W. (2009), *The Necessity of Intercultural Communication*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, p. 175.

Deardorff (2006), referred to as intercultural competence. Later replaced with the recent concept of cultural intelligence (Earley and Ang, 2003), this particular competence evokes the capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts, and includes cognitive, affective and behavioural components. The cognitive factor reflects the capability of encoding and decoding messages in different situations of interaction. This competence entails not only language proficiency, but also the everyday use of language in formal/informal contexts, and in all dynamic articulations of societal interaction. As Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz stress, grammatical mistakes are less often the cause of problems in communication than is the lack of a competence in carrying on the conversation by following the logic of the native speaker¹³. In this sense, communication may act as a currency that allows the access to the rituals of host society. For this same function, insufficient communication competency can bring along some degree of discrimination. The affective component concerns the motivation to approach or avoid communication. It embraces motivational and emotional drives toward successful adaptation. Flexibility in cultural identity - namely, a flexible self/other orientation - leads to greater openness and reduces the negativity of

¹³ Gumperz, J.J & Cook-Gumperz, J. (1982), *Introduction: Language and The Communication of Social Identity*. In J.J. Gumperz (Ed.), *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press.

stereotypes, while instilling in the individual the willingness to understand and accept the cultural habits of the host community in all its facets, aesthetic sensibilities included. The behavioural sphere endows the speaker with the necessary tools for successful social interaction, the last requiring a certain level of consistency with the cultural and subcultural rules prevailing in different conversational situations.

1.4 Theorizing Culture Shock

In 1960, Oberg, the major theorist of culture shock, outlined the essential features of this process:

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Now, these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we are not consciously aware. . .

Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away stare (sometimes called “the tropical stare”); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one’s own nationality; fits

of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and irritations of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner drugstore, to visit ones relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense¹⁴.

This citation encloses the essence of culture shock and evidences the psychological implications of the process. Changing points of reference and social norms lead the individual to experience a sense of loss and disorientation. The sense of loss refers to the absence of friends, parents as well as status and possessions. In order to overcome this sense self and social estrangement, the individual tries to foster his or her psychological adaptation, which can imply the rejection of the new culture, or the rejection by the members of the new culture. In both cases, the individual feels a strong sense of inadequacy and frustration that can result in alienation and anomie. The destabilizing contact with the different Other requires individual's re-contextualization in face of changing points of reference. This process is not immune from a certain degree of confusion generated by different values, behaviours and cultural patterns and, consequentially, can lead to contrasting

¹⁴ Oberg, Kalervo. (1960), Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments, *Practical Anthropology*, Volume 7, pp. 82-177: 176.

feelings toward difference – namely, surprise, appreciation but also indignation and refusal. In the attempt to overcome these obstacles, the individual will face many moments of frustration and impotence, due to the incapability to cope with the new culture. However, these moments of loss become part of individual's personal maturation, in the sense that:

In the encounter with another culture the individual gains new experiential knowledge by coming to understand the roots of his or her own ethnocentrism and by gaining new perspectives and outlooks on the nature of culture. . . Paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself¹⁵.

Anyway, it would be reductive to present culture shock as a negative continuum. Conversely, this process shows the succession of different moments and different psychological reactions. In 1960, Oberg summed up the whole culture shock experience with the use of a stage-wise theory, which showed four different phases: honeymoon stage, crisis, recovery and adjustment.

The honeymoon stage refers to the initial reactions resulting from the engagement with a new culture. The individual feels enthusiastic and

¹⁵ Adler, Peter. (1975), The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Volume 15, pp. 13-23: 22.

stimulated by the idea of a new cultural environment, thus finding everything exciting and fascinating.

However, initial positive feelings relate to superficial contacts with the host culture. When the individual starts to deepen his or her relationships with natives and to deepen his or her knowledge of the new culture, sharp differences in language, values, symbols and cultural patterns in general, emerge and engender a sense of inadequacy in coping with them. Communication differences as well can provoke a strong sense of anxiety and frustration in the everyday life activities such as asking for information, ordering the meal, asking for help in the library or entering in contact with the staff of administrative offices. All these destabilizing elements are gathered under the label of "crisis".

This crisis cannot be everlasting, otherwise creating serious mental problems. For this reason, the individual resolves the critical phase by engaging in processes of culture and language learning which entail the knowledge of local speech mannerism and cultural patterns. This phase is named recovery.

The last stage is adjustment, which deals with the progressive positive interaction with the new cultural environment and leads to a slow integration into the host society. Obviously, the individual will still pass through periodic anxiety and stress, but with reduced intensity.

In addition to this theorization about culture shock, Lysgaard (1955) proposed the idea of a U curve, which could serve as graphical representation of culture shock experience. Through his study about 200 Norwegian students in the United States, he investigated culture shock and analysed students' experience as the succession of a phase of initial adjustment, followed by a moment of crisis and further adjustment. If on the one hand, he never spoke explicitly of a U curve, on the other hand, he registered that the period of adjustment lasted more or less twenty months, in which the most critical period took place between the sixth and eighth month. The problem with supporting this hypothesis is that it presumes that everybody experiences initial feelings of optimism and fascination, while, some people become depressed and frustrated since the very beginning. On the contrary, there are individuals who start to enjoy the experience since the first days and never feel anxious or inadequate.

1.4.1 From Culture Shock to Self-Shock

As demonstrated above, culture shock is clearly a subjective phenomenon and personal traits are crucial in determining its evolution. Peter Adler rightly pointed out that intercultural experience "begins with the

encounter of another culture and evolves into the encounter with self¹⁶”. In

this context, Zaharna defines self-shock as

The intrusion of new and, sometimes, conflicting self-identities that the individual encounters when he or she encounters a culturally different Other. The strained relation with the Other and the behavioural ambiguities ultimately filter down to a strained relationship with the Self. The strained relationship affects the individual’s ability to hold on to recognizable, consistent self-identities. The sense of “wrong-ness” is no longer ambiguities about the Other or about behaviour, but rather, about the Self¹⁷.

Self-shock feeds off the intricate relationship between Self and Others.

Behaviour is the connecting thread since, in order to maintain an equilibrated relationship between the Self and the Other, a shared meaning must be attributed to behaviours. The problems arising with intercultural contact relate the ambiguities that behavioural patterns have to face in front of a different culture. The contradictions and differences that inhere culture subject behaviour, and original systems for assigning meaning to experience, to sharp negotiation and revision. This is the basis for self-shock, a process that develops along three different lines.

¹⁶ Adler, Peter. *The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock*, cit., p. 18.

¹⁷ Zaharna, R. S. *Self-Shock: The Double-Binding Challenge of Identity*, cit., p. 511.

The first destabilizing factor refers to the necessity of adapting behaviour to a changed context of reference. As a matter of fact, individual's primitive identity can appear inconsistent with the new culture. This problem stems from the existence of different meanings for different behaviours, implying that, when entering in contact with a new cultural system, individuals can feel disoriented because behaviours show discrepancies with self-expectations.

The second challenge to self-identity entails those self representations which base on how we think that the Other sees us. What we expect is deeply influenced by our original culture, which may bear no resemblance to the new one. By relying on self-expectations, the individual risks to adopt behaviours that do not produce the hoped results and is likely to attribute wrong meaning to the behavioural responses of the Other. When those responses contradict individual's self-identity, the image that individual constructs with reference to the Other is totally erroneous.

The third dimension of self-shock relates again to the necessity of changing behaviours – and the meanings assigned to behaviours – in order to maintain an harmonic relationship between the Self and the Other, but with growing awareness. As a matter of fact, this stage requires that the individual manages to communicate competently with the different Other, thus recognizing contextual meanings and cultural differences. However, a critical

confrontation persists because new behaviours can contradict old behaviours in such a way that the individual feels disoriented and frustrated. The self is shaken under the hurricane impact of two different trends: one driving towards original behaviours, the other towards new behavioural patterns.

The thin links between self-shock and culture shock lingers on individuals' unawareness about the factors of strain. The elements of instability are considered external to the person and not interpreted as personal variables. In this sense, culture shock is the reaction to the different Other, to a different environment, considered as sources of instability. Conversely, self-shock requires a double level of analysis: on external factors and on how these factors affect self-expectations and self-identities. In this sense, it can be affirmed that self-shock is the reaction to differences within the Self and that its difficulty stems out of the necessity to match the need to confirm self-identities with the ability to carry out this task.

1.5 International Students Abroad

For international students, the experience of moving to a foreign country to study is potentially challenging; there are many unanticipated difficulties of which the students are not aware. Despite their linguistic preparation, the new cultural context hosting their Study Abroad Programme will be inevitably source of anxiety. This is due to the fact that communication involves not only

verbal, but also non verbal language, which embraces kinesics, paralanguage, olfactics, chronemics and proxemics: competent communication implies both linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge¹⁸. Other factors, such as social class, age, personality traits, levels of study, kind of university, and duration of the stay abroad, influence the students' ability to cope with the personal, academic and social spheres of the hosting society. There is an extensive body of empirical evidence in support to this contention, but the research by Singh fits perfectly into this issue. In 1963 he conducted a study on 300 Indian students in Britain and discovered that many of them experienced unexpected strain. The difficulties he detected referred to emotional problems: loneliness, lack of training in looking after oneself, homesickness; and to academic problems: language problems, difficult teacher-student relationships. The academic life is one of the major contributors to acculturative stress for international students. It is worthy of note the fact that many international students find it difficult to accept and adapt to the teaching style of the new university: the critical thinking that Western universities praise is source of frictions for some non European students. A mismatch in international

¹⁸ The concept of culture here to be conceived as "the accumulated pattern of value, beliefs and behaviors shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and non verbal symbol systems". Neuliep, W. (2009), *The Necessity of Intercultural Communication*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, p. 17.

students' academic expectations may occur because of the difficulties of studying in a foreign language. The linguistic stress may affect the proficiency or, even worse, it can decrease their self confidence in coping with the unfamiliar environment. Languages skills are crucial not only for a successful university iter, but also for the necessity of weaving a social net. International students are thought to belong to three different social networks, each satisfying a distinct psychological need. The monocultural network includes the relationships with the fellow compatriots; its function is that of upholding students' ethnic and cultural values. The bicultural network encompasses the bonds with the host community and facilitates the engagement with the new culture. The multicultural network refers to the relationships with other foreign students, belonging neither to the native culture nor to the host culture. There is an extensive body of evidence that supports the opinion that many international students tend to experience strong isolation and avoid intimate contacts with members of the host society. This marginality presents negative implications since students' lack of contact with the host society decreases the possibilities of learning those cultural skills that would allow them to enter the new culture. Furnham and Bochner (1986) have efficiently synthesized international students' major obstacles to successful interaction into four groups. The first cluster includes the problems that anybody has to face when entering in contact with a new culture, such as language problems, racial

discriminations, accommodation difficulties, misunderstandings and loneliness. The second section refers to the general efforts that young people have to make in order to reach a certain level of psychological stability: problems in becoming independent and self-sufficient. The third class embraces the wide group of the above mentioned academic stressors, and the fourth deals with the ethnic or national role of which international students are ambassadors and representatives. When their ethnic role, or cultural identity collides with the host milieu and the international students experience a disruption in their behavioural and social patterns, a process of *uprooting* starts out. The concept of uprooting has been deeply investigated by Zwingmann and Gunn (1983) who, in analyzing the interaction between the individuals and the host institution posited that:

Perfectly open systems are utopian. The majority of existing systems tend to be at least more closed than open. 'Closed' and 'open' are to be understood as relative notions. A system may, for instance, be relatively 'open' with respect to the equality and freedom of displacement (travelling), to express opinions, to choose pleasure, etc., but relatively 'closed' with respect to the existence of racial discrimination, the impossibility of transgressing caste-lines, social conventions or the necessity to be extremely competitive and consequently inconsiderate toward fellow men or women. A student from abroad may find his university or college is an 'open' system, yet the town or the country or temporary adoption 'closed'. However, in theory,

according to national constitutions, [...] most western systems adopt the stance of being 'open'.¹⁹

A careful reader may note that this theory seems to shake the foundations of the present research and its pillar, *the Open-Systems Theory*, which conceives the individual as always in interaction with the surrounding environment, and for this reason, deprived of a stable internal structure. The lack of stability brings each person to a constant revision of its self-system. It is my opinion that, the constant revision our identity undergoes not only in new social milieux, but also when facing different life experiences, is the evidence that the individual is not immune from change. In this sense, the individual affects society and, on his/her turn, is affected by it. The reciprocal influence occurs when individuals become part of societal articulation by enjoying groups, organizations and institutions. If on the one hand, this influence is unavoidable because it is difficult to isolate from societal apparatuses, on the other hand, it is only by voluntary participation that the self becomes an active player in the game of interaction. Anyway, in both cases, societies cannot be conceived as "closed" systems, mostly because they are constantly subject to revision and external influences.

¹⁹ Furnham, Adrian; Bochner, Stephen. *Culture Shock. Psychological Reactions to Unfamiliar Environments*, cit., p. 126.

Now that the reciprocal influence between individuals and environment has been proved, a further reflexion is needed. The trouble that individuals face when changing context of reference arises from the inappropriate use of systems of behaviour, value and interpretation that are part of individual's first culture - and that, for this reason, appear natural to him or her. Nevertheless, culture, as well as community or society, is not a natural, pre-existing entity, but rather, a construction. Recognizing that it is a construction implies the awareness that it can have different meanings in different contexts, consequently, it cannot be taken for granted. Contrarily, an attentive intercultural communicator knows that he or her must be well-equipped when entering in contact with the different Other. This attention requires, first of all, the awareness of possible difference and then a deep knowledge of the host culture in order to prevent cultural frictions. The following section will prove how misunderstanding and misinterpretation are really likely to occur in intercultural contacts.

The connecting thread of this first chapter is the intercultural contact, which has been analyzed in its main features and consequences both for individuals in general, and for international students. The aim of this section was that of introducing some essential concepts for the following investigation about international students. This investigation will function as evidence for

the theoretical part, thus showing both consistency and contradiction with what has been hypothesized until now.

Chapter 2. International Students in Italy

*“If what we can express in any present moment cannot be comprehended,
or if what we can comprehend at that moment is not being expressed,
our existence as humans is threatened”.*

Lee Thayer, “Knowledge, Order, and Communication”, 1975

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter hinted at the issue of educational internationalization, as a phenomenon that saw its momentum after the Second World War, with the attempt to improve the conditions of many countries, whose educational structures had been shaken under the hurricane of war. This attempt was part of a wider project which aimed to help the economic and social reconstruction of those nations that had been most stricken by the conflict. Further reasons hide behind this noble task: the strategic geopolitical and economic expansion of developed countries was masked by a curtain of strong interest in the promotion of international will and cooperation. However, educational internationalization is not the product of the modern era; it dates back to ancient India:

Early biblical references provide accounts of travelling scholars, and intercultural education can be traced to the 272-22 BC reign of Asoka the Great of India and the establishment of the University of Taxila in Asia Minor. Over the next thousand years international centres of scholarship arose in Egypt, Greece,

Persia, China, and Japan. By the late Middle Ages universities in Western Europe, such as Seville, Paris, Rome and Bologna, flourished, and during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a steady increase in international education, encouraged by the governments of England, France, Germany and Russia. During the nineteenth century, interest in international education continued to expand and included increasing participation of the United States²⁰.

Since ancient times, the aim of wide spreading the values of dominant cultures – initially moral and religious values, later, the secularized values of democracy, freedom and cooperation – has provided a venue for the parallel widening of geopolitical influence on strategic countries.

2.1.1 Why to Focus on International Students?

Beyond governmental scopes, the internationalization of higher education is a great opportunity, both for universities and for students. Every year, universities accommodate students coming from differing countries, with different origins, values and cultural patterns. In this sense, international students are representative of their culture abroad, a sort of cultural ambassadors, who bring with them not only their values, but also their skills and competences. Hosting students with a number of skills and knowledge is way to enrich the local intellectual capital of the receiving country. For this

²⁰ Ward, Colleen; Bochner, Stephen; Furnham, Adrian. (2001), *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. Second Edition, Routledge, p. 143.

reason, educational internationalization is becoming crucial for developing countries as well, which see the internationalization of higher education as a good chance for improving the cultural compositions of their social and administrative apparatuses.

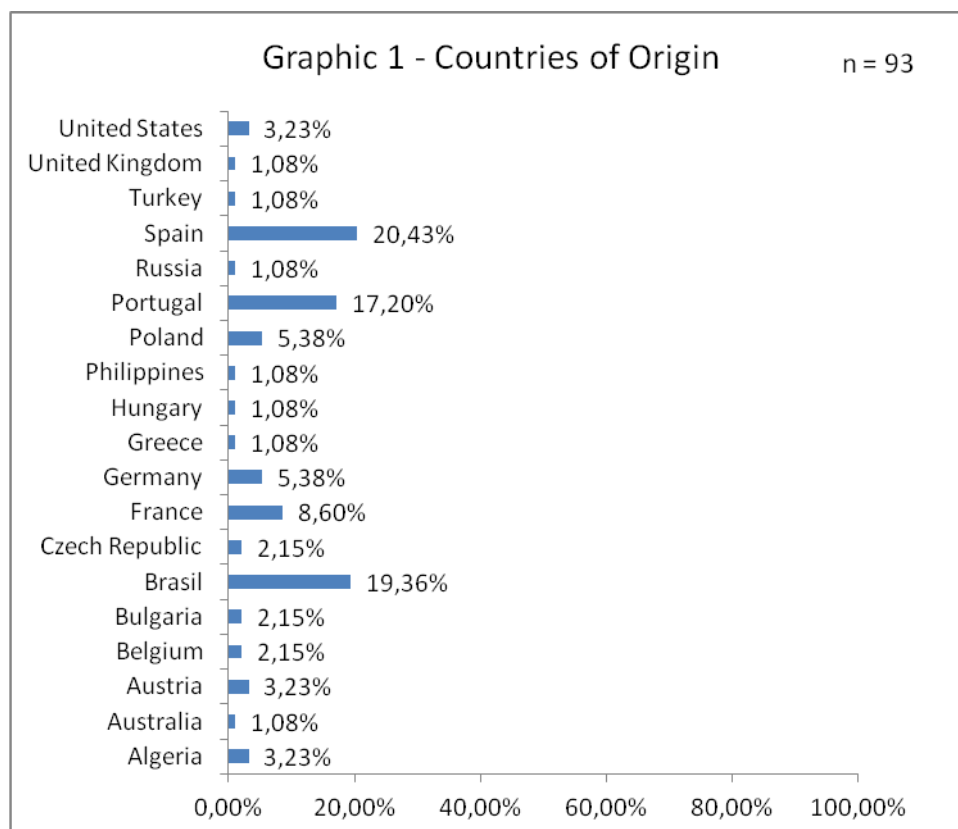
On the other hand, international students have the possibility to study in a number of countries, thus enriching not only their knowledge, but also their original identity. This richness stems from the process of acculturation, defined as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members”²¹.

The Erasmus project is only one of the many possibilities international students have to encounter the multicultural flavour that higher education is promoting. This project allows university students to spend from six to nine months abroad, with the attempt to improve not only their language proficiency, but also their knowledge about foreign cultures and their strategies to cope with different cultural contexts. With particular reference to international students in Italy, data analyzed below show some major

²¹ Berry, J.W. (2005), Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 29, Issue 6, November 2005, pp. 697-712: 698.

challenges to successful acculturation and focus on an array of factors that can determine the positivity or negativity of intercultural contact. Consistently with the previous theoretical part, the questionnaire aimed to investigate important aspects of verbal and non verbal communication, differences in the perceptions, use of spatiotemporal variables, and impact of stereotypes on the contact with the Italian cultural environment. The questionnaire was submitted to ninety-three international students, the majority (47,3%) between 19 and 23 years old. Other students' age varied between 24 and 30 years old (38,7%); and 14% respondents were more than 30 years old. As for their country of origin, the graphic below shows participants' ethnic composition.

Graphic 1. Participants' countries of origin.



Another interesting datum for interpreting international students' perception of, and attitude towards, Italian culture, is their academic iter. In order to verify whether a humanistic background could provide international students with proper strategies for coping with a new culture of reference, the questionnaire asked to indicate humanistic or scientific studies. Data showed that 75,3% respondents attended humanistic courses, while the remaining 24,7% attended scientific faculties. Therefore, the remarkable presence of students with a humanistic iter could have influenced final results.

For the massive participation of Brazilian students, I would like to acknowledge the help of University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, and, particularly, the support Professor Paola Baccin offered to me, not only for the initial phase of elaboration of the questionnaire, but also for its diffusion and analysis. The relevant data about Brazilian students in Italy allowed to think about a specific focus on their experience in Italy, which will consist of a parallel between Brazilians' way of perceiving and interpreting "Italian-ness" and that of other international students. In addition to this comparison, the initial perceptions of two Brazilian girls in Italy will be reported in order to demonstrate how difficult it is to theorize a proper model for the analysis of culture shock, since even people coming from the same place, with more or less the same age, and

sojourning in the same host country can perceive in totally different ways the contact with the new context of reference.

For the collection of data about Portuguese students, I acknowledge Isabel França, Coordenadora do Gabinete de Relações Externas and Maria João Xavier Martins, responsible for International Academic Exchange in the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, who accepted to forward my questionnaire to the students of Lisbon Universities.

2.2. Introducing “A Window on Internationalization”

The questionnaire, entitled “A Window on Internationalization”, consists of seven sections, each investigating specific aspects of intercultural contact.

1. The first part served to gather relevant personal information, such as gender, age, country of origin, host city in Italy, sending university and level of familiarity with Italian language.
2. The second section opened with a brief explanation of what non verbal communication entails: the concept of nonverbal communication embraces body language, pitch, volume and intonation. The use and organization of space are of paramount importance for communication, as well as physical appearance, dress and, generally speaking, all gestures that convey meaning;

silence and non-actions included. Participants were questioned about the use of non verbal communication in their everyday contacts.

