

Comitato promotore | Supporting committee

Giovanni Caudo, Anna Laura Palazzo, Francesco Careri, Mario Cerasoli, Marco Cremaschi,
Andrea Filpa, Giovanni Longobardi, Lucia Nucci, Simone Ombuen, Alfredo Passeri
Dipartimento di Architettura, *Università degli Studi Roma Tre*

Direttore | Editor

Giorgio Piccinato

Comitato di redazione | Editorial committee

Lorenzo Barbieri, Redattore capo
Francesca Porcari, Segreteria
Sara Caramaschi, Martina Pietropaoli, Giuseppe Ferrarella, Alberto Marzo, iQuaderni di U3
Eleonora Ambrosio, leRubriche di U3
Viviana Andriola, Comunicazione
Giulio Cuccurullo, Grafica
Ha collaborato Federica Fava

Comitato scientifico | Scientific committee

Thomas Angotti, *City University of New York*; Oriol Nel-lo i Colom, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*; Valter Fabietti, *Università di Chieti-Pescara*; Max Welch Guerra, *Bauhaus-Universität Weimar*; Michael Hebbert, *University College London*; Daniel Modigliani, *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica*; Luiz Cesar de Queiroz Ribeiro, *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*; Vieri Quilici, *Università degli Studi Roma Tre*; Christian Topalov, *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*; Rui Manuel Trindade Braz Afonso, *Universidade do Porto*

L'Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca (ANVUR)
ha classificato QU3 rivista scientifica in classe A per l'area 08.

Rivista sottoposta a *double blind peer review*.

The Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of University and Research Institutes
(ANVUR) classified QU3 as scientific journal in the area 08.

Journal subject to double blind peer review.

Rivista registrata presso il Tribunale di Roma con numero 13/2019 del 07/02/2019.

Journal registered at the Court of Rome with the number 13/2019 dated 7th February
2019

N. 21, anno sette | No. 21, year seven

On the cover | *In copertina*:

DIVERGING

Towards a cognitive and spatial involvement

Picture by Studio Zerotredici

Editore

Quodlibet

via Giuseppe e Bartolomeo Mozzi, 23

Macerata

www.quodlibet.it

ISBN 9788822905727, E-ISBN 9788822911193

ISSN: 2531-7091 (online), ISSN: 2611-5646 (edizione cartacea)

con il supporto di



in this issue
in questo numero

Exploring Identities

Perspectives from a cross-disciplinary dialogue

edited by | a cura di

Sara Caramaschi, Sebastiano Marconcini & Ludovica Marinaro

Sara Caramaschi, Sebastiano Marconcini & Ludovica Marinaro_p. 9

Introduction

Editoriale

Giulio Giovannoni_p. 15

“Never again with Florence”:

Prato Identity between Subalternity and Local Pride

“Mai più con Firenze”: l’Identità di Prato tra Subalternità e Orgoglio Locale

Sebastiano Marconcini_p. 23

Inclusion, identity and cultural heritage: a bond of reciprocity

Inclusione, identità e patrimonio culturale: un legame di reciprocità

Francesco Careri, Serena Olcuire & Maria Rocco_p. 31

C.I.R.C.O. at Istituto San Michele:

a didactic experience to enable new urban identities

C.I.R.C.O. all’Istituto San Michele:

un’esperienza didattica per rivelare nuove identità

Sara Caramaschi_p. 41

Making public spaces better by temporary uses.

A brief critical reflection

Migliorare gli spazi pubblici tramite usi temporanei. Una nota critica

Sara Caramaschi & Sebastiano Marconcini_p. 49

L'autre

In dialogue with Michele Lancione

L'autre

In dialogo con Michele Lancione

Giuseppe Carta_p. 55

On the Postsecular City:

Translation, Sharedness and Heterogeneity

Sulla Città Postsecolare: Traduzione, Consenso e Differenza

Giovanni Perucca _p. **63**
European identity and economic disparities: what role for urbanization?
Identità europea e disparità economiche: quale ruolo per l'urbanizzazione?