3. The following part focused on international students' cultural awareness and willingness to engage in contact with people from different countries. Interesting question was that about the need for a private space in which international students could stay on their own: if in this case the question referred generically to a personal attitude, in a following section the same question was posed again, but with reference to the sojourn in Italy.

4. The fourth part intended to examine international students' experience in Italy by asking about the frequency of contact with Italian people and the language they used to communicate in Italy. An array of verbal and non verbal factors, related to Italian communication, were proposed to understand the extent to which they were perceived by international students. Mostly, they included nodding, physical closeness, physical contact, gesticulating and silence for non verbal communication; while, for verbal communication, the use of interruptions, of irony and high pitch, and the tendency to stuff sentences with words such as "cioè", "allora", "quindi", "..ehm", "insomma", "quant'altro" was questioned.

5. A section entitled “Greetings” served to analyze this important cultural aspect that varies a lot across different cultures and can cause discomfort.
6. The sixth part inspected international students’ perceptions of the differences in the use of time with reference to Italian culture. The questions related to punctuality, reactions towards lateness and changes in programmes. As a matter of fact, far from being universal, the organization of time and space is rooted in culture and depends on cultural patterns.
7. The section about the perception of differences in the organization of space is linked to the one mentioned above, which investigated the necessity for international students to have a space where to stay alone. In addition to this, a further question asked if, from the point of view of international students, Italian people value privacy and private space.
8. The last section gathered crucial elements for present purposes, namely, the extent to which international students perceive that Italian people are willing or open to interact with them and help them. This question helped to analyze Italian host receptivity - which, as explained in the first chapter, is an important index for Italian people attempt to accommodate the different Other. Final questions related to stereotypes and to how they affect the intercultural contact between international students and Italian host culture.

2.2.1 Anxiety

The description above underlines how the structure of the question develops along the investigation of significant stressors that can be perceived as more or less challenging, accordingly to the subject. If the individual is well-equipped and adopts adequate strategies to cope with these stressors, he or she will experience a low degree of acculturative stress; if, conversely, the individual is not provided with the required tools to overcome obstacles to acculturation, he or she will suffer from a high level of acculturative stress. Acculturative stress can result in strong feelings of anxiety, sadness, inadequacy, isolation, and sense of loss.

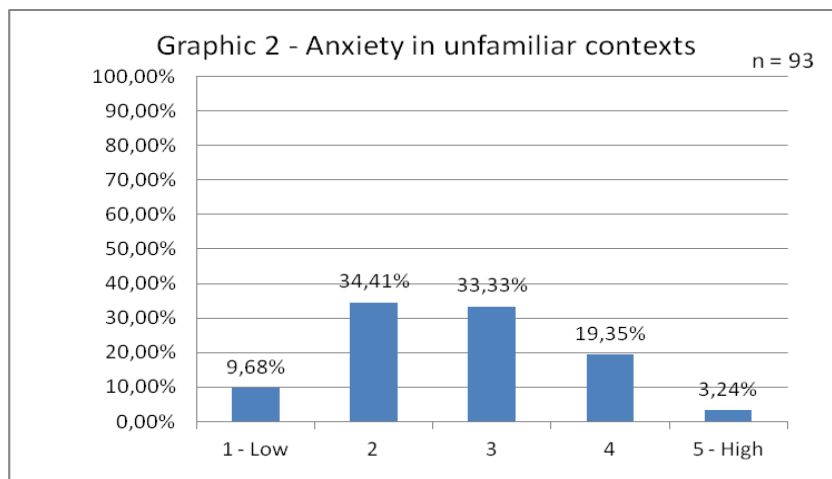
The first hypothesis referred to anxiety, which is a constant in culture shock. Presuming that every student experiences a certain degree of anxiety in his or her contact with the different Other, it was hypothesized that this degree was directly linked to a tendency towards facing or avoiding contacts with people from different cultures. In order to test this possibility, three questions were posed:

- ✓ How anxious do you feel in unfamiliar contexts?
- ✓ How do you assess your level of anxiety in Italy?

- ✓ In situations where you have to deal people from different cultures, you tend to avoid them or face them?

The graphic below shows participants' level of anxiety in unfamiliar contexts, thus measuring their personal attitude towards new environments. This variable depends, mostly, on the character of the person, even if, as explained above, proper strategies for coping with new contexts of reference can help in decreasing this feeling.

Graphic 2. How anxious do you feel in unfamiliar contexts?



Anxiety in unfamiliar contexts stems from an array of acculturative stressors. The most common are language, educational stressors, socio-cultural stressors, discrimination and practical stressors²². Language can be considered the major source of anxiety since communication difficulties result in

²² For the analysis of acculturative stressors see Smith, Rachel A.; Khawaja, Nigar G. A Review of the Acculturation Experiences of International Students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 35, Issue 6, November 2011, pp. 699-713.

educational and social problems. As a matter of fact, barriers to communication impede to make friends and inhibit contact with natives. Communicative problems impact academic results as well, because studying in a different language can imply a redoubled effort. Persistent language obstacles may decrease the level of self-confidence, thus causing interpersonal trouble. This last hypothesis is strictly linked to the socio-cultural field: along with the lack of self-confidence, a sense of inadequacy often impact international students' propensity to create a new social framework, leading them to prefer to keep in contact with co-nationals, at home or in the host country – or, even worse, to isolate. Discrimination is another source of anxiety: recent studies (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007)²³ have demonstrated how students coming from Asia, Africa, India, and the Middle East, perceive higher levels of discrimination than European students, discrimination including verbal and physical attacks. Lastly, practical stressors relate to:

a) Accommodation.

Ricerca di appartamento.	Looking for a flat. As soon as I
Appena sbarcata a Mestre	arrived in Mestre, (a few days
(pochi giorni prima dell'inizio	before the beginning of the

²³ Cited in A Review of the Acculturation Experiences of International Students, cit., p. 704.

del mio anno scolastico in Erasmus) cerco casa. Sono all'inizio ospite dagli inquilini dell'Erasmus che c'era a Venezia l'anno prima di me. Cerco sui siti internet, sulle bacheche a Venezia. Inizio le visite : appartamento in centro a Venezia, camera doppia a 300 euro in nero; dico al proprietario che cerco una camera singola: "Non c'è problema, ti lascio la mia camera matrimoniale per 300 euro ma quando torno - poche volte, sono spesso in trasferta - dobbiamo dividerla io e te". Letto matrimoniale quindi condividere anche il letto? NO, GRAZIE. Altra ricerca, altra casa, fuori Mestre, carina, sui 250€, sempre in nero. Il proprietario : "Io accetto solo ragazze, giovani e senza moroso." AH... Terza casa : una cinese, 300 euro in nero, in una laterale di via Piave "Mi raccomando, chiuda sempre la porta della camera a chiave" MMMH ... Appartamento carino, da condividere con una coppia...di tossicomani che mi parlavano solo per chiedermi (già al secondo giorno) sigarette e soldi. Risultato : sono tornata dai miei ospiti iniziali, ci sono rimasta quasi un mese e ho finalmente trovato un appartamento conveniente in centro a Mestre... Sempre in nero.

academic year in Erasmus), I started looking for accommodation. In the beginning, I shared the flat with the flatmates of the boy who had been in Erasmus in Venice the year before. I started to search accommodation in websites and in notice boards in Venice. Afterwards, I started visiting the flats: flat in the centre of Venice, double room, 300 euros, in black; I specified that I needed a single room. The landlord answered: "there is no problem, I can leave you my bedroom for 300 euros, but when I am here – seldom, because I am often away on business – we have to share the room". The bed was a double bed, so I was supposed to share the bed as well. NO, THANKS. Further search, other house, in the outskirts of Mestre, cosy, about 250 euros, illegal agreement. The landlord said: "I accept only young girls and without boyfriend". AH...Third house: a Chinese woman, flat for 300 euros, illegal agreement, in a side road of Piave street. She said to me: "I recommend always locking the bedroom door ". MMMH ... Lovely flat, to share with a couple .. of drug addicts who talked to me only to ask for cigarettes and money (it was only the second day). Conclusion: I went back to the initial hosts, I stayed there for almost a month and, afterwards, I finally found a

cheap flat in the centre of Mestre... Again no legal agreement was signed.

b) Transports.

Tremendi uffici statali e universitari.. ce ne per scrivere un libro! Ma anche le ferrovie, poste, trasporti pubblici, ritardi.... problemi con Alitalia... Devo dire che in Italia diventa tutto un problema - anche le cose piu' facili e semplici.

Terrible state and university offices...

I could wrote a book on them! Not to mention railways, post offices, public transports, delays problems with Alitalia... Let me say that in Italy everything becomes a problem – the easiest and simplest things as well.

Il principale problema che ho vissuto in Italia è stato uno sciopero dei treni, però io avevo già comprato il biglietto e mi hanno informato che dovevo prendere un autobus sostitutivo, però non c'era una fermata specifica e io non sapevo come era questo autobus, così ho perso circa due ore a chiedere delle informazioni più precise fino a finalmente trovare la fermata giusta.

The main problem I had in Italy relates to a train strike; I had already bought the ticket, when I was informed I had to take a special bus which was going to substitute the train. There was no specific bus stop and I didn't know which the bus was, so I lost more or less two hours asking for more precise information, until I finally found the right bus stop.

c) Administrative offices.

Uffici amministrativi che non sono [Problems with] administrative

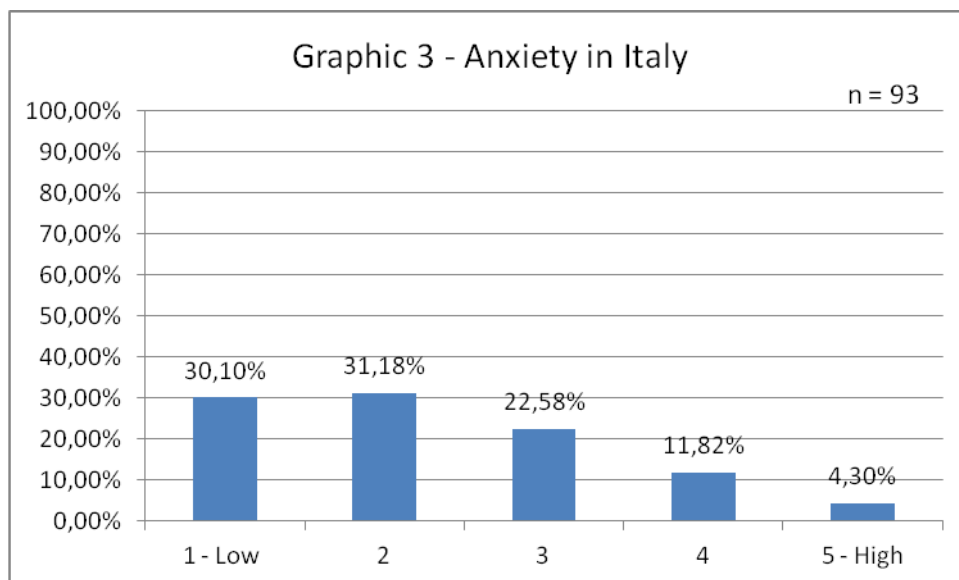
interessati ad aiutarti. Quando una cosa e' diverso o richiede impegno non e' possibile.

offices, where people are not interested in helping you. When something is anomalous or demanding, they hardly try to solve it.

d) University.

I loved living in Venice generally, but I did find the University system there to be a challenge. Nothing is explained and I ended up failing one course and not being able to take the exams in another simply because of a timetabling error which meant I had been attending the wrong courses. I didn't realise until the last moment that this was the case, and because it was so hard to make friends on my courses there were no indications I was doing the wrong thing until it was too late.

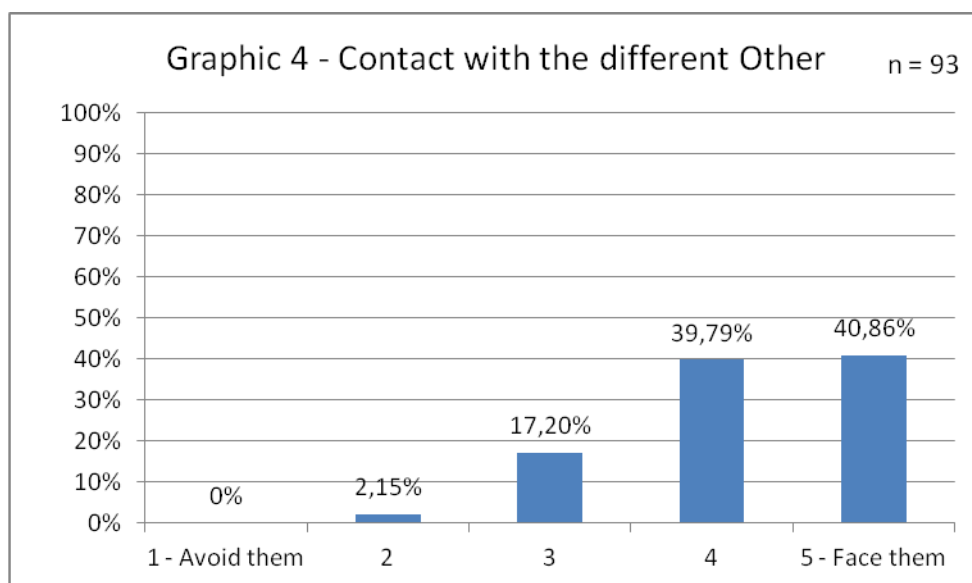
Graphic 3. How do you assess your level of anxiety in Italy?



With reference to what explained above, graphic 3 reports how international students assess their level of anxiety in Italy. Data show that the perceived degree of anxiety is relatively low, especially if compared to the

graphic about perception of anxiety in no specified unfamiliar contexts. As a matter of fact, the index “low anxiety” shifts from 9,68% in graphic 2 to 30,10% in graphic 3. What had been hypothetized during the elaboration of the questionnaire was that *low levels of anxiety foster international students to exit their isolation bubble to face the different Other, thus privileging contacts with natives rather than with co-nationals*. Collected data seem to support this idea.

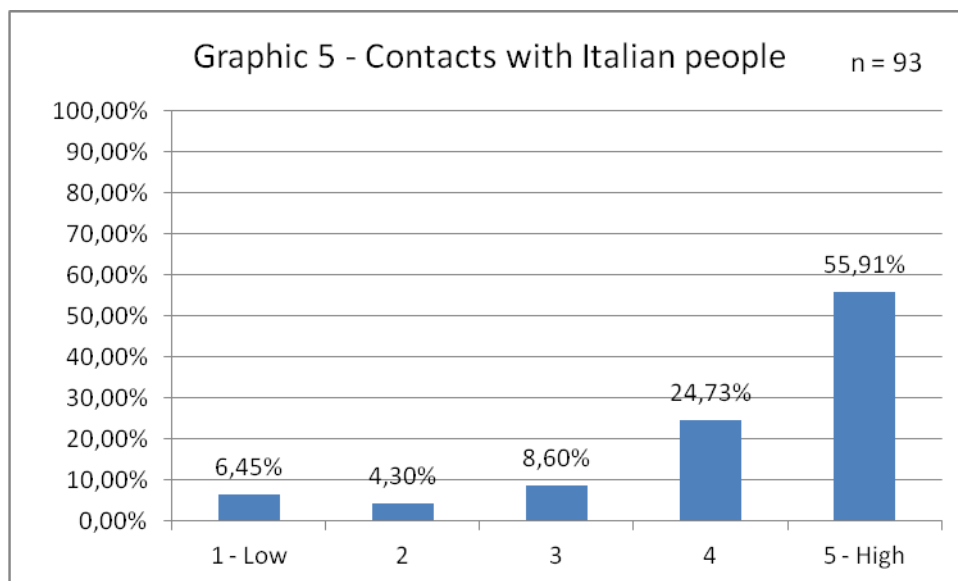
Graphic 4. In situations in which you have to deal with people from different countries, you tend to avoid them or face them?



More than 40% participants shows a tendency towards facing situations that entail the contact with the different Other. This implies a low degree of uncertainty avoidance, that is, “the degree to which members of a particular

cuolture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations”²⁴. The concept of uncertainty avoidance was elaborated by Hofstede, who asserted that unknown situations can involve a high level of uncertainty, and consequentially, of anxiety. Along with this notion, the theory of uncertainty orientation assumes that there are individuals that are certainty oriented and others that are uncertainty oriented. Respectively, the first have a weak uncertainty avoidance, the second a stronger uncertainty avoidance. Generally speaking, individuals coming from Eastern European countries show marked uncertainty avoidance, while, people from Western European countries privilege uncertainty. The remarkable participation of Spanish and Portuguese students may have shifted results towards uncertainty orientation. The second part of the above reported hypothesis related to contacts with natives. With particular attention to Italian cultural context, it was assumed that low degrees of anxiety, and consequentially, of uncertainty avoidance, could encourage international students to create a social network with local people. The graphic below supports this theory.

²⁴ Neuliep, W. (2009), *The Necessity of Intercultural Communication*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, p. 74.

Graphic 5. In Italy, frequency of contacts with people speaking Italian.

More than half of the participants favoured interaction with natives. This means that, mostly, they engaged in positive contacts with local people. As explained in the first chapter, positive contact stems, at least in part, from positive stereotypes about host culture.

2.2.2 Stereotypes

Stereotypes can be conceived as “some inflexible statements about a category of people, and this stereotypical statements are applied to all members of the group without regard for individual difference”²⁵. In the first chapter, great emphasis was put on the fact that stereotypes are not necessarily negative, on the contrary, they can stimulate the interest in the

²⁵ Xiuzhen, Ren; Hongwei, Wang. A Study of Cultural Stereotypes in Intercultural Communication, cit., p.45.

differences and similarities between the original culture and the host culture. It seems the case of international students in Italy; many students answered the question “please list your stereotypes about Italian people” not only by listing them, but also by highlighting that those typical cultural traits neither annoyed them, nor were always consistent with the reality. Some examples follow below.

[Italian people] are generally louder and more honest than English people. Their interest in food and pride in Italian cuisine is very strong.

They are less concerned about personal space when communicating.

I would like to point out here that I am half Asian and I do not view any of these stereotypes negatively.

Sono aperti, parlano alto, non sono puntuali, quando parlano fanno dei gesti con le mani, etc. Ma mi sono reso conto che non sono sempre veri, dipende tantissimo dalla regione da dove vengono e dalla persona.

Pensavo che gli italiani fossero più aperti alle persone, più gioiosi e vivaci! Oggi so che sono diversi, antipatici, xenofobi, hanno molto pregiudizio e anche le donne sono maschiliste!

Italian people are open, speak aloud, are not punctual; while speaking, they make gestures with their hands, and so on. However, I have realized that it is not always so, it depends on the person and on his/her region of origin.

I thought Italian people were more open to interact with people, more joyful and lively. Now I know they are different, disagreeable, xenophobic, they have many prejudices and Italian women are chauvinist as well!

The following table gathers the most important stereotypes that international students mentioned.

Table 1 - Main stereotypes about Italian people	
"Italians speak with the hands"	24,73%
Italians value food	19,35%
Italians speak aloud	18,27%
Italians value fashion	11,82%
Italians are "mammoni"	8,60%
Italians are always late	8,26%

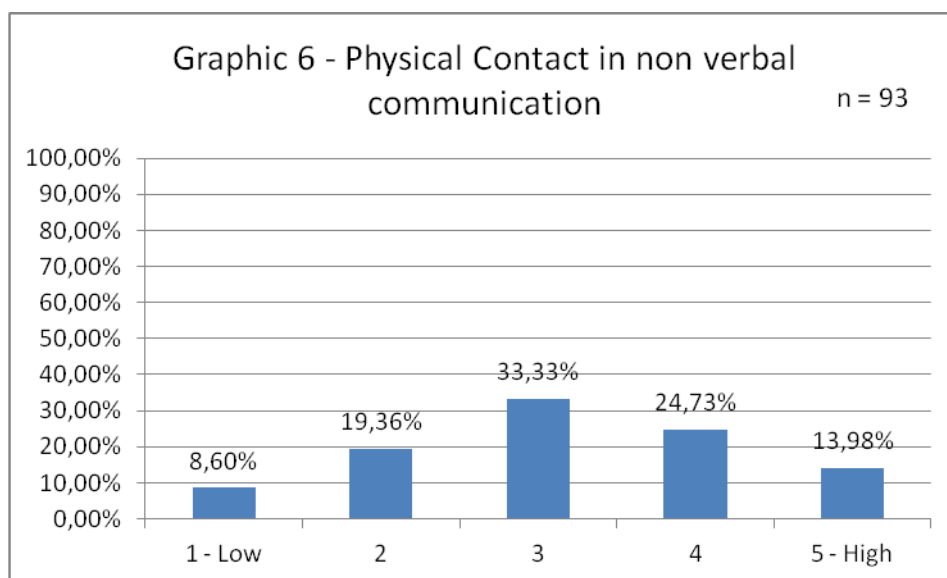
Differently from what expected, the typical Italian tendency to speak aloud is not in pole position; the importance that Italian people give to food came before. In this case, food does not only entail eating greedily, but also taking pride in Italian ingredients and plates. In Italy, having dinner together is one of the best way to socialize with people. Far from being universal, this trait is distinctive of Italian culture: interestingly, one student pointed out that Italian people *waste* a lot of time eating. The specific use of the verb *waste* underlines how the relationship with food is strictly cultural. In many Northern countries food means only nutrition and has nothing to do with socialization and pleasure.

Another surprising datum relates to the typical association of Italian people with mafia. Curiously, statements such as “gli italiani sono tutti mafiosi” only appeared in two questionnaires. This remarkable aspect may mirror a new awareness about the regions to which mafia is restricted. However, this is only an hypothesis which would require further investigation. More realistically, the datum could depend on the fact that the majority of the participants sojourned in the north/centre of Italy and, for this reason, the association with mafia was preceded by other considerations. Convulsive gesticulation is a key stereotype as well. This cultural trait is strictly linked to “Italian-ness” and is a crucial aspect of Italian non verbal communication as well.

2.2.3 Non Verbal Communication

One participant pointed out that Italians are so skilful at conveying meaning with the hands that they could communicate in every language of the world. Obviously this assumption cannot be taken for serious since non verbal communication is not universal - but, anyway, gives an idea of how this cultural feature is perceived by international students. Along with gesticulation, Italian tendency to touch people while speaking is remarkably noted by outsiders.

Graphic 6. With reference to non verbal communication, to what extent do/ did you notice in Italian people the use of these gestures and expressions? [Physical contact]



Since non verbal communication is of paramount importance and may exceed the meaning carried by words, elements such as the tendency to look for physical contact, the use of hands to communicate and nodding assume a particular meaning when related to Italian culture. Physical contact resulted

particularly irritating for those people who perceive contact as an intrusion in their personal space. Conversely,

In cultures whose population density is high, personal space and territoriality are highly valued. Privacy in densely populated locations is often accomplished psychologically rather than physiologically. In Calcutta, India, for example, there are nearly 80,000 persons per square mile. There is literally not enough room in the city to claim any personal space. Touching or bumping into others while walking through the streets of Calcutta is quite common and to be expected²⁶.

This abstract confirms that proxemics is culture bound as well, thus can vary accordingly to age, gender, environment, ethnicity and so forth. With particular attention to international students in Italy, non verbal communication has been perceived as essential for interaction; some answers to the question “are there any other aspects of Italian people non verbal communication you would like to signal?” illustrate its meaning.

<p>Uso della comunicazione non verbale per insultare anche in contesti ufficiali (servizi amministrativi della facoltà, ufficio per i studenti Erasmus a Viterbo, vari servizi statali).</p>	<p>Use of non verbal communication for insulting, even in formal contexts (university administrative offices, office for Erasmus students in Viterbo, various state offices).</p>
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<p>Lanciano le cose sulla tavola quando sono arrabbiati (esempio, lanciare i</p>	<p>When they are angry, they throw things on the table (for example,</p>
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²⁶ Neuliep, W. *The Necessity of Intercultural Communication*, cit., p. 264.

piatini sulla tavola per mettere le tassine di caffè). they throw coffee saucers on the table to put coffee cups).

2.2.4 Verbal Communication

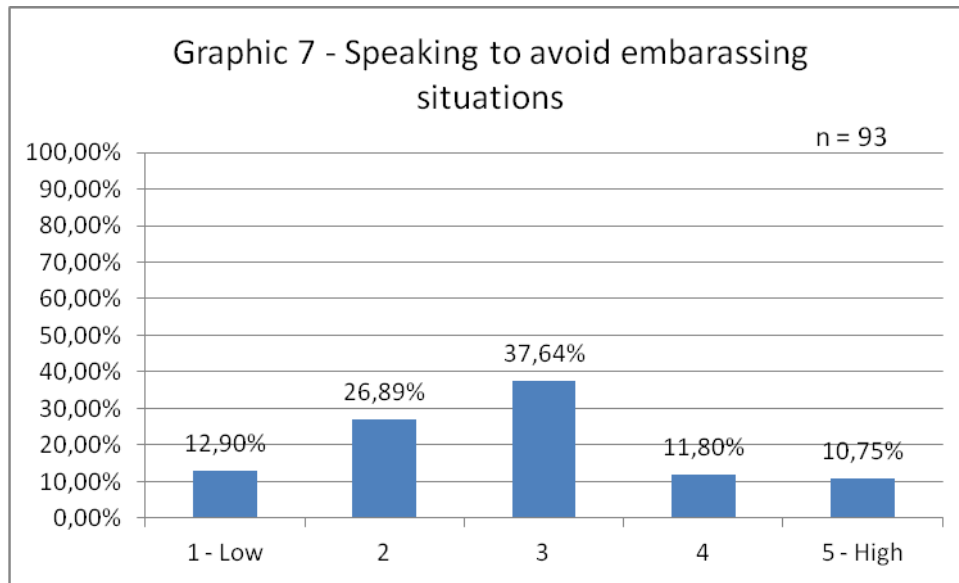
Since communication is “the dynamic process of encoding and decoding verbal and non verbal messages within a defined cultural, psychological, sociorelational, and perceptual environment”²⁷, verbal communication must be examined as well. Non verbal and verbal symbols are culture bound, and are part of interpretative systems that can vary a lot among cultures. The implications for changing verbal systems are extremely interesting since they affect our way of interpreting reality. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis bears testimony to this assumption. In 1940, Whorf, student of the anthropologist and linguist Edward Sapir, wrote that “the background linguistic system (in other words the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas ... We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language”²⁸.

If applied to Italian verbal system, this hypothesis can reveal important aspects of Italian people attitudes towards interaction.

²⁷ Ivi, p. 13.

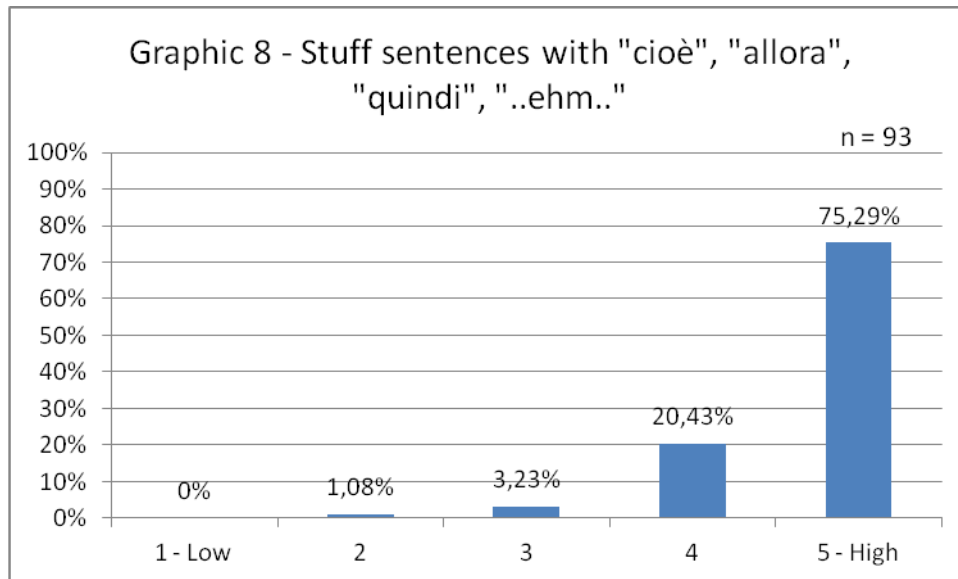
²⁸ Ivi, p. 215.

Graphic 7. With reference to verbal communication, to what extent do/did you notice these characteristics in Italian people? [Speaking to avoid embarrassing situations]



The typical Italian way of speaking – really fast and without interruptions – is interpreted here as a way of avoiding silence. This because silence in Italy implies a great deal of embarrassment. Differently from Asian cultures, silence for Italians means lack of interest in carrying on communication, and, for this reason, is often avoided. In order to escape moments of silence Italian people seem to rave, as to prevent embarrassment. Differently from what had been foreseen, this aspect was not remarkably noticed by international students. The reason for this trend could be find in their cultures of origin: as a matter of fact the majority of participants belonged to European countries and Brazil; for these cultures silence has not the same relevance it has for Asian cultures, where it carries important implications for communication. International students in Italy privileged another feature of communication. Please observe the graphic below.

Graphic 8. With reference to verbal communication, to what extent do/did you notice these characteristics in Italian people? [Tendency to stuff sentences with words such as “cioè”, “allora”, “quindi”, “..ehm..”, “insomma”, “quant’altro”]



A revealing 75% of participants noticed Italian tendency to stuff sentences with words such as “cioè”, “allora”, “quindi”, “..ehm..”, “insomma”, “quant’altro”, to which some students added:

- ✓ uso di "magari".
[The use of the word magari].
- ✓ Usare "boh" quando non sanno qualcosa o cosa succede. Usare l'espressione "per forza..." e "comunque...".
[The use of the word “boh” when they do not know something or what is happening. The use of expressions such as “per forza...” and “comunque...”].
- ✓ Alto uso di "praticamente" come espressione per intercalare.
[Frequent use of “praticamente” when stuffing sentences].

- ✓ Anche tanti injuria, ma penso che non fosse gravissimo nella vostra lingua, è abbastanza naturale, o no?
[Many blasphemies as well, but I do not think it is so serious in your language, it is quite normal, isn't it?]

With reference to this last point, blasphemies can be considered a distinctive feature of Italian language indeed. Mostly, they are automatically inserted in the speech, with no awareness of referring to God. In some cases, the speech is an undesirable sequence of blasphemies which serve to emphasize speaker's feelings and emotions; many times there is no conscious willingness to address to God²⁹.

2.2.5 Use and Perception of Time

One of the main aims of the questionnaire was that of analyzing how Italian organization of time is perceived by international students. The concept of time entails punctuality as well as the structures of programmes, reunions, and plans. Since the approach to these variables is culture bound, it can create frictions with reference to multicultural encounter. For example, the reaction to people's lateness varies a great deal, not only accordingly to culture, but also accordingly to personal tolerance. Before investigating how international students reacted to lateness, it was necessary to ask if they perceived that

²⁹ For further information about blasphemies see Turina, Isacco. (1999), *Maledire Dio, Studio sulla Bestemmia*. Tesi di laurea in Sociologia dei Processi Culturali, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università degli Studi di Bologna.

Italian people valued punctuality. As expected, the majority (67,7%) answered that Italians attribute no relevant importance to punctuality. The remaining 32,3% answered the opposite. In order to understand how international students faced Italian lateness a question was posed. The table below evidences the main reactions.

Table 2 - How do you react when people are not punctual?	
Tolerance	17,20%
Anger	9,68%
Lack of respect	5,38%
Other:	
Anxiety	3,23%
Indifference	3,23%

Tolerance seems to be the dominating feeling, followed by anger and lack of respect. Here again, participants' provenience is not entirely negligible: the considerable presence of 20% Spanish people, 17% Portuguese people and 19% Brazilian people has a notable impact on the prevailing trend. Please note that these cultures are known for their "Latin" character and for their members not valuing punctuality. If the respondents were people from the United States, for example, the results could be totally different. The explanation is that for some cultures time is money, the day is skilfully planned and no "wastes" of time are accepted. On the contrary, Latin people seem to be used to lateness; in particular some Portuguese students stressed:

Fui-me habituando, também já I got used to, I am already used to

estou habituada ao atraso Portuguese lateness, even if
português, apesar dos italianos Italian people are worse [as
serem pior. regards punctuality].

Bene, i portoghesi anche sono così. No problem, Portuguese people
are similar.

Conversely, situations that required coping with changing programmes, lessons and courses were perceived as particularly stressing. In this context, there was a general consensus about the fact that Italian people are disorganized and careless about the discomfort they cause in other people with their ever-changing programmes. Data below bear testimony.

It was annoying to some extent and it disorganised my schedule.

Challenged! Very stressful, as felt unorganised and I wasn't given any information as to who could help or who might know how to find disrupted classes.

In qualche caso specifico, mi ha In some cases, students'
disturbato e mi ha stupito notare indifference in facing lateness or
l'indifferenza generale degli studenti changed times of exams annoyed
davanti a un ritardo o a un cambio di me and surprised me. Anyway, it
orario negli esami. Comunque non è occurred seldom.
che sia successo tanto spesso.

University was considered the most triggering context; students complained about the lack of organization of administrative services and of professors as well. Students felt deeply disoriented and frustrated by professors' general indifference towards their specific problems and requests.

When answering to the question “in which situations did you perceive that your communication partner was not interested in helping you?”, respondents stressed that professors seemed completely disinterested in their students and their needs, pointing out that this attitude did not regard only international students, but Italians as well. This lack of helpfulness was reported as one of the major sources of stress and anxiety.

2.2.6 Use and Perception of Space

The distinction between private and public space varies across cultures and, as stressed above, depends on age, gender, environment, ethnicity, demographic density factors, and so forth. The analysis about Italian environment stressed that 72% respondents to the questionnaire thought Italian people value privacy and private space. This considerable figure mirrors what Lobasso, Caon, Pavan highlighted when they pointed out that the conceptualization of public and private space

E' uno dei software mentali che velocemente stanno cambiando in Italia, soprattutto nel Centro-Nord: mentre anni fa dominava il concetto che quel che è pubblico (ad esempio un parco, il bordo di una strada, il piazzale di un'azienda) è di tutti e quindi non è di nessuno, e allora può essere insozzato a piacimento,

oggi si sta affermando un valore comune ai paesi nordeuropei: quel che è pubblico è di tutti e quindi è anche mio, e va difeso³⁰.

[The conceptualization of public and private space] is one of the mental software that are quickly changing in Italy, above all in the centre and in the north: some years ago the prevailing idea was that what was public (for example, a park, a side of the street, the square of a company) belonged to everybody and to nobody at the same time – therefore it can be dirtied without regard for it. Conversely, nowadays, a value that is common to many northern countries is wide-spreading: what is public belongs to everybody and must be defended.

Along with a smoother demarcation between public and private space, renewed attention is given to issues such as smoking in open and closed areas. If from 2005 Italian law does not allow to smoke in restaurants, offices and bars, a parallel awareness of the impact that passive smoking has on non-smoking people is arising in Italians. This new understanding materializes in smokers' attempt to avoid open areas where there are children.

Generally speaking, Italians are more mindful of the space of the Other, both in public and in private sphere. However, table 3 seems to contradict this assumption.

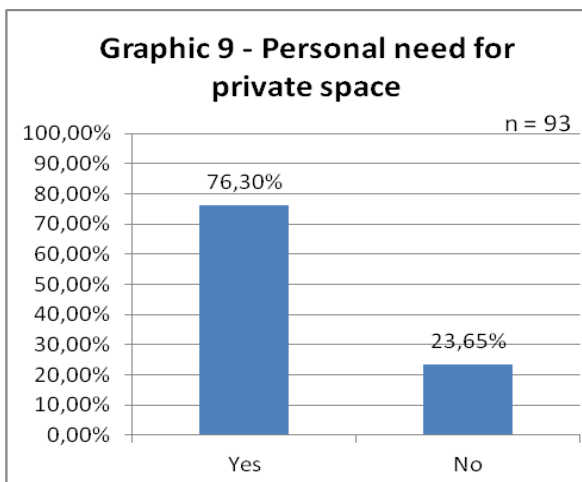
³⁰ Lobasso, Fabrizio; Pavan, Elisabetta; Caon, Fabio. *Manuale di Comunicazione Interculturale tra Italiani e Greci*. Guerra Edizioni, Perugia, 2007, p. 27.

Table 3 - In Italy, do/did you feel the need for a private space in which you can/could be on your own?

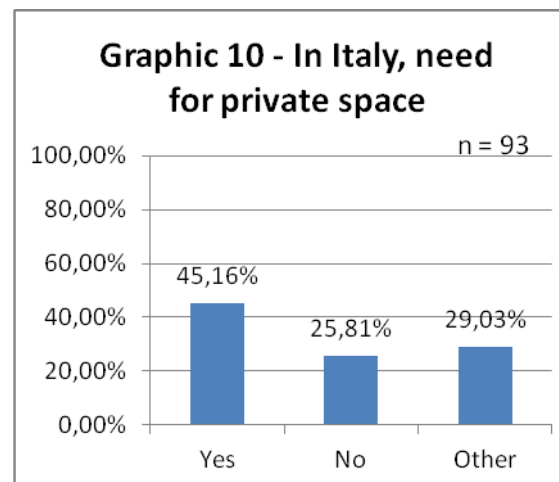
Yes	45,16%
No	25,81%
Sometimes	1,49%
Other:	
<p>Yes, but even if I shared a room I found it was always possible to get some space if I needed.</p> <p>Yes, Italians always like spending time together, eating together, watching TV together. When I could, I escaped in order to spend some time alone, usually in my room.</p> <p>Yes, I felt great need for private space in Italy (mostly because the rooms in "residenza" were quite tiny and there was no privacy in it). I usually went for a long walk along the beach to get a little bit of privacy.</p>	

Data above bear testimony of Italian attitude towards enjoying time together, thus inhibiting other people's attempt to find a proper personal space – 45% respondents felt the desire for spending some time on their own and sometimes found it difficult to get free space. What the table reports, seems in contradiction with the theoretical part about the relationship between Italian people and their perception, use and organization of space. Actually, data above cannot find proper analysis if not linked to another question: “Do you often feel the need for a space in which you can stay on your own?”. This general question was posed in the first sections of the questionnaire to record respondents' personal need for a space in which they can isolate. In the observation of data, please note that, in this particular case, no cultural context was specified.

Graphic 9. Do you often feel the need for a space in which you can stay on your own?



Graphic 10. In Italy, do/did you feel the need for a private space in which you can/could be on your own?



As graphic 9 highlights, the need for private space is strongly felt by international students, independently from the context of reference. This means that it is rather a personal attitude than a need related to changed cultural environment. In any case, the percentage of respondents which answered affirmatively to the general question is much higher than the second one, illustrated in graphic 10. The conclusion is that, while appearing a relevant datum in graphic 10, the need for private space cannot be considered if compared to graphic 9, which renders its significance relative.

2.2.7 Use and Perception of Hierarchy

Another aspect that shows how culture preserves its distinctiveness in space and time is the hierarchic articulation of society. To some extent, this section is connected to the previous one, since in many occasion spatial organization mirrors hierarchic scales. In his analysis of hierarchic distance, Professor Balboni³¹ investigates the issue by following four categories: transparency or opacity, permeability or impenetrability, explicitness or implicitness, attributed or acquired status.

The first parameter relates to hierarchic structures that are fictitious, in the sense that their representatives are not charged with real power, but,

³¹ Balboni, Paolo. *La Comunicazione Interculturale*. Marsilio Ed., Venezia, 2007.

rather, their position is only nominal. This is typical of Asian culture, where the highest representative is the oldest person of the social apparatus – even if in most of the cases he has no real authority.

The second binomial group explores the possibility of shifting from low positions to higher positions in a hierarchic structure. In some cultures this is not possible, and whether it is, it can occur only through a gradual passage through intermediate positions.

The third tool of investigation takes into exams the extent to which hierarchy is perceptible to outsiders through vocal symbols (for example, the use formal registers), or non verbal symbols (for example, the use of objects that express the status of the boss).

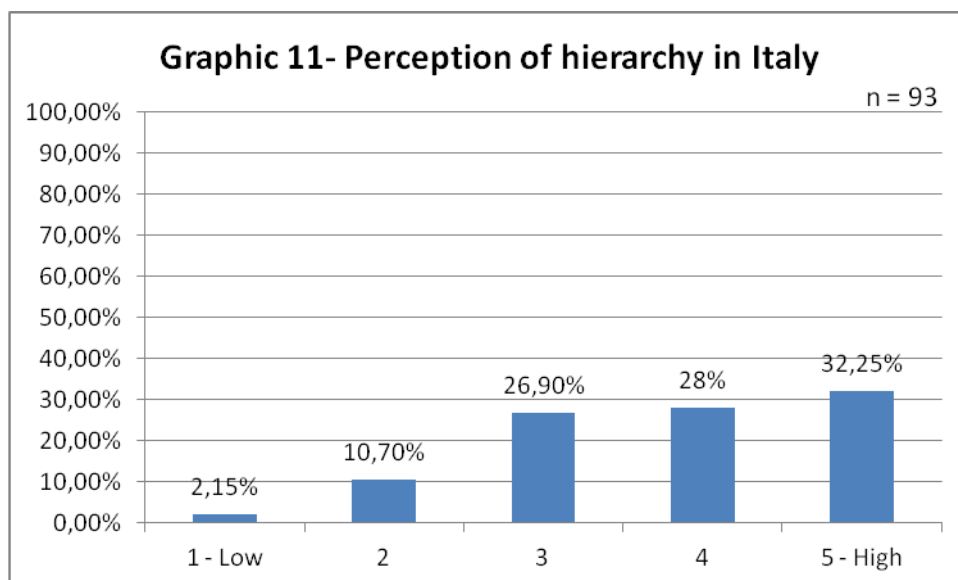
The fourth category gathers all those factors that attribute social status to members of a hierarchy: age, gender, aristocratic belonging, and so forth. At the same time, Balboni does not neglect that in some cultures social status is not attributed but acquired, that is, people work hard to reach high positions.

As far as these parameters are applied to Italian social apparatuses, hierarchy can be conceived as transparently, impenetrably and implicitly organized. Its structure requires that individuals work hard before reaching higher positions, but, once achieved, these position can be put under discussion and negotiated without the feeling of experiencing a social drama.

The question of political correctness is rather critical in Italy, where people are not completely aware of what personal differences entail and for this reason address to them with no sufficient delicacy.

In order to investigate international students' perception of hierarchy in Italy, the questionnaire posed a question which articulated in two parts: the first referred to the perception of hierarchy at university, the second to the perception of hierarchy in other Italian social contexts. For present purposes, the academic context appears the most significant, and for this reason the analysis will concentrate on it. The graphic below shows international students' perception of hierarchy in the academic context.

Graphic 11. Which is/was your perception of hierarchy in Italy? [At university]



Despite its being implicit (Balboni 2007, p. 46) , hierarchy is highly perceived by international students in Italy – 32% respondents signalled a

strong hierarchic organization at university. Accordingly to what evidenced above, this datum finds explanation in international students' complaint about professors' attitude towards their students. Comments on academic structure appear rather critical not only about the internal disorganization, but also about the perceived distance between professors and students. This distance is technically known as power distance, and relates to the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Probably, professors' disinterest in international students' specific problems and difficulties was interpreted as a sign of their belonging to the higher position of the academic body.

2.3. Brazilian Students in Italy: Similarities and Differences

2.3.1 Introduction

This section opens with two Brazilian students' testimonies about their first weeks in Italy. The idea to insert their experience came to me while reasoning on the fact that the first period abroad - the one in which individual has to deal with accommodation, different language and contact with different habits and behavioural patterns – is extremely interesting for present purposes. Professor Paola Baccin put me in contact with two Brazilian girls from São Paulo, Maria and Ana, who are now in Italy and accepted to answer to

some questions. Comments below will be limited to their initial impressions, thus focusing on anxiety and acculturative stressors such as language, accommodation, public services, interpersonal contact, and so forth. For the investigation of further components, the analysis rests on data collected from eighteen Brazilian students, eleven girls and seven boys, mostly coming from the University of São Paulo.