Ludovica Marinaro _p. **73**
Emerging landscapes in Mediterranean port cities
An approach to recode maritime identity
Paesaggi emergenti nei porti del Mediterraneo
Un approccio per ricodificare l'identità marittima

Joan Vicente Rufi _p. **83**
The city without addresses
La città senza indirizzi

Appendix | Appendice

DIVERGING. Towards a cognitive and spatial involvement _p. 92
Cover design by | Immagine in copertina di
Studio Zeroredici

Identities in Evolving Urban Landscapes _p. 94
Photographic project by | Progetto fotografico di
Pere Sala

Authors bio | Profilo autori p. 110

Keywords | Parole chiave p. 113

Exploring Identities

Perspectives from a cross-disciplinary dialogue



Valencia,
Spain, 2010
Identities in Evolving
Urban Landscapes
 Pere Sala
 detail
 complete project p. 94

Introduction*

Sara Caramaschi, Sebastiano Marconcini & Ludovica Marinaro

Identity
Sense of Place
Cross-disciplinary
approach

Identità
Senso del Luogo
Approccio
Cross-disciplinare

The introduction sets out the reasons and the process that have led to the publication of this special issue of QU3 – iQuaderni di U3. Addressing identities is, today more than ever, significant, as the topic incorporates contrasting conceptual traditions and evokes both positive and negative solutions. The understanding of the very same term “identity” and the narration of the evolution of the debates around it have been the necessary prerequisites to open up to new theoretical and practical perspectives on the subject. On these premises, the ideation of this issue as an “open and dynamic dialogue” among academics from different research fields is explained. A brief description of each contribution introduces the reader to the complexity of the topic, developing a wider discussion about new visions on identities in urban contexts.

L'introduzione chiarisce le motivazioni ed il percorso che hanno portato allo sviluppo di questo numero speciale di QU3 – iQuaderni di U3. Discutere del tema delle identità è, oggi più che mai, significativo, dato che quest'ultimo incorpora tradizioni concettuali contrastanti ed evoca risposte sia positive che negative. La comprensione dello stesso termine “identità” e la narrazione dell'evoluzione del dibattito teorico e progettuale attorno ad esso sono stati le premesse necessarie per poter guardare a nuove prospettive teoriche e pratiche. Su tali premesse, si spiega l'ideazione di questo numero come un “dialogo aperto e dinamico” tra accademici di diversi settori di ricerca. Una breve descrizione di ciascun contributo introduce poi il lettore alla complessità del tema e lo invita a partecipare a questo dibattito per lo sviluppo di nuove visioni sulle identità nei contesti urbani.

* The editorial was not included in the peer-review process.

Identity is a term with which urban scholars associate conflicting meanings and diverging expectations. The theoretical evolution around individual and collective subjectivities, as well as place attachment, authenticity and place making, has contributed to its active promotion in terms of both practical and conceptual commitment. In recent years, the academic research on the notion of “identities” has elicited increasing attention among urban scholars around the world. Going beyond studies of seemingly fixed social differences in relation to changing environments, the interest in this issue considers the complex perceptions and practices of individuals and groups of people who experience the city (Amin, 2002; Brah, 1996; Escobar, 2001), as well as the role of the urban space in engaging (or disengaging) them (Barrell, 1972; Hayden, 1995; Jackson, 1994). Additionally, identities have often been assumed as linked to the dynamics and image of the city (Lynch, 1960; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Walter 1988). Specifically regarding certain research fields, the essence and characteristics of built and natural environments, their relation to local communities and the sense of belonging they can express, have been assumed, implicitly and explicitly, as crucial components of any processes of transformation and identification (Eyles & Williams, 2008; Ouf, 2001; Relph, 2009). However, since the system of relationships involved is multifaceted, professional and theoretical perspectives on identities have often become partial and confused, allowing practical planning and design to work towards constructing a sense of place without a rooted and comprehensive knowledge.

Major social, cultural, economic and spatial transformations occurring in urban areas mark these concepts as both highly praised and controversial. Local governments’ policies and strategies towards “new identities”, more attractive cities and distinctive quality of life end up with radical positions, particularly regarding tradition and distinctiveness (Kim, 2000; Seamon, 2018). Indeed, the concept of identity has undergone forms of exploitation and generalization, especially in terms of individual and group chance to exercise their democratic rights within urban transformation processes. Certainly, the heterogeneous conception of what identities, their multiple dimensions and scales are – which have been representing a catalyst for social innovation – have also inspired programs of urban development and regeneration, as well as city strategies (Gehl & Gemzøe, 2003; Montgomery, 1998). However, this idea that the character of a place and the attachment to it can be developed through appropriate design and planning methodologies must consider and interact with the view that identities raise from individual and community perception, experience and values.