Maria and Ana's testimonies gave me the opportunity to consider significant features of their initial impact with Italian environment. Three questions were posed in the same form, in order to see if the answers confirmed my first hypothesis or not. What I expected was that, despite coming from the same country, their answers would be different, since personal traits influence perception and reaction to stress. Three aspects were pivotal to the analysis: level of anxiety, contact with Italian people, preference for contact with local people or co-nationals.

Question 1. With reference to your current experience in Italy, do you feel anxious? If yes, how are you trying to overcome this feeling?

This first question is strictly connected with the second one. As reasoned for international students in general, strong levels of anxiety inevitably result in

difficult contacts with local people. Maria and Ana's questions are reported below.

Maria: I'm a very anxious person and it reflects on me as headache, because of that I already take the meds. But as I didn't bring enough, I'm not taking it everyday, so I try tiring out my body, walking on the streets everyday, so I don't have much energy to think about my anxiousness.

Ana: eu tenho me sentido muito menos ansiosa do que imaginei que estaria. Na minha cabeça, quando eu estava no Brasil, ficar aqui iria dar um nó na minha cabeça e eu ficaria bem confusa nos primeiros dias. Quando fico muito ansiosa, e isso costuma acontecer à noite, eu fico sem fome e não consigo dormir ou durmo muito mal. Mas acho que às vezes o que sinto é o contrário de ansiedade, algo como uma preguiça ou um desânimo, uma passividade para fazer as coisas. Para ir contra isso procuro pensar em tudo de legal que posso fazer por aqui, penso em como serão as minhas aulas (que ainda não começaram, talvez por isso fique esse vazio de não ter uma obrigação), penso que posso ir aos museus aqui de Perugia mesmo, e também faço coisas do cotidiano para distrair, como ir ao mercado e lavar roupa. Também trouxe algumas homeopatas que também servem para combater isso e tenho tomado.

[I am much less anxious than I thought. When I was in Brazil, I thought that my experience in Italy would provoke a lot of confusion in my mind. When I am really anxious, and this usually occurs at night, I am not hungry and I cannot sleep or I sleep bad. However, I think that what I feel is the contrary of anxiety, a sort of laziness or discouragement, or passivity in doing things. In order to react I try to imagine all nice things I can do here, I think about how my lessons will be (they have not started yet, maybe the fact that I have no work to do makes me feel a sense of emptiness), I think I can go to museums in Perugia and I do everyday things to entertain, such as going to the market or wash my clothes. I brought with me some homeopathic products which help in feeling better and I have already taken]

Interestingly, both comments highlight a strict connection between psyche and body. In the first chapter, theorization about how acculturative

stress resulted in physical suffering was introduced and, here, practical evidence is offered.

This strain appear to be the consequence of differences in language as well as of many practical factors, for example Maria evidenced:

Eu sai chorando do correio quando fui lá para pedir a documentação para o Permesso di Soggiorno: tomei um chá de cadeira de 1h30, quando chegou minha vez falei que queria o kit e a mulher começou a falar um mooooooooooonte de coisa e eu, toda educada, expliquei que não havia entendido muito bem o que ela falou, se ela poderia repetir falando mais devagar e ela respondeu que sabia que eu não tinha entendido nada e que quando eu entendesse eu poderia voltar e entregar a papelada, em choque, sai do correio e comecei a chorar no meio da rua. Umás cinco lágrimas depois eu voltei, mesmo não sendo mais a minha vez, fui no guiché ao lado (só tinham dois que atendiam o permesso) e perguntei para a outra moça o que eu deveria fazer, o procedimento e tals, ela viu que eu estava nervosa, me explicou tudo bonitinho e eu fui embora.

[I cried when I exited the post office, after asking for resident permit documents. After waiting for 1 hour and a half, it was my turn, I explained to the post employee which documents I needed. The woman started to explain me a lot of things, I told her, very nicely, that I had not understood what she had told me, I asked her to speak more slowly. She answered that she had realized I had not understand and that I could go back and hand in the documents when I would understand. Shocked, I exited the post office and I started to cry in the middle of the street. Some tears later, I went back, even if it was not my turn anymore. I went to the next window (there were only two persons waiting for resident permit) and I asked to another woman what I had to do, the procedures and so forth. She saw I was nervous, so she explained me everything very politely and after that I went away].

This comment highlights one of the common difficulties international students face in Italy; Brazilian students, in particular, felt that their Italian communication partners were not interested in helping them or willing to hear their problems as long as they could not speak Italian fluently. As expected, their feeling of being rejected by local people provoked in Brazilian students a certain degree of anxiety. The fact that Maria started to cry after speaking with the post employee is indicative of how discomfort decreases self esteem and, consequently, the propensity to engage in further contacts with natives. In order to investigate to what extent this discomfort is a destabilizing factor for everyday communication with local people, question two was posed.

Question 2. With reference to your current experience in Italy, how do you feel in your everyday contacts with Italian people (asking for information, do the shopping, ordering the meal)?

The second question aimed to examine if the girls felt confident with the new cultural context since the very beginning, or if their anxiety and cultural differences inhibited their willingness to interact with local people. Their answers revealed perceptual differences:

Maria: I feel like there are two types of Italian people: the young ones that are very nice and don't bother give you all the information you want and the elderly ones with whom I don't want to talk anymore, because they don't pay attention to what you say and don't want to repeat what they

just said and they aren't kind, I think they do that if everyone, but with the foreign seems like a game being rude.

Ana: O contato com os italianos, desde o primeiro momento, pareceu muito simples e não muito diferente do contato com brasileiros. Não sei se é porque estou acostumada a estudar a língua ou se é porque estamos acostumados com a presença de italianos e da cultura italiana em São Paulo, ou se porque Perugia é uma cidade pequena e bastante acolhedora, mas o que foi estranho mesmo foi só o fato de estar em outro país, vivendo uma experiência nova, que durará muito tempo. O que fica mais na minha cabeça não são propriamente as pessoas diferentes, mas a experiência diferente de estar aqui sempre sabendo que ainda tem muito pela frente. Porém desde que estou sozinha já senti muita falta de falar português à vontade!

[Since the very beginning, the contact with Italians appeared to me really simple and not so different from the contact with Brazilians. I do not know if it is because I am used to study Italian language or because we are used to Italian presence and Italian culture in São Paulo, or because Perugia is a small and welcoming city. What appeared strange to me, was the fact of living in a new country, a new experience which will last a lot of time. What strikes me most are not different people but the different experience of living here with the awareness that I still have a lot of time ahead. Therefore, since I was here alone, I started to feel that I missed speaking Portuguese].

While Maria answered by stressing Italian sharp generational differences in Italians' attitude towards foreigners, Ana perceived no main difference between contact with Italians and contact with Brazilians. Since Maria appeared quite annoyed about Italian rudeness and Ana noticed no main difference compared to Brazilian contact, it was expected that Maria privileged contacts with Brazilian people, while Ana preferred engaging in contact with local people. The third question contradicts what had been foreseen.

Question 3. With reference to your current experience in Italy think about the moments in which you are alone. How do you organize your free time? Your activities privilege contact with Brazilian or with Italian people? (Please comment your choice by explaining for which reason you privilege contact with Brazilians or Italians).

The third question was posed to comprehend how the girls organized their free time, that is, if they preferred to isolate and keep in contact with their friends and parents in Brazil or if they tried to open to new contacts and new experiences. This point relates to the three networks theorized in chapter one. The monocultural network entails relationships with compatriots and fortifies primitive ethnic and cultural values; the bicultural network includes relationships with local people and fosters integration within host community; the multicultural network entails relations with other international students and helps avoiding psychological isolation. This last question aimed to record the level of engagement with natives – therefore it refers to the bicultural network, but Maria speaks of the multicultural network as well.

Maria: In these first days I haven't had much free time, but I can surely say that I chose and I choose to be with the Latin-Americans or even other foreign. I didn't have the opportunity of being friends with an Italian and I'm not sure if it's because they don't want to be friends with me or because they are so closed in their own group that they don't noticed that there are other people

around, for example, in my first day I went to eat at the university cafeteria and I chose a table that there were three or four Italians and during the whole meal they didn't noticed that there was another human being listening to what they were saying and trying to fit in, after that I went to the accommodation and tried to use the computer, what I didn't saw was that, while I was trying, two girls got near and started talking to me and helping me, guess what: Latin girls and now we hang out together and they have presented me to the rest of the group, somehow everyone speaks Italian, goes to the Italian university, but aren't Italian.

Ana: Sem dúvidas até agora sempre que tenho tempo livre eu falo com brasileiros, principalmente com a minha mãe. Mas também até agora não fiz muitos amigos aqui, conheci um grupo pequeno de pessoas em uma noite e ficamos de marcar mais coisas, e tenho a minha companheira de quarto, que é russa, nós conversamos um pouco, mas eu achei ela tão parecida comigo que ela é até tão calada quanto eu. E às vezes converso um pouco com os porteiros do alojamento, que são divertidos e parecem personagens de filmes. Embora eu tenha vontade de fazer muitas coisas aqui, a saudade acaba falando mais alto, é difícil ser mais forte que ela e não ficar com a cabeça no Brasil.

[When I have free time I speak with Brazilian people, mostly with my mum. Here, I have not made a lot of friends yet. I met a small group of people one night and we arranged to go out together sometimes; and I have my flatmate who is Russian, we spoke a little; I think she is really similar to me, she is still as calm as me. Sometimes I speak with the doormen of the flat, who are funny and look like characters in films. Even if I want to do a lot of things here, the “saudade” is stronger, so strong that coping with it is challenging, so that my mind remains in Brazil].

Differently from what had been foreseen, both girls privileged contacts with Brazilians. This contradiction can be explained by considering that Maria and Ana commented their experience with respect to its initial phase and not to their sojourn as a whole. On this view, their preference for contacts with Brazilian people could be a consequence of their suffering the detachment

from their original culture – therefore, speaking Portuguese or keeping in contact with Brazilians could be both a way to reaffirm their primitive identity and an attempt to mitigate their “saudade” by taking refuge in their consolidate points of reference.

Their need to cope with new cultural and behavioural patterns that create a certain psychological stress could be a crucial factor as well. As a matter of fact, the strain deriving from interaction with the different Other might foster contact with Brazilian people and, consequently, decrease girls’ willingness to open to new contacts - which are more challenging and, therefore, require more energy to reach successful communication.

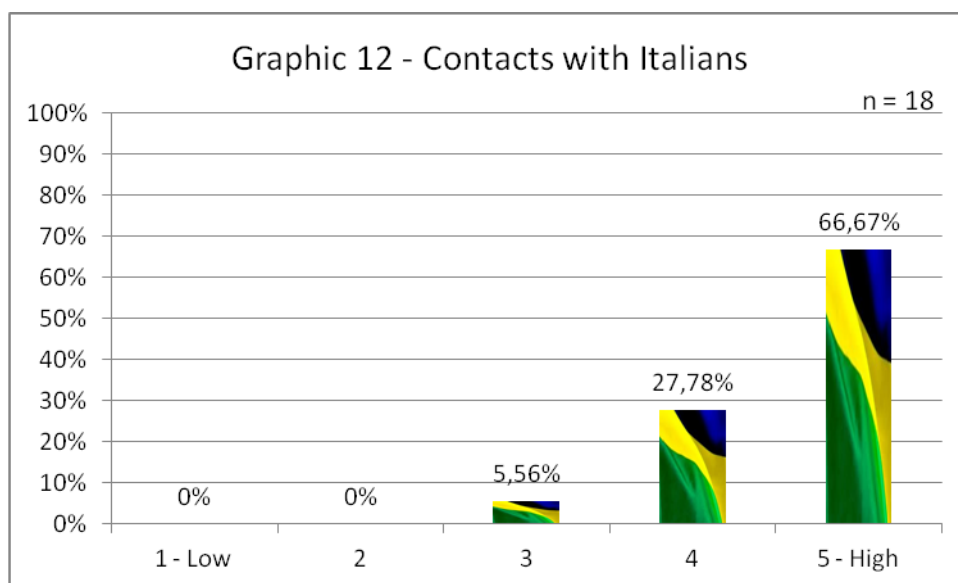
Lastly, Maria and Ana’s tendency to privilege contacts with members of other ethnic groups rather than contacts with Italians can be justified by the fact that other international students may appear more helpful than Italians because of the perception of sharing more or less the same difficulties, even if with different intensity. This implies that, for the girls could be easier to make friends with foreign students rather than with Italian students, thanks to a feeling of sharing a common challenge; this feeling is known under the name of empathy.

Since Maria and Ana’s impressions relate just to the very beginning of their experience in Italy (the first two weeks), their testimonies will be integrated with other relevant data collected through the questionnaire. The

questionnaire was the same that had been submitted to other international students. In order to create this specific focus, Brazilian students' answers were separated and analyzed apart. Main differences have been reported below.

If compared to Maria and Ana's experience, data collected from other Brazilian students show more positive contacts with Italian people.

Graphic 12 – Brazilian students' contact with Italian people



A significant 67% Brazilian students signalled the preference for contact with Italians rather than with Brazilian-speaking people or people speaking other language. This is in countertendency with what recorded by Maria and Ana, the reason being the fact that their impressions were the result of initial psychological strain, while other respondents could consider the whole sojourn in Italy.

The main difference in comparison to international students from other countries, was a relaxed relationship with Italian lateness

Gli italiani sono molto puntuali ed io sono rimasta sorpresa con tanta puntualità perché noi brasiliani non siamo per niente... in pochi casi siamo puntuali. Ho visto che loro si arrabbiavano con il ritardo.

Italian people are really punctual and their punctuality surprised, because Brazilian people are not punctual, at all... only in few occasions. I noticed they got annoyed about lateness.

Non mi piaceva molto, però non mi sentivo in grado di rimproverare nessuno... qui in Brasile anche le persone arrivano in ritardo, così sono già abituata.

I don't like their being late, but I did not feel like criticizing anybody... Here in Brazil, people arrive late as well, so I am used to.

Evidence shows that cultural similarities foster positive contact and help in coping with the new context of reference. Brazilian students being used to lateness, helped them in facing Italian people tendency to be disorganized and not punctual. Another factor revealed useful in this attempt: Brazilian students' stereotypes about Italians. 50% respondents pointed out that the stereotypes they had about Italians helped them to successfully communicate with local people. Brazilian students' common stereotypes about Italian culture relate to their speaking aloud, their passion for food and fashion, their bizarre way of gesticulating, their morbid relationship with their mother, and so forth. These data are crucial, since consolidate the hypothesis that stereotypes are not necessary negative - prior knowledge of another culture, if free from prejudice and discrimination, can be verified and enriched through intercultural contact. Positive intercultural contact is the first step to move in order to transform

culture shock into a phase of evolution in the process of forging competent intercultural communicators.

Chapter 3. Cultural Identity: An Extension of the Self

«[The individual] must reach out in totally new ways to anchor himself, for all the old groups – religion, nation, community, family or profession – are now shaking under the hurricane impact of the accelerative thrust of change... Each time we link up with some particular subcultural group or groups, we make some change in our self image»

(Toffler, 1980, pp.121-123)

3.1 Introduction

The second section of this paper is concerned with providing a wider framework for the analysis of identity issues in the globalized world. As explained above, the same problems international students face when the cultural context of reference changes are shared by people whose values, customs, patterns or behaviour and sensitivities join or collide with those of the different Other. Considering the multicultural experience an enriching moment or a conflicting one leads to opposite analyses but, basically, nobody can deny the importance of personal and social implications that globalization has on individuals. Globalization is a process that, far from being only an economic issue, stretches to and affects the political, social and cultural spheres. The progressive compression of time and space variables has been pivotal in favouring the high level of interconnection that facilitates reciprocal influence and intertwines the fate of social communities. In the first section, the focus was on how the multicultural experience affected the individual; here, the

perspective goes far beyond the personal experience and the everyday life to reason on the causes and consequences of globalization with reference to the state and social communities. The linking assumption between the first chapters and the last ones is the idea that in the present shrinking world there is still room for individual and social agency, but, at the same time, the personal development is not immune from the overwhelming impact of globalization. Because the individual has no longer a clear and definite grid of action, the multicultural experience can be perceived as a challenging moment in the construction of identity, or as an enriching opportunity providing the self with new stimuli and interpretative schemes. Reasoning on globalization requires a two-levels analysis: on global dynamics and on particular, local communities. The third chapters deals with the puzzling scenario that globalization has forged, a global arena where different forces exert their influence and compete to gain control, while eroding the strength of the original guarantor of internal and external stability: the modern nation-state.

The analysis of the state as cultural, economic and political actor will be core issue of this chapter. Modern influences on individuals, communities and states will be examined in order to shed light on the implications that globalizations trends have for individual and collective identity. The possibility of a homogenized world, resulting from globalization, will be analyzed and

discarded to favour a perspective that opens to multiplicity and change. For the purposes of the present research, heterogeneity and relativism will be introduced as key elements for understanding the complexity of the globalized world, where self representations and identities need to be negotiated in consequence of the multicultural experience.

3.2 Communities and Their Extension in Time and Space

3.2.1 Historical Background

The local, territory-bound communities dating back to the rise of the national states can be considered the cradle for the analysis of identity issues. Local communities are commonly thought to share a common repertoire of self representations, behavioural patterns, aims. The fact that these local communities were clearly gathered within defined borders allowed modern territorial states to control groups and to intervene in most aspects of societal organization. This intervention was the main vehicle of power imposition across the dominated territory. The process that turned local communities into national communities fed off the circulation of pamphlets, books, images and sounds, which, through the diffusion of common national symbols, helped to create a sense of belonging to a common past. In this way, national languages and culture started to emerge and to be forged. The state was pivotal to the creation of an educational system that was the main vehicle for the spread of a

precise range of values and ideas. National states, in opposition to territorial states, claim to be representative of the nation, from which they derive their legitimacy. Far from being disinterested, the shaping of a common sense of belonging was functional to secure the citizens' consensus in case of war. In this way, sovereignty and its legitimated exercise on bounded territories became crucial for the emergence of the nation-state. As it will be explained in the following sections, place and its relation to cultural and national identity was of paramount importance both in the creation and in the disintegration of the state, conceived as a guarantor of political, social and economic stability. The modern nation-states achieved the monopoly of coercive power and gained legitimacy through the consensus of their citizens, subsequently expanding their power beyond the controlled territories. By spreading the idea that states were representing the interests of the nations, they managed to gain the consensus they needed to mobilize people in war and forge their imperial project. Territorial expansion was not a nation-state invention, the previous Spanish and Portuguese expansion to Central and South America had been a clear indication of the imperialist will that would consolidate throughout the centuries. Territorial expansion meant military, diplomatic and economic involvement at a global level. In order to regulate relations at a global stage, a unified system of rules was established, which allowed to

improve the fiscal organization, the distribution of resources, the war-making affairs and, not least, the diplomatic relations among the different states. This was the seed that gave birth to the international society, which albeit initially consolidating in Europe, saw a later expansion across the world and affected the internal affairs of European countries' colonies. The formal recognition of the international society, and of the order it endorsed, dates back to the Peace Treaties of Westfalia on 1648, but it reached a complete structure in the late eighteenth century. Only then, the principles of non intervention in internal affairs as well as the equality among states were introduced. While the effective observation of these principles came with the decolonization and Second World War, in the seventeenth century the pillars of the international order had already been set. In his investigation about nations and nationalisms³², Hobsbawm reasoned on the relation between the state, the nation and the people, specifically focusing on the period between 1830 and 1880, a phase in which the principle of nationality had a sharp impact on European political asset. With the delineation of Italy and Germany as pivotal powers, the internal division of the Austro-Hungarian power after 1867, and

³² Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nazioni e Nazionalismi dal 1780. Programma, Mito, Realtà*. Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2002.

the recognition for minor political groups³³ who became independent states, the issue of nationality drew new attention. Its importance was not only the result of the increasing number of nation-states, but also of the awareness their significance had for the consolidation of 19th century world economy. Hobsbawm underlined how the basic political entities of nation-states fostered the economic development of an international economy, where single states aimed to the implementation of mercantilist policies, but with an international extent. Along with this economic implications, national states were the starting point for the definition of nationalism and social movements which had, and still have, the potential to threaten social and political stability.

With the following disintegration of the great empires – namely European, American and Soviet - in the twentieth century, the international order gained a global reach and the international stage saw the strengthening of many new, independent states. Far from being totally autonomous and equally endowed with the possibility of choosing their economic and political orientation, the new states and political communities could not ignore their intertwined fate, nor move regardless of their member's consensus.

³³ Hobsbawm referred to Belgium, Greece, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria as to minor political entities who achieved the condition of independent states by founding this right on their national characteristics. For a further investigation on the basic features of the concept of nationality see *Nazioni e Nazionalismi dal 1780. Programma, Mito, Realtà*, p. 42.

3.2.2 Communities Today: Questioning the Meaning of Citizenship

An intriguing question is what it means to be member of a community today. The fragmenting impact that globalization has on political communities has made sense of belonging and citizenship moot points. The citizenship that originated during the development of nation-states was nothing more than the imposition of dominant language and customs on subnational groupings. The present phase, in which the nation-state appears to be affected by a loss of legitimacy, questions the traditional concept of citizenship and leaves room for new theorization about community. Among the different approaches, the one that plays a major part for present purposes is *communitarianism*, which conceives the political community as the overarching framework that provides individuals with a binding sense of belonging to particular groupings. For communitarianists, like Michael Walzer³⁴, the basic assumptions that the neo-medievalist approach holds are objectionable. Walzer and other scholars hold that the neo-medievalists' perspective discards the main source of identity negotiation, that is, the complex web of rights and duties that links individuals to national states and provides individuals with a strong sense of membership of their community. As a matter of fact, neo-medievalists believe in the possibility of different, overlapping authorities governing the same community.

³⁴ Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books, New York, 1983.