Constraints over subjectivities and plurality have therefore overcome not only the sense of belonging to places, but also the very same perception of the urban space by its own inhabitants. However, the built environment and the natural one are evolving systems in a continuous process of making and unmaking shaped by various actors holding multiple, often contrasting, perspectives. Urban scholars are already on the front lines to explore and enable these new subjectivities. Indeed, as cities are today more and more under pressure, individuals are increasingly engaged with, and active for, new conceptions, connections and synergies, positioning themselves in contrast to formally designated notions of identities.

Stemming from the above cognitive framework, this special issue of QU3 – iQuaderni di U3 presents the outcomes of an insightful dialogue among scholars on the ambivalence of identities in contemporary cities. “Exploring Identities” offers crossing-edge contributions to the discussion about the complex web of forces that affect identities in the built environment. We have engaged academics coming from human and urban geography, architecture, spatial planning and urban design, ethnography, landscape architecture, economy and regional science in a meaningful reflection regarding the complexities and controversies in approaching the topic. A cross-disciplinary approach, we assert, can be useful in rethinking theoretical and practical assumptions, while critically reflecting on them. Such experimentation is highly needed today in order to address this topic from different – possibly innovative – perspectives. Rather than suggesting an interpretative framework about identity, we have decided to give authors the freedom to voice their position and experience, welcoming multiple approaches – open to additional and alternative perspectives – upon relevant knowledge.

Relying on the authors’ distinguished works and commitments, in this dialogue we deal with the challenges, multiplicity and dynamism of urban/place/collective/individual identities, suggesting both an updated research agenda and a conceptual rethinking of this subject. Therefore, the reader will experience multiple possibilities on how to acknowledge the topic, so that the very same theoretical assumptions, while being re-examined, could be drivers of strategies for renewed spatial arrangements holding multiple involvements. The final aim is to open a space of active, incremental and mutual learning that may serve as an inspiration for further studies. The choice of a cross-disciplinary approach, able to partially disclose the complexity of the several components and processes that shape identities, finds explanation in the brief presentation of the eight papers and one interview accepted for publication.

In his article, Giulio Giovannoni theoretically focuses on the dynamics of a symbolic conflict in Prato (Italy), which is rooted in the historical-political domination and cultural subalternity to Florence. This example offers the opportunity to reflect on the dialectic and conflictual relationship among contrasting urban identities born and consolidated through time.

Sebastiano Marconcini reasons about identity and culture as fundamental needs for human well-being, acknowledging cultural heritage as a major asset in activating processes of identification and engagement among diverse individuals and social groups. On this basis, his paper raises awareness on achieving, for the widest number of people, equal opportunities in accessing cultural heritage, while suggesting operational meanings.

Based on empirical research and teaching activity, Francesco Careri, Serena Olcuire and Maria Rocco illustrate limitations and potentialities of their policy and design recommendations about bottom-up processes for the reuse of underutilized and vacant buildings in Rome. The C.I.R.C.O. experience shows how the development of alternative social and physical orders necessarily involves a restructuring of basic relations of power.

Sara Caramaschi's study on temporary uses in public spaces illustrates how the growth in temporary interventions is opening a battleground on which different political views and interests compete to exploit the opportunities provided by temporariness in the contemporary city. Her article warns about the powerful impact of temporary/tactical urbanism on place identity, a potential shift from a dynamism of insurgency and resistance to place marketing and spatial exclusion.

Michele Lancione's interview marks a turning point in this special issue, critically tackling the very same concept of "identity" and suggesting to focus on a subject-formation. Particularly, through some reflections on marginality, Lancione urges a reflection on the political and social consequences in defining fixed categories to facilitate the understanding of tense and lively processes within spaces of the city.

Giuseppe Carta's article traces the outline of the postsecular city, explaining its role in allowing heterogeneity, collective desires, and a plurality of practices. His theoretical investigation, supported by the presentation of a workshop experience held in Rome, questions the conflicts over the recognition of religious identities, exploring the processes through which encounters, spaces, and subjectivities may emerge.