On this view, the state should give part of its power to some institutions which are supposed to deal with global issues, while, on the other hand, transferring power to subnational regions, where there is a strong cultural identity. This two-fold orientation of state powers implies multiple loyalties, both to supranational authorities and to subnational apparatuses. For the communalist perspective, globalization cannot affect individuals' attachment to their original community, and for this reason they will never transfer their loyalty or belonging to a global world order.

3.3 Sense of Belonging in Modernity

The analysis of social life in modernity is subject to intense dispute since it loosens the traditional social ties to space and time. As social relations become more stretched, they provide a fertile breeding ground for patterns of cultural globalization, which underpin the circulation of specific images and practices. The vehicle for these images and practices is communication, embracing not only language but also all the nuances of verbal and non verbal communication.³⁵ In the nineteenth century, the wave of technological innovations in communication has favoured the diffusion of messages far

³⁵ For a close examination on communication concepts and processes see Chapter One, Negotiating the Self in a Perspective of Culture Shock.

beyond the national borders, creating, in this way, a connection even among the most disparate social communities. The separation of communication from physical transport, and the immediateness with which messages are sent and received, obliterate the space variable in the communication axis. Virtual networks create proximity not only among international organizations and international social movements but also in the everyday life of common people. Their strength, perhaps, derives from the same potentiality of wide spreading particular images in common cultural contexts, thus insinuating new sensitivities, tastes, practices and sentiments in ordinary people. By creating dense networks that link local groups and cultures, globalization affects relations and dynamics above, below and alongside the state. In his analysis, Thompson³⁶ investigates the association between the circulation of media products and their reception at a local level and holds the assumption that, while globalization has altered and reconfigured some aspects of peoples' life all over the world, it has not undermined their local and cultural life.

³⁶ Thompson, John B. The Globalization of Communication, in Held David and McGrew Anthony, (2003), *The Global Transformation Reader*, Polity Press, pp. 246-259.

3.4 Towards Cultural Homogenization?

3.4.1 Reconceptualising the Role of the State in Post-Modernity

The present crisis, while affecting the role and strength of the nation-state, questions the clear conceptualization of the same as a definite unit, and consequently, the possible homogenization resulting from its loss in power. Proponents of the convergence theory conceive homogenization as emerging from a weakened nation-state, unable to execute his political task, deprived of political initiative and of economic control. The role of transnational companies in this process of draining nation-state resources is of crucial importance since:

The moulding forces of transnational character are largely anonymous and therefore difficult to identify. They are an agglomeration of systems manipulated by largely 'invisible' actors ... [There is no] unity or purposeful co-ordination of the forces in question...³⁷.

This description clearly depicts the consequence of a world undergoing the hurricane of globalization: no centre is detachable, no ordering force is controlling the world affair; in this sense globalization can be considered as the new world disorder.

³⁷ Cited in Bauman, Zygmunt. (1998), *Globalization: The Human Consequence*, Colombia University Press, pp 55-76: 64.

3.4.2 The Global Dimension of Economy and Politics

As far as the political field is concerned, Kenichi Ohmae, with his analysis of the *borderless world*, is among the supporters of the idea that the nation-state has ceased to be a political actor able to exert influence on the activities of capital. According to Ohmae's perspective, the present global economy entails a global orientation in industry production, the possibility for global corporations to work virtually all over the world, a change in individual consumers towards more 'global' tastes and no geographic constrain in investment, meaning that capital is free to flow to places that allow the highest profit. These components are driving forces that lead to an homogeneous and borderless world, where the nation-state loses its political power and where the convergence of production, circulation and consumption undermines geography and national boundaries. Gaining strength from the weakness of the nation-states, region states emerge in all their economic potential and successfully capture the market by exploiting their role as natural economic areas. No relevant role is attributed to state policies in this new picture.

Interestingly, with reference to the above described theories of homogenization and convergence, Henry Way-Chung Young sheds light on a crucial issue: the problem that the metaphor of the borderless world arises is that of confusing a representational model with reality. Henry Way-Chung Young underlines how the globalization rhetoric is often used by Kenichi

Ohmae and other scholars to justify the annihilation of localities by global forces and territorial states by the capital. In this perspective, the global logic of investment and capital prevails on the particular, local interests of real communities.

Globalization began to be represented as a finality, as a logical and inevitable culmination of the powerful tendencies of the market at work. The dominance of economic forces was regarded as both necessary and beneficial. States and the interstate system would serve mainly to ensure the working of market logic³⁸.

3.4.3 Social and Governmental Rescaling

Since geographical metaphors convey specific interpretations of reality, the image of the borderless world is functional to support the neoliberal thought and its lack of recognition about the fact that markets are not 'natural' or given contexts but constructions. In this way, the metaphor of the borderless world undermines the assumption that today's world is a dynamic space; the significant contestations and negotiations it undergoes bring about a constant review of its form and mechanisms.

³⁸ Cited in Yeung, Henry Way-Chung. (1998), Capital, State and Space: Contesting The Borderless World. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Volume 23, Issue 3, pp 291-309: 295.

In the present context of a significant process of rescaling, in which not only the scale of the national state but also other scales of governance and of regulation of social conflict and social reproduction are reshuffled, the ideology of an ungovernable and largely abstract process of global reorganization takes hold easily.³⁹

In this way, Swyngedouw holds, spatial scales can no more be considered as naturalized contexts for social agency, because they imply a continuous reorganization of social power dynamics. If in the nineteenth century, the nation-state was the paradigm of political power and spatial configuration, the present change in scale and consequent process of rescaling are instigators of new social power dynamics. As David Harvey pointed out in his book *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, the control over space is fundamental in the use of social power. As a matter of fact, social power, particularly in capitalist societies, cannot transcend the intertwined handling of money, time and space. In this sense, who decides the rules of the game – namely, form and content of money, space and time – has, at the same, time the possibility of taking advantage from that power. Moreover, the skilful command of the framework in which social experience

³⁹ Swyngedouw, Erik. Globalization or Glocalization? Networks, Territories and Rescaling. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Volume 17, Number 1, 2004, pp. 25-48: 32.

takes place prevents potential opponents from exploiting those rules to subvert the established social order. As Harvey stressed:

The common-sense rules which define the 'time and place for everything' are certainly used to achieve and replicate particular distributions of social power (between classes, between women and men, etc.). [..]. Frustrated power struggles (on the part of women, workers, colonized peoples, ethnic minorities, immigrants, etc.) within a given set of rules generate much of the social energy to change those rules. Shifts in the objective qualities of space and time, in short, can be, and often are, effected through social struggle⁴⁰

Which is, then, the role of capitalist state in this social power reshuffling?

Its function is that of empowering those space which support its existence and discarding those spaces which could fall under the control of oppositional movements.

Once proved that space can never be considered as natural space – but, rather, the expression of class or other social claims and struggles – the way in which its local dimension reaches further extension can find proper analysis through “scales”. In his investigation, Swyngedouw examines the existing relationship between scales of networks and scales of regulation. As explained above, scales of networks tend to contract and expand as consequence of

⁴⁰ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1990, p. 227.

mechanisms of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation. The framework in which these dynamics take place is that of scales of regulation, which refer to the institutionalized territorial entities controlling processes of cooperation and competition. If we assume that these scales are never natural and fixed, but constructed and evolving, which are the main instigators of change? Swyngedouw proposes social conflict and political-economic struggle as the most destabilizing factors affecting the role of several geographical scales. When former hegemonic geographic scales are undermined, new scales are created and empowered. This socio-spatial power reshuffling contributes to the asymmetry of social power, by enforcing some social actors and discarding others. The same alteration is instigator of power shifts that result in the formation of new social, political, economic scales subsiding the former ones. The problem of scales emerges, for example, in the case of national unions: they are rooted in alliances from lower scales movements, but need to maintain a precarious equilibrium between the power held by the national organization and the struggle for power emerging from local and inter-local diverging interests. When confronting the fragmentation and differentiation that feed off local movements, scale regulates opposite tendencies of competition and cooperation, homogenization and heterogeneity. The cooperation and alliances of social groups over a spatial scale is the central tenet of their control and influence on socio-spatial power.

This (stretching process) is a process driven by class, ethnic, gender and cultural struggles. On the one hand domineering organization attempts to control the dominated by confining the latter and their organizations to a manageable scale. On the other hand, subordinated groups attempt to liberate themselves from these imposed scale constraints by harnessing power and instrumentalities at other scales. In the process, scale is actively produced⁴¹.

Capitalism and its theoretical grounding is emblematic of the above presented processes: while exerting influence on great space for the control of social struggle, it came across the local oppositions which found representation in lower scale movements, such as the environmental movement which mobilized people and local resources to contest the hegemonic discourse of capitalism. When an alteration in the balance of relative socio-spatial power occurs, the existing power lines are questioned in front of the emergence of new scales. In this assumption lies the basis of the loss of power of the national state.

3.4.4 The Role of the Nation-State in the Globalized World

The nation-state was the crucial focus of regulation during the Fordist economy of West Europe. This was the arena for the social struggle of the labour movement which aimed to overcome the boundaries of the local scale

⁴¹ Swyngedouw, Erik. Globalization or Glocalization? Networks, Territories and Rescaling, cit., p. 35.

to gain power at the higher level of the state. The highly uneven development at a local level, associated with homogenizing regulation of some social and economic aspects such as social policy, state intervention, wages and so forth, showed the declining power of the national state but, at the same time, the territory of the nation-state remained the framework in which community politics could cooperate and compete for gaining power, and where subnational and supranational processes could find articulation and meaning. These processes and dynamics testimony that even when losing its original power, the state cannot be conceived as trapped within the contradictions of capitalism; on the contrary, it still has the power to reinforce territoriality and local-bound processes as organizing forces affecting the global scene. The presumed loss of autonomy of individual states is in contradiction with their capability of constantly reformulating national policies to face the challenges of globalization. Capitalism and its inherent cracks could not transcend some degree of collective action, mostly state intervention and regulation. When dealing with the provision of collective goods, or the distribution of market powers, the state still influences capitalism in remarkable ways. David Harvey's reflections upon this issue help not to lose sight of the state considerable role as stabilizing actor. In the attempt to compensate market failures, state exerts its power, aiming to

Shape the trajectory and form of capitalist development in ways that cannot be understood simply by analysis of market transactions. Furthermore, social and psychological propensities, such as individualism and drive for personal fulfilment through self-expression, the search for security and collective identity, the need to acquire self respect, status, or some other mark of individual identity, all play a role in shaping modes of consumption and life-styles⁴².

3.5 Multiplicity and Change

3.5.1 Introducing the Concept of Heterogeneity

What might be called the fluidity of culture has always been a social reality, and can only have become intensified with the increasing density of human settlement. Perhaps, in 100,000 B.C. when humanity may have consisted of a series of small bands living distantly from each other, each such band was relatively culturally homogeneous. But it makes no sense whatsoever today, or even for the period of so-called recorded history, to conceive of ourselves as living in cultural homogenous band. Every individual is the meeting-point of a very large number of cultural traits⁴³.

The concept of heterogeneity best describes the puzzling consequences of globalization and stresses the sharpening of cultural contrasts as well as of new forms of opposition. At the basis of this issue, the question of social

⁴² Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, p.123.

⁴³ Immanuel, Wallerstein. The National and the Universal: Can There Be Such a Thing as World Culture? In King Anthony D. (1991) *Culture, Globalization and The World-System*. Department of Art and History, State University of New York at Binghamton, pp 91-105: 95.

agency is of paramount importance: the self in the world is a self that can actively choose to integrate or reject new cultural practices, aesthetic sensitivities, and political models as well. Surely, the overwhelming effects of globalization has raised the self awareness of many communities, which now fear to lose their constructions of identity, and, for this reason, try to defend their sense of being deeply rooted in their culture.

Immanuel Wallerstein, the main theorist of the world-system theory, claims for a continuous creation and recreation of social institution within the context of the dynamic world-system. The world-system, Wallerstein holds, has been the principal form of social organization. Starting his analysis from the economic level, Wallerstein investigated two possible economic systems: world-empires and world-economies, which see their main differences in the distribution of resources. In the first hypothesis the resources come from the peripheral units and move towards a common, unique centre, while, in the case of world-economies, there are different competitive centres and the market is the means by which resources are distributed. Despite the different organization, the movement of resources follows the same direction: from the periphery to the centre. On this view, the above mentioned historical development of the nation-state has resulted in the creation of a world-economy whose underpinning process has been capital accumulation. Alongside concurring globalization and capitalism, the institutional stage

presents a continuous shaping and reshaping – even original groupings, such as families, undergo processes of change and adaptation in space and time. Please note how the variables of space and time are constituting key elements for the examination of the different models and issues presented in this paper. For present concerns, the spatial factor refers to the different economic positions that differing regional structures adopt within the world-system. The three possibilities Wallerstein investigated mirror the categorization into core, peripheral or semi-peripheral positions. The semi-peripheral zone shares some characteristics of the centre and others of the periphery. The richer the core becomes, the poorer the periphery. Far from being isolated units, core, periphery and semi-periphery are deeply intertwined and subject to constant revision, as well as their institutional apparatuses and relationships. Wallerstein's analysis discards the convergence model both from the spatial perspective and from the time perspective. The world-system is not supposed to be eternal or immutable, on the contrary, it presents consequent phases of emergence, expansion and implosion, that is, it follows the cyclical rhythm of capitalist economy. Since Wallerstein holds that a crisis can occur only once during the life of a world-system, he considers the possibility of a succession of systems, while leaving quite open the issue of their form and of the content. The problems with models of homogeneity and convergence arise from the

same notion of culture: any definition depends on boundaries that are arbitrarily taken, therefore, it is not possible to outline a definition that could embrace all members, customs, patterns of behaviour, practices and sensitivities. Since this aim is unachievable even for particular cultures, it follows that the definition of a single, common world culture deriving from homogenization trends would be misleading.

In this sense, the history of the world has been the very opposite of a trend towards cultural homogenization; it has rather been a trend toward cultural differentiation, or cultural elaboration, or cultural complexity. Yet we know that this centrifugal process has not at all tended towards a Tower of Babel, pure cultural anarchy. There seems to have been gravitational forces restraining the centrifugal tendencies and organizing them. In our modern world-system, the single, most powerful such gravitational force has been the nation-state.⁴⁴

3.6 Nation-State and Identity: A Symbiotic Relationship?

3.6.1 National Identities

With the rise of the modern state and the consolidation of the concepts of nation and nationhood, we assist to state rulers' attempt to reorganize their political power and consensus basis in circumscribed territories. Consolidating their power meant to become more and more dependent on the social relation with governed people, and consequentially, it entailed increasing reciprocity.

⁴⁴ The National and the Universal: Can There Be Such a Thing as World Culture?, cit., p. 95.

The circulation of nationhood and membership principles instilled in the people an increased awareness of belonging to a community of people, sharing a common fate. This emergent identity was being shaped and reshaped, until acquiring more definite outline. This was in the interest, some scholars hold, of the nation-state formation; the modern state required the consolidation of a precise form of identity that served to legitimize its power, while creating a common framework of reference that could act as a big umbrella, gathering shared meaning, ideas, sensitivities, values and patterns of behaviour: national culture. The consolidation of national culture in history always requires some basic components, such as the pillar of common public culture, a fundamental body of rights and duties, and a solid economy creating mobility for its resources. Since the concurrent presence of the three factors is difficult to guarantee, national culture underwent, and actually undergoes, processes of reshaping and redefinition. This precisely because the identity that underpins it is flexible, undetermined and sensitive to the changes in its components. For the same reason, even where the creation of national identity was explicit and declared, it rarely reached a complete form. However, Thompson argues, where it managed to survive, “the resilience of national cultures is an important part of the explanation on why territorial states persist and continue to play such a key part in the determination of the shape of the international

order”⁴⁵. In his analysis, Thompson subjects to intense dispute the idea that globalization is an endangering force for cultural and national identity. On the contrary, globalization is presented as a regenerating stimulus, which promotes and supports all recent social movements that forge new identities and reshape the old ones. Globalization, it is held, allows the diffusion of the essential institutions of modern life by overcoming the traditional barriers of space and time and by linking unconventional frameworks of understanding to new communities and places. In Tomlinson’s perspective, the strength of globalization is that “it produces identity where none existed – where before there were perhaps more particular, less socially-policed belongings”⁴⁶. The result is that identity appears detached from place and that new commonalities are created without the necessity of direct contact among people. Less fixed identities emerge from a process of uprooting, not only from space, but also from time and tradition. In this way, the individual is exposed as never before to new influences, which move the self away from unity and completeness, and endow it with a new understanding and interpretation of previously unknown frames of meaning.

⁴⁵ Thompson, John B. *The Globalization of Communication*, cit., p. 251.

⁴⁶ Tomlinson John. *Globalization and Cultural Identity*, in Held David and McGrew Anthony, (2003), *The Global Transformation Reader*, Polity Press, 269-277: 271.

The recent debate about modernization has stressed the necessity to contemplate a possibility that goes far beyond the homogeneity theorization that advocates a model of convergence towards one common world system. As John Gray argue in his essay,

Nineteenth-century theories of progress held that as countries throughout the world adopted technologies and techniques of production they would assimilate the values of the European societies that first achieved modernity. History does not support that Enlightenment faith⁴⁷.

While the idea that societies could combine their efforts to reach an homogeneous status appears rather improbable and simplistic in the cultural sphere, on the consumerist and economic level it is already a reality. The question now is to understand if the economic integration can result in a loss of cultural uniqueness and particularity, and to what extent this loss is a concern for cultural identity. If we assumed that homogenization, as hypothetic consequence of globalization, could affect only the superficial stage, in its material and consumerist features, the problem of cultural identity would be solved. However, this assumption cannot be hold because of the same concept of globalization, which entails further implications not only for the global

⁴⁷ Gray John. Global Utopias and Clashing Civilizations: Misunderstanding the Present. *International Affairs*, Volume 74, No. 1, 1998, pp 149-163: 150.

dynamics, but also for the local mechanisms that attribute meaning to knowledge, sense of the self and community. In the following sections, two different interpretations of the global trends will be presented, one claiming for homogenization as the proper consequence of globalization, the other considering heterogeneity as the option that best portrays the present situation. Throughout this paper the heterogeneity theory will be adopted in analyzing the issue of identity as an evolving personal and cultural construction that can be menaced or enriched by globalization challenges.

3.6.2 Contemplating the Possibility of a Global Culture

In his essay⁴⁸, King Anthony D. analyzes the possibility of creating a single, unified global culture feeding off the abolition of time and space barriers that globalization brought about. In contrast with the particular, time, space and tradition-bound national cultures, global culture presents as timeless, 'spaceless', and artificially constructed on economic and political lines. Its cultural realm would result from the juxtaposition of different cultural traits, which are representative of the different national and popular cultures that were the protagonists of the pre-modern stage. The point here is not the artificiality of global culture – national cultures are social constructions as well

⁴⁸ King Anthony D. Towards a Global Culture?, in Held David and McGrew Anthony, (2003) *The Global Transformation Reader*, Polity Press, pp 278-386.

– but rather the fact that national culture is expressive of a particular set of symbols, values and traditions that is linked to a specific place and time. By proposing a global culture, all particular differences would be swept away and hidden under a veil of homogeneity. The main assertion that discards the possibility of creating a global culture refers to its lack of a common history. If it is a melange of the rests of disparate cultures, its pillars cannot be the historical one, and if there is no gathering history, no images, symbols and tradition can be shared. These components are at the basis of identity creation and consolidation and are guiding lines in the development of a common historical experience. The images and traditions that underpin identity are functional in the strengthening of three major feelings that gather communities – in this sense, King’s analysis functions as a perfect framework for the present research, since it sheds light on the main cultural elements that support any cultural representations. Firstly, the perception of *continuity* between the experiences of different generations guarantees a line of development that works as a string on which all images of the same segment of population hang despite the passing of time. Secondly, *common memories* referring to crucial historical events and personalities assure a shared knowledge about identity roots, and is a distinctive treasure that no space or cultural shift can challenge. Lastly, a shared outlook for a *common fate* is a crucial vehicle of solidarity and

the stimulus that spurs community members to cooperate to reach social stability. The concurrent presence of these factors results in what King's calls collective cultural identity and defines as "those feelings and values in respect of a sense of community, shared memories and a sense of common destiny of a given unity of population which has had common experiences and cultural attributes"⁴⁹. The absence of historic identity in global culture renders it memory-less and untied from any process of identity forging. The problem with historic identity is that it is essential for the development of a community. It would be misleading, King argues, to believe once again that a global culture could arise by following a structured economic path. Economic determinism must leave room to the belief on a common historical experience and fate, in which shared memories and images can provide the community members with the same sense of belonging. In addition to the historical component, another factor that obstacles the creation of a global community is the resilient tie that links people to place. This is an heritage of the pre-modern era and, at the same time, the confirmation that, everything considered, the state still preserves part of its original task of cultural container. If on the one hand, the progressive weakening of the state is undisputed, on the other, recent rediscoveries and claims for the importance of communities' ethno-history

⁴⁹ Towards a Global Culture?, cit., p. 280.

witness that the nation-state will never be an anonymous box: a vast repertoire of symbols, memories, knowledge and myths vehicles and guarantees its content. The possibility of creating a global community has been subject to intense dispute. Supporters of the global community believe in four basic characteristics:⁵⁰ its members are supposed to share a common cultural identity based on the awareness of belonging to different cultures, traditions and languages; to share common aims and future projects; to share the perception of being protected and represented by the same institutional framework and, lastly, to share similar rights and duties. Scholars, who adopt a sceptic perspective, have direct their attention to the four points and have elaborated a critic for each of them. I will report sceptic's debate because of its pertinence with this dissertation and because it inspired further reflections on the theme. The sceptics stress how the attempt to create a political and social context, even for communities that were gathered within old-establishes borders of pre-modern state, required hard work. The contradictions and fractures that erodes the unity of old ethic-communities would prove amplified in the global society, where the state could not execute its ordering task. The fact that present images and representations are affected by the most

⁵⁰ Held David; McGrew Anthony. The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction, in Held David and McGrew Anthony, (2003), *The Global Transformation Reader*, Polity Press, pp 1-50: 33.

disparate means of communication and information entails a continuous revision of identity that further complicates the shaping of a clear and unified identity. The point here is that the pluralism globalization brings about contradicts the very existence of a single community with a shared pattern of symbols, images, sense of belonging as well as social and political purposes. If it is difficult on a local, national level because of the contradictions that crosses different genders, generations and ethnic groupings; the same difficulty would become insuperable when inserted in the global arena.

Table 4. The great gobalization debate: in sum⁵¹

	Sceptics	Globalists
1	Concepts	Internationalization not globalization Regionalization
2	Power	One world, shaped by highly extensive, intensive and rapid flows, movements and networks across regions and continents Erosion of state sovereignty, autonomy, legitimacy Decline of the nation-state Rise of multilateralism
3	Culture	The nation-state rules Intergovernmentalism Emergence of global popular culture Erosion of fixed political identity Hybridization
4	Economy	Development of regional blocks Triadization New imperialism Global informational capitalism The transnational economy A new global division of labour

⁵¹ The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction, cit., p. 38.

5	Inequality	Growing North-South divide Irreconcilable conflict of interest	Growing inequality within and across societies Erosion of old hierarchies
6	Order	International society of states Political conflict between states inevitably persists International governance and geopolitics Primacy of the ethically bounded society	Multilayered global governance Global civil society Global polity Cosmopolitan orientation

3.6.3 The Renaissance of Local Identities

The renewed strength of local identities is of paramount interest for the purposes of the present research. The resurgence of ethnic identities in the face of globalization is here interpreted as the consequence of the erosion of fixed political identities. Even when adopting a globalist perspective with reference to a certain degree of erosion in the state sovereignty and power, the final conclusion backs the idea of a recent strengthening of local and ethnic identities. The local sense of belonging, far from being annihilated by the hurricane of globalization, feeds off the globalization challenges and sees a regenerating momentum that entails the recovery of historic roots – shared symbols, images, values, traditions. Ethnic groupings are more and more using this repertoire of representations to transform pluralism into enrichment, rather than into a menacing phenomenon. The enriching potentiality lies in the awareness that, paradoxically, with globalization marginality has acquired

power. Since local communities risk to be swept away from globalization, they are spurred to revisit and fortify their historical background in face of anonymous globalization. Only by recovering their hidden representational tools, they can gain space and emerge from the pastiche of subjects, classes and groupings that cannot find a proper cultural representation, thus remaining submerged by the veil of apparent homogenization. If on the one hand, the nationalist umbilical cord that was emblematic of the complex cultural alliance between individuals and their particular national identities has been eroded, on the other, “a denser, more intense interaction between members of communities who share common cultural characteristics, notably language”, and stimulate the project of “re-emergence of ethnic communities and their nationalisms”⁵² is consolidating. The space and time compression, following the nineteenth century revolution in technologies, has created a sophisticated network that allows the contact among the most disparate communities. In this way the different Other becomes closer and a new awareness arises in individuals: easier access to different and distant cultural patterns instils in the human mind the necessity to face difference and to cope with it competently. The perception of diversity in lifestyles and cultural patterns, not only exposes the individual to the wind of change, but also leads

⁵² Smith A. D. (1990) Towards a Global Culture? In M. Featherstone (ed), *Global Culture; Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, London: Sage, pp. 171-191: 176.

to the affirmation and accentuation of his distinctiveness when facing the pluralism of the global stage.

3.7 Collective Identity and The Sense of 'We-ness'

3.7.1 Moulding Collective Identity

At this point the concept of collective identity must be explained in order to prepare the basis for the following section on New Social Movements. It is precisely through social movements that collective identity is forged. However, before introducing the notion, two other types of identity need to be described: social identity and personal identity. Both of them are strictly entrenched with collective identity, in the sense that they overlap and interact ceaselessly. In David Snow's essay, a conceptual grid for identity investigation is offered. Social identities are identifiable with social roles or broader semantic groups such as ethnic and national categories. Generally speaking, social identities are useful to place others in social space. In this sense they correspond to the social roles of "father", "priest", "teacher", etc. Social identities often interact with personal identities which refer to the self-representations of individuals, comprehending distinctive personal traits. The interaction between social and personal identities stretches to collective identity defined as "a shared sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' anchored in real

or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity”⁵³. This sense of ‘we-ness’ mirrors a reciprocal sense of collective agency, that is, a common action to pursue common aims and interests. As mentioned in the first chapter, identity is not a fixed property, but rather a process that undergoes several changes as consequence of interaction with the different “Other”. At a collective level, collective identity seems to be linked with factors of sociocultural change, socioeconomic and political estrangement, and political crisis. The last decades of the twentieth century are particularly emblematic of identities endangered by socio-cultural, economic, and political instability, which brought about an unprecedented social effervesce. This social turbulence was portraying identity crisis and claims for new identity representations, as well as new forms of social or political representation. In his book *The Power of Identity*, Castells argues that:

Along with the technological revolution, the transformation of capitalism, and the demise of statism, we have experienced in the last quarter of the century, the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment⁵⁴.

⁵³ Snow David. (2001), *Collective Identities and Expressive Forms. CDS Working Papers*, Center for the Study of Democracy, UC Irvine, pp. 1-14: 3.

⁵⁴ *Collective Identities and Expressive Forms*, cit., p. 5.

3.7.2 Identity Work

The above mentioned shifts and changes in identity inhere clear processes of identity formation, expression and modification. These processes are mechanisms of *identity work*. With this concept, scholars refer to all activities individuals carry out to attribute meaning to what they are and what they represent, with reference to similar or different Others. Many resources are deployed in this attempt: the most important are symbolic resources used as borders and distinctive features of one collectivity, emphasizing commonalities or differences in relation to other collectivities. These symbolic resources encompass interpretative frameworks as well as peculiar codes of expression, associated with storytelling, dress, music and so on. Such symbolic tools provide the sense of we-ness with pragmatism and distinctiveness. Within the dynamic development of identity, two processes gain prominence: identity convergence and identity construction. Identity convergence entails the question of lining up collective and personal identity in case of reification, that is, when the individual takes for granted his/her link with collectivity. The alignment requires the individual to stretch his/her personal identity to the collective identity as a way to give meaning and definition to the self. Identity convergence can be conceived as the union of personal identity with collective identity when they are congruent; it encompasses three mechanisms: the first

deals with movements and organizations making use of solidarity networks to reach their aims. The second encompasses the situations in which the individuals assume collective identity because the actions of others suggest the necessity of adopting it; these situations are called tipping points. The third mechanism facilitating identity convergence is the most interesting for the present analysis since it considers collective identities when linked to social movements. It conceives this union as a proper way to express individuals' personal identities. Here, collective identity functions both as an anchor and as a life preserver for personal identity; this means that, while assuring its basic existence, collective identity furnishes to personal identity the basic framework from which it can emerge. Two assumptions issue from the third process: firstly, there is an original correspondence between a number of personal identities and possible collective identities and, secondly, collective identities result from the convergence of parallel personal identities. When this convergence is not available, the second process, that of identity construction, is set in motion by following four different directions: identity amplification, identity consolidation, identity extension, identity transformation. Identity amplification brings about a change in the individual's salience hierarchy, meaning that a lower-order identity becomes more functional to the commitment to collective action. Identity consolidation refers to individuals assuming an identity that is the fusion of two apparently irreconcilable

identities. Identity expansion entails the personal identity stretching until reaching a congruence with collective identity. Lastly, identity transformation provides a venue for a deep change in identity, which sees individuals feeling profoundly different. These mechanisms are emblematic of identity when undergoing moments of emergence and sinking, acceptance and refusal, shaping and reshaping.

3.8 Social Movements and Tradition to Counterbalance Globalization

3.8.1 New Social Movements Celebrating Identity

For present purposes, the analysis of new social movements is crucial. These movements are expression of organized collective action and mouthpiece of the consolidating collective nature of the protests that arose in the wake of the 1960s. After 1968, traditional social movements stretched to the international arena, linking adherents from different countries thanks to the important innovations in communication and patterns of migration. Their main concern was not narrowly economical, but gave prominence to ethnical and identity issues, and their attempt was that of changing the socio-cultural, political and economic context from which they had emerged, by operating outside the traditional institutional channels. Their fortune derives from the consolidating framework of transnational networks, which contributed to make

them direct actors of change in the contexts of struggle. The relative loss of power the nation-state was undergoing provided a venue for the creation of transnational forms of collective agency, challenging in this way the possibility of an homogenized, overarching identity that the globalization process menaced to bring about, while, on the contrary, accentuating struggles about local patterns of culture. Nation-states functioned at the same time both as guarantor for some identities and as frame for local struggle. Despite their international reach, a lowest common denominator underpins new social movements: they “sought to uncover hidden histories of their political ancestors in order to fortify their legitimacy and forge new collective identities”⁵⁵. The analysis of social movements usually proceeds by examining their origins, wave and circles, thus neglecting the participants or activities of the inter-waves phases. Political process theorists, on the other hand, direct their attention to the sharp differences existing between the framework of contention arising after the consolidation of the nation-state and the collective action of the mid nineteenth century. With the fortification of the nation-states, we assist to the consequent widespread of concepts such as nation, citizenship, and mainly, collective identity, that is, the creation of a frame of meaning that aimed to legitimize power within defined territorial borders.

⁵⁵ Edelman, Marc. Social Movements: Changing Paradigms and Forms of Politics. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Volume 30, (2001), pp. 285-317: 294.

3.8.2 When Tradition Meets Modernity

Tradition is the result of the diffusion and consolidation of symbols, images and rituals that are pillars of collective identity. Tradition, Edward Shils holds, “can be understood as a set of beliefs and practices that are passed from one generation to the next and which affect the practice and interpretation of life”⁵⁶. Tradition can operate as counterbalance to globalization because, while globalization obliterates and erodes the importance of time and space in the formation of communities, tradition feeds off the anchoring to the past and the development along the generational line - that is, it values time and history through transmission. Now, when people become aware of their rituals, these practices turn into important identity handhold, which modernity cannot transcend. New social movements pivot identity pillar with connection to the most disparate social themes: from environment to gender, and class discrimination. Despite the vast repertoire of social movements, sociology specifies that not all of them can be labelled as ‘new’. The main features outlining their shape are connected to the fact that, opposite to other social movements, they do not pay particular attention to the social status of their participants - namely, they are accessible to young, old, rich, poor, educated,

⁵⁶ Cited in Ron, Eyerman. Moving Culture, in Featherstone Mike; Lash Scott. (2009), *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 116-137: 118.

non-educated, homosexual, heterosexual people. The lack of demarcation about structural roles allows a certain degree of heterogeneity and, at the same time, impedes a unitary perspective on the theme at stake. For this reason, new social movements gather different ideas, images and values, while transcending the traditional distinctions between conservative and liberal, capitalist or socialist, left or right. Their patterns of protest are usually quite pragmatic and nonviolent, make use of civil disobedience, and aim to assure wider access to the processes of decision making. They entail institutional reforms for a more democratic system that could result in the development of the civil dimension of society. In the framework of new social movements, identity acquires paramount importance since it endows social actors with the tools for constructing meaning on the basis of common cultural features. Not least, the astonishing proliferation of these movements originates from the credibility crisis that is affecting the democratic system of many countries and that instils in the protesters the will to challenge traditional channels for participation by creating alternative forms of decision-making. On the other hand, the fact that these social movements, in whatever stage of their development, oscillate between displaying their distinctiveness from the majority group and losing their political power, should occasion no surprise. Most of the time, the only occasion they have to challenge the state of affairs is to join what Falk in 1993 defined as *globalization-from-below* and described as

the union of “transnational social forces animated by environmental concern, human rights, hostility to patriarchy, and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking to end poverty, oppression, humiliation, and collective violence”⁵⁷. The support of transnational networks is functional to underpin social claims about new, or formerly weak, aspects of identity that go beyond the economic demand of the working class movement to embrace cultural and symbolic dimensions of identity. Opposite to the working class movement of the industrial era, new social movements focus on issues related to the quality of life. With reference to Western countries, scholars have explained this shift in focus as the consequence of the achievement of a certain degree of political and economic security in modern age. With the fortification of the nation-state in the modern age, the basic needs of sustenance and survival were met and assured, and consequently, people could direct their attention to the satisfaction of higher needs.

3.9 Discarding Homogenization Hypothesis

Once upon a time, before the era of globalization, there existed local, autonomous, distinct and well defined, robust and culturally sustaining connections between geographical place and cultural experience. These connections constituted one’s –

⁵⁷ Cited in Edelman, Marc. Social Movements: Changing Paradigms and Forms of Politics. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Volume 30, (2001), pp. 285-317: 304.

and one's community's – 'cultural identity'. This identity was something people simply 'had' as an undisturbed existential possession, an inheritance, a benefit of traditional long dwelling, of continuity with the past. Identity, then, like language, was not just a description of cultural belonging; it was a sort of collective treasure of local communities⁵⁸.

The variegated picture of local communities has faced the destabilizing effects of globalization, a phenomenon that has shaken the original foundations of their collective identity representations, has questioned and gathered them under the umbrella of a market driven homogenization. The point here is to understand if homogenization, while starting from the economic level has progressively could stretch to the cultural realm. The recent wave of globalization and its homogenization potential menace to swamp national cultures with a new form of global mass culture characterized by the modern systems of cultural production, which exploit the power of image to transcend linguistic barriers and hit the target with unprecedented immediacy and efficacy. The use of mass communication and mass advertising is pivotal to this attempt and entails the skilful use of visual arts and subtle non-verbal communication. Powerful modern media are crucial since "the media are powerful agents for informing and spreading cultural values, but they can also

⁵⁸ Tomlinson, John. *Globalization and Cultural Identity*, cit., p. 269.

be used for the less edifying purpose of exercising a 'panoptic power', by working persuasively on people's identity, emotions and imaginations.

This can happen when the media relate particular images to social facts, in the way they construct and prioritise or arrange notions of 'what is true' and 'what is real'. To know the extent to which such effects of the action of the media overtake individual identity, or 'colonise' identity, continues to be a question to which there is no clear answer⁵⁹.

As Stuart Hall in his essay⁶⁰ points out, the main feature of, and problem with, global mass culture - whether we assumed it would exist - is that it appears to be centred in the West and resulting from Western luggage of economic, political and cultural history. It is precisely this characteristic that endows globalization with a homogenization force that could absorb the specificities that inhere national cultures under the overarching repertoire of Western means of production, socio-spatial power relations, and identity representations. However, the differences underpinning ethnicity cannot conserve their particular meanings when undergoing a process of juxtaposition,

⁵⁹ Viegas, José Manuel Leite, Da Costa Firmino António (eds.). (2000), *Crossroads to Modernity*. Contemporary Portuguese Society, Celta Editora Lda., Portugal, Page 77.

⁶⁰ Stuart, Hall. The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity, in King Anthony D. *Culture, Globalization and The World-System*. Department of Art and History, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1991, pp. 19-39.

because identity is constantly shaped and reshaped when an alteration in the social power equilibrium occurs. The interconnectedness between culture and economic, political spheres has now become so sharp that it is not possible to analyse globalization by following the exclusive capital logic.

3.9.1 Towards a Fluid Interpretation of Reality

Recent studies on globalization challenge the idea that the interest for globalization is part of the Western project of modernity. This mainly because, as explained above, it affects Western countries, as well as emergent countries, and enhances cultural identity in the sense of shaking certainties about knowledge of one's own community, society, ethnic group, religion and individual self. It is beyond doubt that the nation-state has been the pre-eminent and almost naturalized scale for the articulation and development of both subnational and supranational movements and processes. The loss in power it has been facing since the 'crisis of Fordism' cannot be overlooked because of its implications, not only for the national state, but also for the entire interstate and supranational system. The regulation scales which had been created during Fordism saw the nation-state as the pivotal unit of contestation, social struggle and negotiation of power equilibrium. If on the one hand, the regulation of some socioeconomic aspects, such as state intervention, wages, social policy and so on, occurred on the higher level of interstate networks, on the other, it resulted in local and regional uneven

development. With the crises of Fordism, a deep change in the territorial scales of regulatory rules occurred, implying the emergence of new actors and the disempowerment of others. With respect to the crisis of 1973 – 1975, Harvey wrote: “The image of strong governments administering powerful doses of unpalatable medicine to restore the health ofailing economies became widespread”⁶¹. The arising pattern was that of *glocalization*, conceived as a change in scale of the institutional structure that could stretch both upwards to supranational or global scale, and downwards to local or regional level. This restructuring affected not only the institutional network, but also the scale of economy, which allowed local and regional companies to cooperate at an urban level, while becoming more and more embedded in the global competitive stage. Their participation in the global arena entailed both advantages and challenges, since regional configurations needed to cooperate at a local level in order to maintain competitive advantage at the global one. The new rhetoric repertoire on globalization was exploited by local elites to promote high productivity, low wages and a weakening state control on the local economy. The intervention of the state started to present a twofold articulation: downwards, at the level of the urban configurations, cities and

⁶¹ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, p.168.

regions, and upwards, until reaching the institutional giants of which European Union, GATT, NAFTA are some examples. This rescaling process concerned state intervention, capital-labour relations and the pattern of governance as well. The relation between capital and labour force saw a jump in scale regulation, passing from the collective norms of the national scale to the local compromises, which were the result of private negotiations between employers and labour force. The change in the governance system is the most interesting and challenging for the present analysis since it puts at stake the traditional forms of democratic representation. The new pattern of governance involves both the supranational scale and the local level, and seems to clear the way for rather undemocratic and arbitrary systems of representation, which could lead to poor participation in the social and political decisions – while, at the same time, promoting the autocracy of quasi-state actors that sacrifice the local bargain in favour of global competitive advantage. The consequence of this political and social exclusion from the decision making process has widespread new forms of governance that embrace different relationships between power and citizenship.

How does this “jump in scale” affect local communities? The overwhelming impact of globalization has woken up individual and collective conscience, forcing the local to develop an awareness of its roots before starting to defend them. This means that, under the impact of globalization and

under the time-space compression, the basic structures of the world – the state and the interstate system - are affected by internal and external limits that multiculturalism implies. A sort of cultural protectionism is now emerging as opposition to homogeneity and as a way to save national cultures from the influences of the global scene. Simon Harrison justifies the growing heterogeneity and local distinctiveness by holding that:

There is much empirical evidence that people's awareness of being involved in open-ended global flows seems to trigger a search for fixed orientation points and action frames, as well as determined efforts to affirm old and construct new boundaries... It looks as if, in a world characterized by flows, a great deal of energy is devoted to controlling and freezing them: grasping the flux often entails a politics of 'fixing' – a politics which is, above all, operative in struggles about the construction of identities⁶².

The attempt to defend national identities helps maintaining specificities and avoiding the uniformity of modern societies. As John Gray argues in his essay, "the late modern world is not treading to a road that leads inevitably to a universal civilization. Instead, as ever more countries enter into late modernity, enduring differences between cultures are acquiring a greater practical

⁶² Meyer, B. & Geschiere, P. (eds). 1999. *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*. Cited in Harrison Simon, *Cultural Boundaries*. *Anthropology Today*, Volume 15, No. 5, October 1999, pp 10-13: 10.

importance”⁶³. The paradox of globalization emerges in the fact that, despite communities are becoming boundless, they need a precise definition of themselves in order to claim their distinctiveness and fight to preserve it. In the preservation of their particular ethnic boundaries – conceived as the distinctions between the members of a group and those of other groups, and resulting in ethnic groupings – communities face major obstacles, reported in Harrison’s analysis under the name of *identity pollution* and *identity appropriation*. The concept of identity pollution emerged from Handler’s study about the nationalist movement in Quebec, in Canada. Nationalism in Quebec arose as consequence of Quebec community’s perception of being threatened by external powerful menaces. These external forces, identified with American influence on local culture, became an economic, political and economic danger for the traditions of local people which derived their distinctiveness from rural life and French language. In order to defend the “purity” of their culture from the polluting different Other, Quebec nationalists felt obliged to strengthen their images of the nation, in opposition to the new repertoire of images the American invader tried to diffuse. This process brought to a struggle for survival, common to many communities which feel the need to mobilize people to avoid the risk of extinction. The second concept of cultural appropriation

⁶³ Gray, John. *Global Utopias and Clashing Civilizations: Misunderstanding the Present*, cit., p. 150.

concerns the different ways in which outsiders can make use of local images, customs and traditions. The most common practical example is the exploitation of indigenous knowledge, which has a particular charm for outsiders. Harrison reports Brown's case study about the exploitation of Native Americans' culture for advertising purposes. In particular, 'New Age' spirituality seems especially attractive. The following passage is emblematic of the local reaction to external contamination:

[N]ative religious leaders express horror at the monstrous cloning of their visions of the sacred. For them, the New Age is a kind of doppelgänger, an evil imitation close to the real thing to upset the delicate balance of spiritual power maintained by Indian ritual specialists⁶⁴.

The problem indigenous cultures are facing in the present wave of globalization is that of failing to claim for the exclusive control of their culture. As a matter of fact, the same growing fluidity of the concept of culture impedes to bind culture to a precise territorial grid. No settled categorization is possible, and therefore, no cultural appropriation can be justified. Both possibilities, that of identity pollution and of identity appropriation, lie on a sharp distinction between insiders and outsiders, the first conceived as the legitimated owner of

⁶⁴ Brown, M. F. 1998. Can Culture Be Copyrighted?, *Current Anthropology*, Volume 39, No. 2, pp. 193-222. Cited in Harrison Simon, *Cultural Boundaries*. *Anthropology Today*, Volume 15, No. 5, October 1999, pp 10-13: 11.

local culture, the second perceived as contaminating intruders. The result is a ceaseless shaping and reshaping of collective identity in order to defend the uniqueness of local cultures from the contaminating and annihilating impact of homogenization.

Chapter 4. The Deterritorialization of Identity

«[Globalization] undermines the territoriality of individuals, resources, references, requiring them to circulate in systems of “distance relations” which give “translocal” institutional form to things, which are contiguous in space and time. In this way modernity brings to fruition a plan for universal self-fulfilment, as a result of the experience of “decontextualisation”, with its demands for relativism, openness to the world, and emancipation from local autarchy⁶⁵».