Giovanni Perucca's acknowledges the growth of Euroscepticism, and the need of a renewed EU Regional Policy, to question the factors shaping the relationship between individualism and collective identities. Within economic theory, his paper aims to achieve a better comprehension upon the complex relationship between level of urbanization, regional economic performance and European identity.

The article by Ludovica Marinaro addresses identity by dwelling on its processual dimension in the particular urban context of the Mediterranean ports, for a long time spaces leading the recognition of the identity of the Mediterranean city. The essay highlights the founding role of the perception of the population in the process of subject (or community) formation and in landscape characterization, underlining the usefulness of mapping these "emerging landscapes" so to inform urban planning and design.

Joan Vicente Ruff offers a perspective on symbolic and ideological consequences of Odonymy in cities, marking the act of defining, recognizing and sharing street names as both controversial and limited in current times. His article emphasizes the misalignment between social conventions, imagined spaces and the practice of denominating geographical places, resulting in multiple networks with no apparent meanings.

In conclusion, our hope is that a wide variety of scholars will find several interesting reasoning in this representation of approaches, challenges and interpretations of the concept of identity in cities. Through this collective work, we have challenged our own ideas and points of view, questioning our personal perception of what identity, sense of place and authenticity are, their hybrid and

controversial nature, as well as our own academic commitment in embracing such range of explorations. Therefore, our expectation is to witness the development of further theoretically informed conceptions, which should be shared to a much greater extent with the people directly involved in shaping old and new environments.

references

- Amin A. 2002, "Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity", *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 34(6), pp. 959–980.
- Barrell J. 1972, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Brah A. 1996, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Routledge, London.
- Eyles J. & Williams A. 2008, *Sense of place, health and quality of life*, Ashgate, Aldershot, UK.
- Escobar A. 2001, "Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization", *Political Geography*, 20(2), pp. 139-174.
- Gehl J. & Gemzøe L. 2003, *New City Spaces*, Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen.
- Hayden D. 1995, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes As Public History*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Jackson J.B. 1994, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Kim J. 2000, "Creating community: does Kentlands live up to its goals?", *Places*, 13(2), pp. 48–55.
- Lynch K. 1960, *The Image of the City*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Montgomery J. 1998, "Making a city: Urbanity, vitality and urban design", *Journal of Urban Design*, 3(1), pp. 93-116.
- Norberg-Schulz C. 1980, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Rizzoli, New York.
- Ouf A.M.S. 2001, "Authenticity and the sense of place in urban design", *Journal of Urban Design*, 6(1), pp. 73–86.
- Relph E. 2009, "A pragmatic sense of place", *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 20(3), pp. 24-31.
- Seamon D. 2018, *Life takes place: Phenomenology, lifeworlds, and place making*, Routledge, London.
- Walter E.V. 1988, *Placeways: A theory of the human environment*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

further readings

- Casey E.S. 2009, *Getting back into place*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Donohoe J. 2017, *Place and phenomenology*, Roman & Littlefield, New York.
- Hunt J.D. 1992, *Gardens and the picturesque: Studies in the history of landscape architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Jacobs J. 1961, *The death and life of great American cities*, Vintage, New York.
- Malpas J. 2015, *The intelligence of place: Topographies and poetics*, Bloomsbury, London.
- Seddon G. 1997, *Landprints: Reflections on place and landscape*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Tuan Y.-F. 1977, *Place and space: The perspective of experience*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.



**Valencia,
Spain, 2016**
*Identities in Evolving
Urban Landscapes*
Pere Sala
detail
complete project p. 94

“Never again with Florence”: Prato Identity between Subalternity and Local Pride

by Giulio Giovannoni

“Mai più con Firenze”:
l’Identità di Prato
tra Subalternità e Orgoglio Locale

Urban subalternity
Conflictual urban
identities
Prato

Subalternità urbana
Identità urbane
conflittuali
Prato

This paper investigates how the urban identity of Prato, the second largest Tuscan city, was shaped by a dialectic and conflictual relationship with Florence, to whom Prato was politically and culturally subaltern. The first section of the paper provides a historical framework of this relationship, demonstrating the evolution of political issues and conflicts between them over time. The second section applies the notion of “imagined community” developed by Benedict Anderson to the interpretation of Prato’s urban identity and uses Curzio Malaparte’s literary depictions of the city as a source for its study. In the third section of the paper, Tajfel and Turner’s integrative group theory is introduced in order to explain the oppositional nature of Prato’s collective self-image. The concluding section interprets the way Prato is imagined in its citizens’ collective consciousness as a community in order to improve its perceived status.