Josè Manuel Leite; Da Costa, Firmino António, *Crossroads to Modernity*

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter globalization was presented at the same time as a challenge for nation-state solidity and an instigator of hybridization, that is, “the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices”⁶⁶. The weakening of national states has not only given a chance to those local communities who wanted to defend their traditions and historical memories, but has also favoured *glocalization*, namely, the cooperation of the local with the global. The following section about diasporas serves as a proof of how minorities can

⁶⁵ Cited in Viegas, Josè Manuel Leite; Da Costa, Firmino António (eds.). (2000), *Crossroads to Modernity*. Contemporary Portuguese Society, Celta Editora Lda., Portugal, p. 78.

⁶⁶ Cited in Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. Globalization as Hybridation in Featherstone Mike, Lash Scott, Robertson Roland (1995) *Global Modernities*. Sage Publications Ltd, p. 49.

appeal to transnational networks to sustain and defend their identity. If it is true that transnational networks facilitate the contacts between diasporas and their homelands, on the other hand, they pose the problem of loyalty: the necessity of combining primitive values and identity with the ones of the host country or, generally speaking, with the ones that globalization is spreading.

4.1.1 The Case of Brazilian Migration to Portugal

With the intent of providing this analysis with practical evidence, particular attention will be paid to the issue of Brazilian migration to Lisbon. Lisbon, as other metropolises in Portugal, offers a variegated presence of different ethnic groups, thus becoming the locus where the global encounters local practices and lifestyles. The idea of investigating the process of adaptation that Brazilians undergo when moving to Lisbon came up from my personal contacts with Brazilian people during the three months I have spent in Portugal this year. As a matter of fact, during the Erasmus Placement Project, I shared a flat with two Brazilian men who introduced me to their Brazilian group of friends. In addition to this, the section helps creating a connecting thread between the initial focus about Brazilian students' identity negotiation in the context of Erasmus experience, and the following analysis about Brazilian migrants' identity negotiation and adaptation in the Portuguese hosting culture. In both case studies, the supervision and help by Professor Paola Baccin, Universidade de São Paulo (USP), has been crucial. Paragraphs 4.2 and

4.3 offer a general panorama on processes of de-territorialization of identity, namely migration and diaspora.

In the present context of increasing mobility, once they land at a new country, migrants have to choose among different cultural options which can fortify the primitive identity or lead to an adaptation of the self to the new context. In any case, the central issue remains that of migrants' identities as individuals, as member of their primitive community, or as components of the host society.

Since today Portuguese population registers almost half a million of legal migrants, the issue of identity is becoming more and more crucial for social integration. As explained in the first chapter, the concept of identity embraces both the representations individuals create about themselves and the representations individuals construct when belonging to a group, thus being subject to negotiation. For this reason, these representations are not fixed but affected by shifts in space and time. Alongside the space variable, the temporal issue is of paramount importance for the self representation of migrants: a first generation migrant will feel a stronger tie to the homeland than a second generation one. The creation of transnational networks is crucial for the first generation migrants because it helps to maintain contacts with the homeland, but, at the same time, it permits to reach a socio-cultural harmony that favours

integration; for this reason, with the generational shift, bonds with the primitive identity seem to loosen.

4.2 Reconceptualising Space

Modernity, with its implications for concepts such as space, time and society, has questioned the possibility of conceiving space as a neutral grid impregnated with cultural difference, historical memory and societal and institutional organization. In this sense, the division of space becomes problematic and brings the isomorphism of place, space and culture up for discussion.

Yet the fact remains that place continues to be important in the lives of many people, perhaps the most, if we understand by place the experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however, unstable), a sense of boundaries (however, permeable), and a connection to everyday life, even if identity is constructed, traversed by power and never fixed⁶⁷.

The issue at stake are people who lead a life of border crossing: migrants, nomads, businessmen who work for transnational companies. In these cases, a sharp distinction between place and culture exists, but the same disjunction inheres multiculturalism within locality. Multiculturalism relies on

⁶⁷ Escobar, Arturo. Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Sulbaltern Strategies of Localization. *Political Geography*, Volume 20, 2001, p. 140.

the assumption that even if cultures have loosened their ties to definite territories, a possibility exists to gather the plurality of cultures under an overarching national identity. The need for an overarching national identity is the immediate consequence of globalization, which drives individuals to extend their selves beyond their primitive, original selves and structures and to expand their knowledge beyond their local niche which functioned as source of meaning and stability. If this expansion provides individuals with the possibility of developing their identity and knowledge through the contact with the different Other, it also brings about a certain degree of uncertainty in individuals. When undergoing the process of adjustment, individuals face the complexities of different cultural worlds: the meaning of the first affects and is affected by the contact with the second cultural world. In this way, the primitive, evolving self cannot adopt the same strategies for managing conflict it used before the cultural contact occurred, and cannot foresee the future developments it will pass through. Here again, the self is conceived as multivoiced and dialogical, abandoning its primitive niche to open to the ambiguities of the different Other. This conception of the self is fundamental for the interplay of local and global dynamics: the self is more and more subject to external inputs and influences; for this reason, it needs a dialogical attitude to cope with change and to recognize the cultural difference of the person with

whom it enters in interacts. Only after this recognition, the strategies for positive contact and reciprocal influence can be set in motion. The awareness and appreciation of cultural differences become of paramount importance in a world where increasing interconnection favours contacts, not only between different cultural groups, but also between different cultures in the same individual. The self transforms into a cultural container where different values, symbols, representations, patterns of perception and behaviours converge. Only a self that manages to solve internal contradictions and ambiguities can face the complexity of the heterogeneous world, where alterity is crucial.

4.3 A New Sense of Belonging: Transnational Networks and Diaspora

4.3.1 Transnational Networks

The people who first built a path between two places performed one of the greatest human achievements. (...) This achievement reaches its zenith in the construction of a bridge. Here the human will to connection seems to be confronted not only by the passive resistance of spatial separation but also by the active resistance of a special configuration. By overcoming this obstacle, the bridge symbolizes the extension of our volitional sphere over space⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ Simmel, Georg. *Bridge and Door*. Frisby David and Featherstone Mike (eds). (1977), Simmel on Culture, Sage Publications, p. 171.

The bridging function of present transnational networks provides individuals with a sense of belonging to their community, despite spatial separation from it. As we will see later, their consolidation as overarching structure for collective identity helps maintaining a bond of solidarity among member of a community. On this view, transnational ties and linkages affect places, people, and politics of membership as well. They are emblematic elements of modernity in the sense that they allow individuals to create communities without spatial proximity. These communities are transnational social spaces which transcend space bond, but their existence requires constant long-distance communication and contacts, politics addressed to minority groups and lack of forced assimilation in the countries of immigration. On Thomas Faist's view, there are two main distinctive factors to consider in the analysis of transnational social spaces. The first refers to the regulation of borders, in the sense of favouring or impeding the entrance and exit of flows of people, and entails specific migration politics, attitudes towards integration policies, and social aspects such as social distance, stereotyping, as well as ethnic, racial and religious orientations. The second one comprehends all the issues related to groups, organizations, and networks within and between nation-states. "Transnational social spaces consist of combination of sustained social and symbolic ties, their contents positions in networks and organizations,

and network of organizations that can be found in multiple states⁶⁹". The relationships among the country of emigration, the civil society of the hosting country and the different transnational apparatuses feed off economic, human and, mainly, social capital. The social capital is essential for its binding solidarity network that is crucial for the initial adaptation of the first-generation migrants and, in a second moment, permits the circulation of economic and human capital. However, only after the creation of an overarching sense of membership and reciprocity, the diffusion of information and goods for the sustainability of transnational social spaces becomes possible. In this sense, transnational networks function as bridges between at least two nation-states. Transnational social spaces are the result of forced migrations of people, caused by war, ethnic rivalries, or by the expansion of the labour and trade market. By considering the density of the ties migrants cultivate, three different types of transnational social spaces can be identified: *transnational kinship groups*, *transnational circuits* and *transnational communities*. Transnational kinship groups emerge after the arrival of the first-generation labour migrants and are based on the pivotal tie of reciprocity – which, at this stage, entails remittances of money to the family members who remained in the country of origin. These relationships are restricted to small territories and

⁶⁹ Faist, Thomas. (2000). *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 199.

to the members of the family. Transnational circuits set in motion frequent circulation of information, people and goods among various states. Lastly, there are transnational communities. To present purposes, the investigation about these societal forms is pivotal for the same importance that the concept of community assumes throughout the paper. In the creation and maintenance of transnational community the tie of solidarity and reciprocity cannot be restricted to the family members or to remittances, as in transnational kinship groups; on the contrary, it needs to stretch in order to permit a strong sense of membership and common fate. The sharing of a common repertoire of symbols, images and self representations contributes to the reinforcement of social cohesion and solidarity ties.

Despite the detachment from space and time ties, transnational social spaces cannot be considered as products of globalization, that is, de-territorialized flows. As a matter of facts, if on the one hand, they are not embedded in the nation-states, on the other, their existence depends on a range of two or few more nation-states, the civil societies of which are deeply intertwined.

4.3.2 Ethno-National Diasporas

Ethno-national diasporas are the result of forced or voluntary migrations of people who resettle while not abandoning their collective representations,

images and traditions. Their distinctive feature is that of being minority groups in the host country and, as consequence, experiencing difficulties with the hosting civil society and state. Major source of trouble is their attempt to conserve and defend their cultural roots, and their willingness to nourish the community they created in the country of origin as well as the one in the host country. After the travel, migrants begin their adjustment process which deals with the necessity of adopting some strategies for the maintenance or assimilation of their ethnic and national identity. Migrant's attitude is not the only variable; most of the times the attitudes and politics of the hosting country towards migration impact migrants' adaptation process. There are countries in which the friction is so permeating that migrants refuse to create any organizational apparatus. Groups of transient migrants emerge when there is no formal organization within the migrants or between the migrants and the homeland, while, in the case of diasporas, organization is needed. The process of adjustment migrants undergo is emblematic of the changing nature of ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the identities of diasporas are commonly more fixed because based on shared common values and sentiments about the homeland. These primordial sentiments are fuelled by older leaders of diasporic organizations, who try to keep vivid among young people the memories of their homeland, thus reinforcing the original ethnic identity. Depending on the various attitudes of migrants, who can opt to nourish their primordial ethnic

identity and create a new community, or integrate and enjoy organizations of the host country, there are different patterns of resettling. The range varies among the assimilationist, the integrationist, the communalist, the corporatist, the autonomist, the separatist and irredentist strategies. Since the present paper supports the idea that integration, and not assimilation, is possible even when the migrant group conserve its primordial cultural and historical background, the integrationist strategy will be presented as the most desirable one. This strategy aims to a certain degree of participation in the social, political and economic activities of the host country. The members of the diasporas try to reach the same formal recognition of their status and rights as the majority but, at the same time, they maintain and nurture their ethnic cultural origins. When long-established diasporas manage to find a balance between their ethnic traits and those of the host country, they start to be considered dormant diasporas. Despite the desirability of the integrationist strategy, the communalist strategy seems to be the most popular. Its success lies in the possibility it offers to create quite a free framework for the defence and nurturing of ethno-national identity, while permitting a progressive engagement –but not full integration - of diasporans with the host society. It is no surprise that the integrationist strategy is a difficult option for the globalized world; the diffusion of wide diasporic networks is not only source of pacific co-

existence, but also, it can lead to tensions and conflicts involving diasporas, homelands and host countries. The main frictions between them arise from the confrontation between different ethnic identities. Most of the times diasporas' loyalties bring diasporic groups to act to defend the interests of the homeland. If usually host societies try to avoid a full-scale confrontation, the possibility of open conflict depends on the degree of tolerance towards diasporas and towards their commitment to their homelands. Precipitating confrontations occur, mainly, in case of terroristic attacks, or when the diaspora has a strong political or economic influence on the host country. The fact that the main disputes between diasporas and hosting countries are not economic, but identity and cultural issues, is a clear proof that an economic focus on the present trend of globalization is not sufficient to analyse the process in its complexities. In addition to this, if economy can be considered the engine of globalization, its consequences cannot be taken for granted: economic and political homogenization, that is, a convergence towards similar political, economic patterns and institutions, does not necessarily result in cultural homogenization.

Despite the diasporic attempt to keep contacts with the homeland is not a phenomenon of modernity – diasporas used to communicate with old means

of communication (pigeons, signal fires, rabbinical responsa⁷⁰) as well - the additional use of telegraph, railroads, telephone, radio, internet has allowed faster contacts among the most geographically disparate groups. In many less developed countries, diasporas helped to introduce these new forms of communication. This efforts mirrors the strong need to maintain identity as well as cultural, political and economic ties with the homeland.

Consequently, the range and quality of diasporas' activities have been increased by the availability, low cost and, most important, the reach and interactivity of this medium, thus increasing their number of audiences, their efficacy, and impact of their media. Those activities now include dissemination of news and cultural artifacts to local communities in host countries, improvements in education in those communities, mobilization and transfer of economic, cultural and political resources to homelands and other diaspora communities, creation of trans-state political resources to homelands and other diaspora communities, creation of trans-state political communities, and communication with local and global NGOs and IGOs. All of those contribute to the emergence of a global civil society, which in turn will strengthen diasporism and specific diasporas⁷¹.

If from this perspective, distance-shrinking communication facilitates the diffusion of similarities among the Western countries and among local

⁷⁰ Jewish diaspora communities exchanged many questions and answers about all aspects of life related to the homeland and the diaspora group.

⁷¹ Sheffer, Gabriel. (2003). *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, Cambridge University Press, p. 182.

minorities and ethno-national diasporas, on the other hand, the risk is that of an erosion of national and ethnic identities, alongside the emptying of membership and citizenship concepts.

A further concern is that 'identity' may cease to be defined by members of such a group themselves within the context of their immediate environment, but rather it will come to be identified in conjunction with new regional and trans-national cultural and ideological trends, or defined by global movements and organizations⁷².

From the viewpoint of this thesis, the impact of globalization on identity does not entail the disappearance of minority and ethnic groups, but quite the contrary: we are assisting to the renaissance of ethnicity, and the recent transformations of the post modern era are main contributors to foster the search for identity, as the only way to provide our individual or collective representations with social meaning.

When established relationships between individuals and settings break down, individuals experience a sense of loss, meaning a sense of loss of place and of self as well. The reason for this lies in the fact that place identity strictly links the person with the environment, the last becoming deeply rooted in the self construction. With the present processes of de-territorialisation of identity,

⁷² Ivi, p.182.

language appears to be the strongest vehicle to anchor the self to ever-changing settings. Thus because through language people can create ties to new places, with important implication for “who they are” and “who they think to be”. In this sense, the dialogical self is set in motion and the self construction is revisited as a negotiation in face of alterity. The recognition and appreciation of alterity is a skill that outlines the competent intercultural communicator, a person who exchanges information with the surrounding environment and simultaneously develops alongside the changing environment. Plasticity is the term that Kim Young Yun (2008) uses to refer to the ability to change when facing new experiences; it is the pillar of identity construction and negotiation. Successful identity negotiation results in acculturation, that is, the acquisition of new cultural practices, language included, and the redefinition of the self accordingly to the host culture. The problem arising with this redefinition is that, since the original components of the primitive identity are not substituted with the new ones but juxtaposed, the self suffers a resistance to change which brings about a certain degree of stress. As a matter of fact, the individual, on the one hand, tends towards old customs and primitive identity, on the other, he needs to integrate with the new environment to restore psychological harmony. Culture shock emerges as a failed attempt to reach a new equilibrium. The internal conflict cannot be everlasting, for this reason the individual will learn

how to cope with new cultural element. Once this phase is achieved, adaptation manifests as “the entirety of the phenomenon of individuals who, through direct and indirect contacts with an unfamiliar environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment⁷³”.

4.4 Identity and Migration: The Case of Portuguese National Identity

4.4.1 Portugal and Modernity

Globalization and the increasing power of political and economic transnational apparatuses deeply affect not only internal politics of the national states, but also their grid of action in the international arena. If, on the one hand, the nation-state is more and more engaged in regional and transnational forms of cooperation and competition, on the other, a stronger national consciousness is arising, as a reaction to economic, political, and social de-territorialisation. Deflecting the attention from the debate about whether a strong or weak state is the most desirable for present times, the crucial point appears to be the relationship between civil society and political system.

⁷³Kim, Young Yun. Intercultural Personhood: Globalization and a Way of Being. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 32, Issue 4, July 2008, pp. 359-368: 363.

To what extent are citizens able to influence the political system through their consensus or engagement in social and political struggle? Influence means citizens' power to exercise their right of choice and control political and institutional decisions. Only where this freedom is assured, new representations can emerge and consolidate. The political system is the means by which citizens have access to collective political decisions; in democratic contexts this participation must be guaranteed without distinctions between those people who are more influential or well being and those who lack social prestige. Now, this political system is supposed to work independently from the social system from which it draws legitimacy. As a matter of fact, the sharp social differentiation post-modern societies are affected by requires a new regulation of social relations. Social segmentation is the result of modernizing forces which impact the social division of labour, processes of urbanization and industrialization, as well as alphabetization and patterns of migration. Social diversification results in institutional complexity, since new social actors and dynamics need to find proper representation. In this context, the concept of citizenship is a nodal issue because it relates to the idea that members of a community have the right to participate in the exercise of its power. The double dare of the state is that of resulting from social differentiation and give structure to it, by regulation of social conflict. By relying on a solid political

system, the state can, not only assure social order, but also activate that mobilization of resources that is essential for reaching the collective aims of a society. Where this function is put into practice, the state shifts from being “a political structure made up of power mechanisms as a rational political actor, with its own skills and competencies in making public choices and in selective decision-making”⁷⁴, to being the place for confrontation and regulation of social forces. In order to execute this role, the state cannot transcend a certain degree of legitimacy and justification of its rules and procedures. In opposition to what is now occurring in European countries, transparency about rules and procedures is decisive for reaching citizens’ consensus and is the pillar of democratic representational systems. For this reason, the present crisis of credibility that is affecting many European countries nowadays should occasion no surprise.

In this context, the renewed strength of national identity manifests through a rediscovery of the cultural patrimony of a nation, namely language, literature, arts, traditions. The sense of belonging to a community and the essence of what being Italian, Portuguese, English, German, Brazilian means, is subject to closer examination. Modernity is one of the major contributors to this process, but, at the same time, it requires a further level of analysis: in the

⁷⁴ Viegas, José Manuel Leite; Da Costa, Firmino António. *Crossroads to Modernity*, cit., p.215.

present shrinking world, how is it possible to preserve the primitive sense of belonging while entering in contact with other cultures? As explained above, identity ceaselessly undergoes processes of negotiation and reshaping; for this reason, being a Portuguese in Portugal is not the same as being a Portuguese in Brazil, and being a Brazilian in Portugal is not the same as being a Brazilian in Brazil.

The example is not accidental, it anticipates the following focus on how Portuguese identity is transformed by the presence of different ethnic groups, especially the Brazilian one. Under the impact of modernity, Portugal has become a country in which many societies, described by José Manuel Leite Viegas and António Firmino da Costa as societies “which have undergone a number of transitions, some inherited, some the product of actual change, some representing a link with the past, some a break with the past and some an upheaval in relation to the past, whether rural or urban, universal or local”⁷⁵. The modernizing forces under which Portuguese society has been transformed refer, mainly, to the revolution of 1974 and to Portugal’s entrance into the European Community in 1986. Those are the starting points of a deep transfiguration that brought Portugal to become a modern society, whose

⁷⁵ *Crossroads to Modernity*, cit., p. 72.

pattern of consumption, relations with Church, fertility rates, education system and frontiers underwent a huge change. Important transformations concerned everyday life as well; new forms of expression started to be accepted and appreciated. With Portugal's entrance into the European Community, the frictions between the differences emerging from national, regional and local identities and the homogenization trend - required by European identity - have exacerbated. In this context, the above mentioned transnational networks grow in importance, since they give to local identity the chance to express through the increasing presence of artistic projects oriented to regional partnerships, co-production.

At the same time, phenomena as de-territorialisation and delocalization, with concurrent processes of internationalization of economic activities, are destabilizing factors which threaten the equilibrium of local communities. The interconnectedness of the globalized world implies a loss in power for places and locales, which are forced to operate within a structured net of relations and resources. However, with specific reference to cultural patterns, local identity seems to draw new strength from the fast and massive circulation of ideas, values and images by adapting them to its context and transforming them into enriching elements. This re-contextualization is to be understood as the moment in which tradition encounters modernity; it is the chance identity

has to evolve and gather pluralism under the overarching bridge of cultural uniqueness.

4.4.2 Portuguese City: Barriers and Chances for Identity

The city in Portugal is the arena for pluralism. With its variegated functions and services, it becomes the heart of production and consumption, of work and leisure. The city offers different scenarios: the self-fulfilment and personal success of businessmen as well as the self-degradation and exclusion of poor people. This contradictory coexistence of different lives, identities and cultures is the result of modernity too. Anomie - a concept that refers to the personal instability of an individual who experiences a breakdown of values and ideals - is the emblematic result of modernity. Under the veil of superficiality that brings people to pay excessive attention to body care, to leisure and frivolity, identity reveals its deep sense of loss and inadequacy. The great success of contemporary social movements results precisely from this uncertainty and confusion. Despite embracing the most disparate identity claims (sexual, generational, ethnic, environmental issues), new social movements try to orient and provide people with the necessary tools for proper contestation and democratic representation.