Questo lavoro indaga come l’identità urbana di Prato, la seconda città toscana per grandezza, sia stata plasmata da un rapporto dialettico e conflittuale con Firenze, alla quale Prato è stata politicamente e culturalmente subalterna. La prima parte del saggio fornisce un quadro storico su questo rapporto, mostrando come il dibattito politico contemporaneo sia radicato nella storia. La seconda parte applica la nozione di “comunità immaginata” sviluppata da Benedict Anderson all’interpretazione dell’identità urbana di Prato e utilizza la rappresentazione letteraria di Curzio Malaparte della città come fonte per studiarla. Nella terza parte viene introdotta la teoria integrativa dei gruppi di Tajfel e Turner per spiegare la natura oppositiva dell’immagine collettiva di Prato. La parte conclusiva interpreta il modo in cui Prato è immaginata come una comunità per migliorare il suo status percepito e discute la rilevanza del quadro teorico sviluppato in questo lavoro per lo studio dei conflitti simbolici che hanno luogo nello spazio.

Political Subjection and Subalternity of the Urban Image in the History of Prato¹

On October 31, 2012, the incumbent mayor of Prato, Roberto Cenni, gave a very unusual interview to the local press and photographers. Sitting on a WC in an elegant grey suit, he solemnly and irreverently declared: «To comment on the government's choice to put Prato back under Florence you don't need any banner: the WC is more than enough» (Giorgi, 2012).² This bizarre protest – which opposed the government's proposal to abolish provinces – is emblematic not only of the relationship of conflict that historically linked Prato to Florence, but of an atypical urban identity which sharply contrasts with, and in many ways opposes, the one which is dominant in Tuscany. This conflicting relationship has a long history, and originated from the political subordination of Prato to Florence that took place in the Middle Ages. In fact, although Prato provided a very important urban and industrial system in central Italy since this time, its relevance, due to geographical proximity to Florence, was never acknowledged by appropriate institutional and symbolic recognition.

¹ Due to restrictions in scope, this paper will reflect only on the “traditional” identity conflict between Prato and Florence, leaving aside the issue of the effect that immigration, mainly from China, has had on the identity of Prato over the last three decades.

² Unless otherwise specified, all translations in the text are by the author.

³ Since the Middle Ages, the title of *civitas* was given to cities where there was an Episcopal seat. Pope Innocent X changed the name of the ecclesiastical administration to “Diocese of Pistoia and Prato” but all offices remained in Pistoia. The title of *civitas* was granted to Prato in 1653, but only to the urban area inside the walls, despite the important relationship between the urban center and its many suburban villages.

⁴ The economic literature on the industrial textile district of Prato is very extensive. A concise discussion of its developments after World War II is provided, among others, by Becattini, 2000; Maitte, 2009; Nigro, 1986. Over the last three decades, the traditional production of fabrics has been flanked by the development of an important fast-fashion district controlled by entrepreneurs of Chinese origin. Among the growing literature on Chinese entrepreneurship in Prato, the following are worth mentioning: Baldassar et al., 2015; IRPET 2013; Dei Ottati, 2014.

According to historical demographer Enrico Fiumi (1968, ref. Fantappiè, 1991, p. 232) at the time of Dante, Prato had a population of about 32,000 inhabitants and was one of the most important cities in Tuscany. The great development of this city was due to the significant system of hydraulic works that had allowed the early industrialization of its territory. However, despite its demographic and economic importance, Prato did not have the title of *civitas* and depended on the diocese of Pistoia. Only four centuries later, in 1653, Prato was recognized as a *civitas*³. In 1326, hoping to protect themselves from Florentine interference, the people of Prato submitted themselves to the rule of the Anjou dynasty, which then sold the city to the Florentines only a few years later, in 1351. From that date on, Prato was subordinated to Florence (Caggese, 1905, p. 4): «After about two centuries of freedom, [the Municipality of Prato] lost its independence; sold for 17,000 florins by the Queen of Naples in 1350 to the Municipality of Florence, which had already for a long time wrapped it in its immense tentacles [...] minor star, it ended up being definitively attracted into the orbit of the shining star, which we could call the center of the Tuscan historical system».

The troubled path that in the past led to the attainment, albeit partial, of the title of *civitas* is reflected in the recent administrative conflict between Prato and Florence. If Prato was underrepresented in the past, in the course of the twentieth century it was even more so. In fact, its relative importance has greatly increased. Today, it is the second most populous city of all of Tuscany, Umbria and Marche. Moreover, for several decades Prato has been – as it still is, albeit *mutatis mutandis* – a true economic power⁴. In the 1960s Prato manufactured one third of the entire Italian wool production and paid the twelfth highest amount of taxes to the State of all Italian cities. Yet, its political weight was still completely irrelevant. As reported by an interesting documentary made for Rai by Enrico Gras and Mario Craveri (1967): «For 45 years Prato has been asking to be elevated to the status of provincial capital, but in vain. [...] The only form of autonomy granted to Prato was to raise the detached

section of the tax office to autonomous management, so that Prato could pay taxes more easily».

In addition to being politically subordinate, the city of Prato was also culturally subaltern to Florence. In this respect, it is significant that this city was substantially neglected in travel literature and tourist guides. For example, Guido Piovene, in his *Viaggio in Italia*, dedicates little more than a nod to Prato and describes it as an industrial appendix of Florence⁵. The preceding discussion is useful to historically frame the theatrical gesture with which Mayor Cenni opposed the abolition of the provinces. However, this provocative and offensive gesture had also other meanings. For citizens of Prato, the rival city of Florence can all too explicitly be associated with the “shithole” from which Cenni made his famous declaration. This gesture symbolically affirms the moral superiority of Prato over Florence, consistent as it is with the fact that the people of Prato imagined their community with opposite/mirroring features to those of the Tuscan capital, as discussed in the next paragraph.

The “World Capital of Rags”: the Imagined Identity of Prato

The concept of urban identity is difficult to define. Cities are complex organisms, whose identity cannot be reduced to a shared collective image. However, in an inevitably jumbled context, some dominant representations tend to prevail and become the shared image of at least a significant part of an urban population. They tend to impose themselves in literature and the media, and end up becoming recognized as that which is typical of a certain city and its population. Sometimes, such identities are created by policies aimed at shaping a national and local sense of belonging⁶. Other times, they are consolidated from below through an incremental historical process⁷. In his seminal book on imagined communities, Benedict Anderson (1986) explains nationalism as a process of building collective identities through culture. For Anderson, a nation is an “imagined” community, «because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion» (Anderson, 2006, p. 6).

I argue that Anderson’s concept of imagined community can be used for diverse socio-spatial entities at different scales, including cities. Indeed, any spatial community is to some extent “imagined”, being largely based upon narratives, stories, and imagination. This is true for supra-state entities like Europe and for very small socio-spatial communities like the family. Literary, filmic, journalistic, and political narrations play a central role in the construction of such shared images, which often mix reality and imagination and make it difficult to separate one from the other⁸. In such processes, conflict also plays a role, as in the case of nationalistic discourses or in the case of rivalry between neighboring municipalities, like Prato and Florence.

In their representations of themselves in literature, movies, media, and political discourse, the people of Prato are at the same time ambitious, irreverent and easygoing, just to distance themselves and to underline their difference from their Florentine compatriots. In the following discussion, for the sake of

5 «In addition to being a city of culture, Florence has the most important core of industries in central Italy, after Rome. [...] Florentine production, including the woolen textile production of Prato...» (Piovene, 1963, p. 9).

6 Examples of this are the urban planning and identity policies implemented in Tuscany in the period between the Risorgimento and Fascism (Giovannoni, 2017, pp. 51-68). The case of Fascism is particularly interesting; it combined the construction of a national identity with the apparently contradictory promotion of its many regional and municipal variants (Cappelli, 2008).