Even if the impact of globalization on local communities has been subject to intense dispute, it would be unfair to ignore that in the Portuguese case,

plural contexts – namely the city and the European Union – were a good chance to overcome the insularity and marginalization of Portuguese culture. From the economic point of view, the access to the European Economic Community in 1986 meant for Portugal the availability of structural funds, which are of paramount importance for a backward economy. Membership of the EU gave to Portugal the chance to invest in public infrastructure, thus improving the educational and sanitary systems. However, the structural weakness of the country impeded a proper use of those funds and brought many traditional companies to be exposed to massive external competition, thus assisting to a sharp decline of their production. Portuguese private sector was not immune from this stagnation, being the electrical component and automobile assembly sectors the only source of investment in the first half of the nineties. Despite the competitiveness of the main sectors of Portuguese society is based on low wages and low quality employment, some companies are addressing to the international market, facilitating in this way the exit from an insular economy and stimulating a revision of the traditional labour force. The changing trends of the labour force derive from new patterns of migration, which, if on the one hand engender difficulties between the culture of the host society and that of the migrant community, on the other, foster contact among different ethnic groups. Multicultural encounter activates the absorption of various images, lifestyles and values from well beyond the most immediate

community. This absorption implies a re-contextualization of the personal system of belief, and the adaptation of new cultural elements to the primitive identity. The process results in an extension of identity beyond ethnic, religious, social and political borders.

4.4.3 The Local and Global Dimensions of Portuguese Culture

Diversity is a crucial feature of Portuguese society, and its impact on identity construction is remarkable. In Portugal, diversity concerns cities, metropolitan centres, as well as local cultures. It entails generational difference, differing institutional networks, a re-mapping of identities. Here again, a two levels analysis will be presented: the local and the global dimensions of the lusophone community in Portugal are of paramount importance for a practical analysis of how multiculturalism affects societies. Social segmentation is becoming more and more complex in Portugal, especially in the suburbs, where it resembles “institutional containers of poverty”⁷⁶. There, the lives of various ethnic groups intertwine with different social positions and identity systems. If the Portuguese city is commonly considered the arena for multiplicity and pluralism, the countryside is the point of convergence of local and popular culture; the last:

⁷⁶Ivi, p. 85.

Reaches the people through consumer goods and the imaginary realms of mass culture (which of course tend to lead to stereotyping of popular culture), and a 'middle-of-the-road culture' promoted by local councils and associations, a kind of 'small-scale highbrow culture', together with the recovery of heritage or folklore traditions [..]⁷⁷.

Two main features characterize popular cultures: specificity and autonomy. Specificity, José Manuel Leite Viegas and António Firmino da Costa hold, refers to the possession of a dense web of expressions that functions as a connecting thread for identity and customs. Among Portuguese customs, the most traditional one is the fado⁷⁸, which, despite its urban success, hails from the small streets of Alfama, one of the most characteristic quarters of Lisbon. Fado holds the spirit of Portuguese people, even if in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, after the exposure to Afro-Brazilian influences, it was interested by a process of acculturation. Beside specificity, autonomy gathers the tools for perceiving, interpreting and understanding reality. Autonomy of popular culture resides in the particular framework of images, values and aesthetic sensitivities which outline cultural patterns. Increasing degrees of ethnicity and pluralism are clearing the way for a re-mapping of identities - especially in those areas in which a new process of identification with, or

⁷⁷ Ivi, p. 86.

⁷⁸ Fado is a typical Portuguese musical style, played with Portuguese or classical guitars. Fado songs deal with nostalgia, love, political and social critic.

distance from the Other or the Others is taking place. An intriguing question is to ask what the concept of “Other” refers to. In the specific case of Portuguese society, alterity or identification is forged not only with reference to different ethnic groups, but also to different contexts, territories and symbols. As far as territories are concerned, please note that despite the current erosion of borderlines, Portuguese people’s attachment to particular places is still vivid and remarkably present; many places, such as the mountains, the sea, the city, the island, are still considered contexts for belonging which fortify Portuguese identity in the face of increasing trends of delocalization and deterritorialization. Patterns of external and internal migration contribute to a re-mapping of identities – namely, destabilize existing sense of belonging by weakening or fortifying individual’s original identity.

4.4.4 Ethnicity in Portugal: From Neglect to Recognition

As Fernando Luis Machado points out in his essay, “falar de etnicidade è, genericamente, falar da relevância que a pertença a determinados grupos étnicos pode adquirir no plano das desigualdades sociais, das identidades culturais e das formas de acção colectiva”⁷⁹. Two important changes shed light

⁷⁹ Machado, Fernando Luís, *Etnicidade em Portugal. Contrastes e Politização. Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas*, Volume 12, 1992, pp. 123-136: 123. [“Talking about ethnicity is, generally speaking, talking about the relevance that the membership of precise ethnic groups can acquire, with reference to social inequalities, to cultural identities and to forms of collective action”].

on how ethnicity reshaped Portuguese society: the revolution of 25 April 1974 and the accession of Portugal to the European Economic Community.

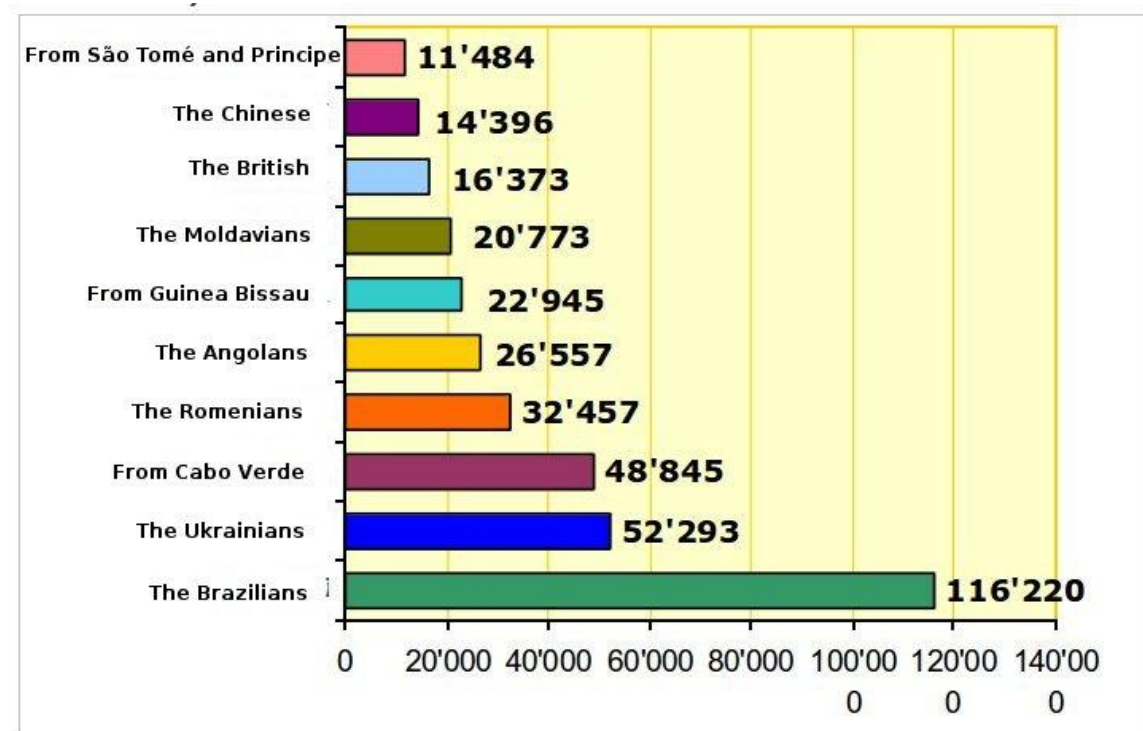
In the aftermath of 25 April 1974, the population of Portugal increased remarkably, the major causes being the homecoming of many Portuguese people who left the ex colonies, and the growing migratory flows. This deep change in migration patterns – in the precedent phase Portugal had been considered a country of emigration – provided a venue for the reconsideration of ethnicity and its implications for Portuguese society. As a matter of fact, during the process of decolonization, half a million of Portuguese people returned to their homeland. The astonishing figure is that, between 1960 and 1981, immigrants' presence in the country increased by 313%. Anyway, this was not the only consequence of decolonization: it should occasion no surprise that many African migrants reached Portugal in the same period - in 1960 they amounted to 42% of the total number of immigrants in Portugal. African migrants came from Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea- Bissau, São Tomé and Mozambique⁸⁰.

The other crucial event that influenced immigration trends was the access of Portugal to the European Economic Community on 12 July 1986.

⁸⁰ African community in Portugal is made up of people coming from PALOP, Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa.

Portugal registered a sharp growth of immigrants, especially thanks to the Schengen Agreements, which favoured mobility by creating a common area among the ten members of the Community. This area is provided with external borders for entering or exiting, but no internal borders, thus facilitating the exchange of goods, information and people.

Besides the migration from the ex colonies, a great flow of migrants from the East of Europe reached Portugal after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. The difference with previous patterns of migration is that, from the nineties, new migration flows did not relate to cultural links between Portugal and its ex colonies, but rather to the request of low-wage labour, free circulation within the European Union and globalization, a process that fosters the creation of transnational networks for migration even among geographically and culturally different countries. For this reason, while the percentage of people from PALOP dropped sharply, migration from eastern countries of Europe became strategic. The multicultural essence of Portuguese society lingers on the coexistence of the most disparate communities, whose presence is reported in the following chart.

Table 1. Ethnic composition of Portuguese society⁸¹

Despite the complex ethnical composition, and the strong distinctiveness that each community defends, no major problems have been registered in the interaction with the hosting culture. As Fernando Luis Machado underlines, in this context, we cannot speak of “*etnicidade forte*”, defined as “*convergência, nuna o mais minorias, de múltiplas dimensões de contraste cultural e social com a sociedade receptora*”⁸². Since none of the listed groups shows the concurrent presence of problems resulting from different social conditions, demographic concentrations, languages, religions and lifestyles, the issue of

⁸¹ Source, <http://www.cserpe.org/>

⁸² *Etnicidade em Portugal. Contrastes e Politização*, cit., p. 128. [“Strong ethnicity”, defined as, “the convergence, in one or more minority groups, of multiple dimensions of cultural and social contrast with the hosting society”].

ethnicity is relatively less disputed in Portugal than in other European countries. Some intrinsic characteristics of these minority groups and some structural features of Portuguese society are major contributors to the pacific coexistence of the above mentioned ethnic groups. The relative tolerance towards minorities in Portugal can be explained, Machado holds, by the fact that minorities do not live in condition of social degradation; on the contrary, a considerable part of Portuguese society shares the same living conditions of these ethnic groups. Quite interestingly, the sharper distinctions and demarcations originate from the confrontation with minorities that hold a privileged position in Portuguese society. The geographical distribution of ethnic groups proves the relaxed relationship between hosting and hosted cultures. As a matter of fact, no sharp ethnic seclusion has been registered, neither in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon or Oporto, where a massive presence of minority groups has been recorded. Even where an outstanding part of the minority community lives in degraded residential quarters, these districts are interested by a remarkable presence of Portuguese people: in some cases they are migrants who moved from the countryside to the city but didn't manage to integrate in the new social environment. This sharing of residential areas, Machado holds, impedes a clear distinction among areas of pertinence to different cultural groups. On the other hand, quantitative and

qualitative changes in the flows of immigration could sharply reshape the composition of Portuguese society. For example, as explained above, the second generation of migrants creates different networks both with the receiving country and with the homeland. The ties with the emigration country loosen to foster a deeper integration in the new social, political and economic contexts. The attempt to reach adaptation cannot transcend the need for social and legal recognition, which leads minorities to organize and start collective forms action, including social movements, identity claims, demand for the recognition of civil and political rights, equality, and politics towards ethnic minorities. As a matter of fact, if in previous decades minorities were engaged in fighting for issues that related to the homeland, now they are more and more interested in defending their primitive identity from the menace of assimilation. Interestingly, as highlighted by Machado's analysis, until 1992 no significant role was attributed to ethnic communities in Portugal:

Assim, diferentemente de outros países europeus onde a acção colectiva das comunidades imigrantes tem já uma história, história que inclui, designadamente, alguns episódios de disrupção social, em Portugal esse processo está a dar os primeiros passos, e só agora a questão dos imigrantes começa a ganhar visibilidade no campo político. Tanto na capacidade de pressão das associações, como na profundidade da implicação do Estado, a situação observável em países como a França ou a Inglaterra, por exemplo, não tem correspondência em Portugal,

onde a etnicidade não ganhou, até o momento, o estatuto de problema político de primeira importância.⁸³

The important changes Portuguese ethnic policies underwent after the nineties will be described in the following paragraph with a specific focus on Brazilian adaptation in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, Portugal. Considering Lisbon as a crucial locus for the negotiation of Brazilian identity means investigating how identity faces the multicultural context of a city, where multiculturalism is at the same time chance and challenge for identity.

4.4.4 Brazilian Community in Lisbon: Opportunities and Challenges

In São Domingo Square, Lisbon, a painted wall shows the sentence “Lisbon, the city of tolerance” in different languages. In this square, the variegated presence of the most disparate ethnic groups is representative of the cohabitation of different minorities in Portuguese cities and metropolitan areas. This cohabitation is more problematic than it appears, for this reason,

⁸³ *Etnicidade em Portugal. Contrastes e Politização*, cit., p. 132. [“So, differently from other countries - where the collective action of immigrant communities has already its history entailing some episodes of social contrast - in Portugal this process is still in its initial phase. Only recently, questions of immigration are gaining visibility in the political field. With reference to both the associative pressure and the implications for the State, the situations in countries as France or England, for example, do not find correspondence in Portugal where, up to this moment, ethnicity has not become the most relevant political problem yet. ”].

new discourses about identity and migration have become of paramount importance for Portuguese society and political system.

With particular attention to the case of Brazilian migration to Portugal, recent problems arise because of migrants' changing features. As a matter of fact, the Brazilians who reached Portugal between 1981 and 1995 were qualified labour force who escaped from the economic crisis and violence of big Brazilian cities to find better conditions of life and new opportunities. This first huge wave of Brazilian migration was the immediate consequence of the admission of Portugal to the European Union, which took place in 1986 and resulted in increasing infrastructural investments⁸⁴. On the contrary, the second migration flow of late 1990s showed an increased presence of middle and working class people who accepted to work for jobs which required lower qualification. As anticipated above, Brazilians in Portugal underwent, and still undergo, significant processes of adaptation, required not only by different languages. Despite the appearances, the Portuguese spoken in Portugal is different from the Portuguese spoken in Brazil, not only with reference to the accent, but also for the contextual use of words and expressions. Started from

⁸⁴ Please note that Brazilian migration to Portugal is not a recent phenomenon: in the 1960s, Brazilian people in Portugal constituted the second major ethnic group after the Spanish, but their impact on the society of the time was not as significant as the one registered after the two migration flows described above.

the language, adaptation stretches to other important factors, such as the new job, new residential space and new rules and customs in the social sphere. Discrepancies in one or more of the listed areas can be source of frictions with the host culture, as well as contributors to perceptions of discrimination and exclusion toward Brazilian migrants.

The stigma cuts across gender and national origin, being manifest in men and women, Portuguese and Brazilian.

In this way, a paradoxical relation between an individual and his or her identity is constituted. If, on the one hand, a series of positive characteristics are attributed to Brazilians, these are absent in the Brazilians who immigrates⁸⁵.

Prejudice and discrimination can be strictly related to the occupation and use of urban space. The fact that many ethnic groups are increasingly subject to processes of peripheralization – as in the case of the Asian community in Martim Moniz - is emblematic of the ambiguous attitude towards immigrants. Lisbon is not only the city of tolerance, but also the city of exclusion. On the other hand, speaking of ghettos would be hasty, since, even where segregation is a reality, its index are so low to result insignificant. Two are the processes that better mirror the present spatial distribution of Brazilian community: one

⁸⁵ Cited in Barreto Siqueira Alessandra. Brazilians in Lisbon: Immigrant Association and the Meaning of Urban Spaces. *Vibrant – Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, Volume 8, No. 2, 2011, Brasília, pp. 480-501: 484.

shows the stabilization of degraded districts in the city centre, which become the point of convergence of different minorities and, consequently, of various identities and representations. It is precisely in these areas that Lisbon shows its multicultural and pluri-ethnic nuances. The other process entails the creation of new areas in the periphery, which are occupied solely by immigrants, thus fostering socio-spatial segregation and related concerns about immigrants' integration. Both processes reveal the dangerous implications of unequal spatial distribution. In their attempt to create alternative ways for pacific coexistence in the urban context, these processes imply the consolidation and diffusion of enclaves. The margin and the periphery become, in this way, representative of migrants and of the discrimination that stems from stereotypes and prejudices.

Immigrants emerge as the Other who, in the process of integrate into their societies, comes to be mostly restricted to specific areas of the city (its periphery or margins), corroborating an association between economic and cultural discrimination⁸⁶.

As highlighted above, the act of attributing meaning to space turns it into place. Emblematic of the same process is the relevant role of the street for the maintenance of Brazilians' original identity in front of the receiving culture.

⁸⁶ *Brazilians in Lisbon: Immigrant Association and the Meaning of Urban Spaces*, cit., p. 486.

As a matter of fact, the street has different implications for Brazilian and Portuguese people: Brazilians consider the street as an extension of their home, as the place for sociality, often linked to the memories of their past in Brazil. For this reason, the Brazilian street carries over all the nostalgic nuances of the past, transfiguring infancy under the light of *saudade*⁸⁷. On the contrary, the street in Portuguese cities appears to Brazilian immigrants as the place of the unknown, to discover with caution. The reserves Brazilians have on facing Portuguese culture result in a two-fold attitude towards the Portuguese. If on the one hand, Brazilians tend to privilege contacts with conational people and to prefer the places that celebrate Brazilian-ness by promoting Brazilian food, music and products, on the other hand, they seek to foster integration by adapting to the new context – for example, by learning local mannerisms and enjoying local activities.

The main guarantor of Brazilian-ness in Portugal is the Casa do Brasil, the association for Brazilian immigrants, which plays a crucial role in supporting

⁸⁷ Please note that the concept of *saudade* is a distinctive feature of lusophone people. It resembles melancholy and nostalgia but has no proper correspondence in other languages. Antonio Tabucchi, Italian writer and connoisseur of Portuguese culture, defines the term as a nostalgic feeling related both to the memories of the past and to the hope for the future.

For a further investigation on the concept, see de Lourenço, Cileine; McDonnell, Judith; Nielson, Rex P., “*Saudade*” and *Returning: Brazilian Women Speak of Here and There*. Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em História, Florianópolis, Volume 2, No. 1, 2010, pp. 136-152.

their national identity and functions as a mediator between Brazilian community in Portugal and the central government. Its growing importance stems from the increasing meaning attributed to policies of integration after Law Decree 115/99. As a matter of fact, in 1999 the central government recognized the legality of Immigrant Associations and of their activities. Immigrant associations date back to the 1970s, but they operated informally; the first step for their formal recognition was moved only in 1996, with the creation of the Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas⁸⁸. With reference to the Brazilian community, Casa do Brazil, founded in 1992 and recognized in 1999, is an essential social actor for the preservation of Brazilian identity. This function is carried on by the promotion of activities that focus on distinctive features of Brazilian culture, such as music, dance, religious symbols and linguistic traits. In this sense, associations fortify national, ethnic and cultural identities by re-contextualizing them in the host culture, by subjecting them to the influence of another culture, and by negotiating their new meaning. The essence of associative action feeds off the most profound sense of multicultural encounter: the different Other is no longer a menace; only through intercultural contact can identity reach its full completeness.

⁸⁸ [High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities].

Conclusions

Nowadays, developing adequate strategies for coping with the different Other has become an imperative, not only for international students, but also for everyone who observes the hurricane of globalization from his or her window on the world. The force of this hurricane spares nobody's life, therefore, even those people who look out of the window will be inevitably changed. The recognition for fast changes, shrinking distances, increasing interconnections, intertwines fates, cannot leave us regardless of these new cracks that destabilize our "selves".

The idea of investigating international students' experience cannot be understood if not plugged in the wider framework of internationalization and globalization. Internationalization, because of its accent on particular differences and on cultural uniqueness, for its attempt to defend distinctiveness before the menace of homogenization. Secondly, to globalization because of the important innovations in technology and communication it allowed. The process of adaptation international students undergo is emblematic of the considerable strain that becoming a competent intercultural communicator requires. The figure of skilful intercultural communicator is no more an option: the diversifying composition of demography, the elastic knowledge the labour market demands, work

relationships with foreigners, are all drives to change we cannot control, nor avoid. Once the necessity of adequate intercultural contact is proved, how can positive contact be achieved? The first and second chapters of the investigation about international students evidenced the guiding lines to successful intercultural communication and gave prominence to the great psychological and physical stress it implied. It is a matter of becoming aware of one's cultural patterns, of getting acquainted with the new environment and of showing the willingness to understand and appreciate cultural differences.

The idea of creating a proper framework for this understanding with a one-year research would sound pretentious, rather, the present paper aimed to move the first steps in this direction. The limits are evident: a proper analysis would require three moments of investigation: before international students left their homeland, during their permanence in Italy, after their return to their country. This procedure would permit the examination of culture shock in all its complexity and duration, but it would require further resources time than a graduation thesis do. For all this limitations, my willingness is that of deepen the topic in the future, in particular with reference to the question of cultural identity.

International students are ambassadors of their native culture, and the psychological strain that results from their experience abroad is a sign of their

attempt to find an equilibrium between their cultural, behavioural, symbolic patterns and the new stimuli of a different context of reference. In countertendency to other schools of thought, this paper thesis? never aimed to promote the neglecting of some identities and the evaluation of others. Conversely, its pillar is the belief that local cultures are still anchoring identity and valuing local practices, symbols, values and representations. The economic cooperation between the local and the global cannot ignore cultural claims in the name of profit and competitiveness: natives are now aware of their cultural uniqueness and are no more inclined to let global consumerism exploit their cultural treasures.

Today, fighting for identity roots does not entail individuals' physical ties to the homeland. The successful consolidation of transnational networks and diasporas provides migrants with the necessary circuits to spreading material resources as well as identity symbols, representations, and claims. This potential can transform local demands into global needs and make native peoples' voices widely heard.

For present purposes, this is the crucial aspect of globalization: providing people with meanings, tools and resources to properly interact with other individuals, not only with those belonging to the primitive community, but also with members of different ethnic or religious groups. Once intercultural

contact is successfully achieved, homogenization can no more be a challenge to cultural uniqueness.

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