7 This is the case with rivalries between cities or villages. In Italian, the term *campanilismo* (parochialism) is used to define the «excessive (and often partial, sectarian) love for the customs and traditions of one’s own village or city» (*Campanilismo*, 2020). There are not many studies on *campanilismo* (among the few references are Manconi, 2003 and Tak, 1987), with a partial exception for studies on Italian immigrant communities (e.g. Luconi, 2017). The relationship between Prato and Florence is certainly a parochial one. This essay, however, focuses on the effects that Prato’s political, administrative and symbolic subordination to Florence has had on the dialectical construction of Prato’s identity.

8 Identitarian narrations are often problematic, as demonstrated by the degenerations produced by nationalistic narratives and by the numerous cases of exclusionary, if not racist, communities. However they also have the potential of strengthening the sense of belonging in positive ways.

space, I will focus in particular on the image of Prato as codified in *Maledetti toscani* by Curzio Malaparte (1998), the writer who most contributed to providing a literary representation of the identity of his own city⁹. Malaparte carries out a true reversal of values against which to measure and evaluate the identities of Prato and Florence. For example, the fact that people from Prato are represented as boorish does not mean that they are rude and vulgar, but is associated instead with their being considered straightforward and pure («they say aloud in the square what the other Italians are silent on or whisper within four walls, in the family...» [p. 64]). While making jokes about the invisibility of Prato, Malaparte (*ibid.*) calls into question the integrity of the inhabitants of Florence and Pistoia, while placing his own city back into center stage: «It does not seem right to me, therefore, that Florentines and Pistoiese, I do not know if out of jealousy or prudence, pretend not to know us, and to those who ask them for news of Prato pretend not to know anything, nor to have ever heard of us».

If Florence is the world capital of arts and culture, Prato is the world capital of cloths and rugs of every kind, age and origin, and of positive moral values. In the imagination of the Tuscan writer in Prato, in rags, «everything ends: the glory, honor, piety, pride, vanity of the world» (ivi, 79). The *cenci* – that is, the pieces of wool on whose regeneration the fortunes of Prato's industry have been based for a long time – are as if absorbed by Prato: from the military uniforms of all armies to the regalia of kings and emperors, popes and cardinals, to the dusty garb of poor people. By recycling textiles from different eras and from all over the world, Prato metabolizes, so to speak, the entire history of mankind. From the humble nature of this activity its people acquire, in Malaparte's imagination, their deepest values, such as simplicity («they know they were born of nothing, but they do not behave like so many others, who even when they walk it seems that they go in a carriage» [ivi, 80]) and loyalty («they are not ashamed of being born poor ... and remain people of the people even when they go in a carriage» [*ibid.*]). In the end, the picture that emerges from this idealized representation is that of an egalitarian and genuine society that has never «raised nobles in its bosom, and therefore never had to bow before anyone in the city» (ivi, 81). In Prato, concludes Malaparte, «what counts is the people, only the people [...] not because there are no bourgeoisie among the Prato people, but because the fat bourgeoisie, as soon as it gets dark, go to Florence, where they stay at home» (ivi, 82). The theory of social identity developed by Tajfel and Turner, which is briefly outlined in the next section of this paper, allows us to grasp the meaning of such reversal of values, as represented by Malaparte, and which constitutes the basis of Prato's identity.

Urban identity, conflict and sense of belonging

According to Henri Tajfel (1974), the identity of people stems to a certain extent from their belonging to social groups, from which they derive pride and self-esteem. This tendency to identify with the group leads to the classification of the social environment and also serves as an individual orientation system¹⁰. Each person tends to remain in a group as long as it contributes positively

⁹ Malaparte is undoubtedly among the writers who have contributed most to the forging of a collective identity of Prato. His most famous phrases about the people of Prato, from *Maledetti toscani*, are widely quoted in the common language, on social networks and on the web. Beyond Malaparte, a more extensive collection of literary works written by authors from Prato is contained in Gurrieri & Pellegrini (eds.), 2009. A literary work on Prato with a strong identitarian/nostalgic dimension that mainly focuses on the issues of industrial decline and of immigration from China is that authored by Nesi, 2010.

¹⁰ «For our purpose, social categorization can be understood as the ordering of social environment in terms of social categories, that is of groupings of persons in a manner which is meaningful to the subject. [...] Social categorization must therefore be considered as a system of orientation which creates and defines the individual's own place in society» (Tajfel 1974, p. 69).

to his or her own identity. Otherwise, he or she will tend to leave the group, unless this is impossible. If an individual encounters difficulty in leaving the group despite the negative image that is associated with it, he or she will implement strategies aimed at containing the injurious identity perceptions. Since no group lives in isolation, the above actions occur in relation to or in comparison with other groups and may lead to conflict relations, as is the case of Prato's identity as opposed to that of Florence.

The necessary condition for an individual to derive a positive sense of identity and belonging from affiliation to a group, such as an imagined urban community of the type described above, is that it receives some positive social consensus on the evaluation of its own group and its belonging to it. This process of identification is intrinsically relational and comparative (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40): «Social groups, understood in this sense, provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are to a very large extent relational and comparative: they define the individual as similar to or different from, as "better" or "worse" than, members of other groups».

As mentioned, when the social identity of a group is unsatisfactory, individuals seek either to leave the group to which they belong or to improve the way in which it is perceived. The tendency to positively evaluate one's own group through internal and external comparisons leads to differentiation from other groups. For this process of comparison/differentiation to take place, three conditions are necessary: a) the individual must have internalized his or her belonging to the group as an integral aspect of self-knowledge; b) it must be possible to identify some variables on which to make the comparison; and c) the external group for comparison must be considered relevant. Obviously, the purpose of differentiation is to maintain or obtain a position of superiority with respect to an external group for comparison on one or more variables, that is, to improve the status of the group. Status defines the relative position of a group with respect to other groups. This process is intrinsically competitive, with status being by its very definition a scarce resource. As said, in the case of negative status, i.e. the state of being comparatively inferior to the group/groups for comparison, the individual's response may consist in changing group, in various strategies aimed at improving the group's image, or in an open social competition with the group/groups of antagonists. The tendency to change group is related to the belief in concrete possibilities of social mobility. In the present case, i.e. a competitive parochial relationship between imagined urban communities, social mobility should in practice consist of a form of geographical mobility, i.e. leaving one's own city in favor of a city capable of giving the individual the perception of a higher status: this is what the "fat bourgeoisie", in Malaparte's disparaging words, do when they move to Florence.

However, of much greater importance are the strategies of "social creativity" implemented by individuals and groups. Tajfel and Turner identify three of them: the first is to introduce new comparison variables, in which the group with lower status is in an advantageous position; the second is to modify the

values attributed to the characteristics of the group, giving a positive meaning to what is usually perceived as negative (a classic example of this strategy is the “black is beautiful” movement)¹¹; the third strategy is, finally, to modify the groups we are compared with. While this strategy plays a substantially marginal role in parochial relations, the first two are, in my opinion, the main devices through which urban identity is negotiated in a dialectical and conflictual manner in parochial relations. The case of Prato’s urban identity, as described above, built as it was in a substantially oppositional and antagonistic way against that of Florence, is an exemplary case in this regard.

Conclusions and discussion

Cenni’s interview and Malaparte’s work – like other literary, filmic, political and journalistic documents that, for the sake of space, cannot be dealt with here – assume, on the basis of Tajfel and Turner’s theory, the meaning of «changing the values assigned to the attributes of the group, so that comparisons which were previously negative are now perceived as positive» (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 43). In fact, the imagined community of Prato has contrasting features and values to those attributed to the Tuscan capital. This allows the imagined community of Prato to raise its status by placing itself on a level which is even higher to that of Florence. A competition based on the strengths of the Florentine identity – the arts, culture, literature and the like – would have confirmed the subalternity of Prato. Instead, Prato’s identity opposes itself to that of Florence, completely reversing its values. This can be symbolized by the contrasting pairs “capital of rugs” vs. “capital of the arts”, “genuine” vs. “sophisticated”, “egalitarian” vs. “bourgeois”, “grounded in a concrete reality” vs. “intellectual”. Tajfel and Turner’s theory allows us to grasp the meaning of this reversal of values.

The theoretical framework developed in this study can easily be applied to many other circumstances. As is demonstrated in this paper, by applying Anderson’s notion of “imagined community” to urban identity, and by integrating this concept with the theory of social identity developed by Tajfel and Turner, it is possible to effectively interrogate the dynamics of symbolic conflict that take place in space.

11 *The “black is beautiful” movement started in the US in the 1960s with the aim of overturning the negative image associated in the media and society with the body of African-American people.*