

“A CROOKED, OPEN, MODEST CITY” – INTERCULTURAL TOURISM AS A TOOL TO GRASP URBAN SUPER-DIVERSITY AND BUILD SOCIAL COHESION

Francesco Vietti*

Abstract

The connection between migration, tourism and cultural heritage in the urban setting is complex, with rich potential in terms of social progress, but also with risks that must be tackled with awareness of the symbolic and political meaning of each of these elements. This paper offers a critical discussion about *Migrantour*, an international project that, over the last decade, has been developing an innovative approach to urban tourism involving migrants as intercultural companions for walking tours in several Italian and other European cities.

Keywords: Migration, Tourism, City, Diversity, Social Cohesion, Migrantour.

In an essay on cosmopolitan life, Immanuel Kant observed in 1784 that ‘out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made’. A city is crooked because it is diverse, full of migrants speaking dozens of languages; because its inequalities are so glaring...
Richard Sennett, *Building and Dwelling, Ethics for the City*

1. Introduction

Sara steps into the Peace Mosque followed by a group of twenty-five women she is accompanying through the open-air market of Porta Palazzo. Sara’s parents are Tunisian who migrated many years ago to Turin, the city where Sara was born, where she studies at university and where every Saturday she works alongside her father at a fruit and vegetable stand in the market. The women she is guiding around the Islamic prayer hall are Italians, and mostly from Turin, who have chosen to participate in a special walk on International Women’s Day. The itinerary was created for women by migrant women as an opportunity for sharing, getting to know each other and for

* University of Milan Bicocca. E-mail: francesco.vietti@unimib.it.

reflection on themes that both unite them and spark discussion. It is a fresh way to wander through the city, observe the territory, to discover unfamiliar places or those seen as difficult to access. In the mosque, Sara speaks about the veil and of the five pillars of Islam. She shows how *kajal* is used to augment the beauty of the eyes and she passes around a small flask of scented rose water.

At the same time, Madhobi is accompanying her group through the alleyways of the Torpignattara neighbourhood in Rome. Madhobi was born in Bangladesh and grew up in the Italian capital city where today she studies languages at university. Here too, many of her fellow Romans have chosen to sign up for an intercultural walk: they visit shops brimming with *saris*, learning how to wear them and set them off with jewels; they experience the art of *henné* tattooing and sample tasty foods traditionally cooked for weddings and other ceremonies. To finish, they meet women from a Bangladeshi Association for a debate about women's rights. In Florence, Erii too is accompanying the 8th March special edition Migrantour walk: her Japanese background enables her to explain the complex dressing ceremony and the specific role of *geishas* in Japanese culture and the Western idea of Oriental femininity. Meanwhile in Milan, Emma, an English teacher of Bolivian origin, leads the tour of Via Padova, speaking about the impact made by historical female figures in their own country, the migratory flows of women from Latin America, the projects for the integration of migrant women but also family traditions and recipes.

It is no coincidence that on the same day, hundreds of kilometres apart, Sara, Madhobi, Erii and Emma are leading a hundred women to explore the intercultural heritage of the neighbourhoods where they live. This is the result of long-standing process – begun as a pivotal experience launched a decade ago in Turin – which has become the international project “Migrantour. Intercultural Urban Routes” currently involving 16 cities across Europe.

In order to analyse the assumptions and the aims of this initiative, it is necessary to refer to the concept of “traveling cultures” proposed by James Clifford (1997) more than twenty years ago in his seminal book *Routes*. Clifford invites us to ethnographically observe those “transit sites” crossed by tourists, travellers, government officials, police officers, merchants, pilgrims, artists, seasonal workers and immigrants, as well as powerful global forces such as television and goods. In particular, we should pay attention to the different scales of what, following Hall and Williams (2002), we can define as the “migration-tourism nexus”. The boundaries between these different forms of mobility are sometimes evanescent and it is possible to study the common work of the imagination in the processes of representation of the otherness related to “contemporary nomadism” (Callari Galli, 2004; Riccio, 2019).

Cultural diversity related to global migration is a key element of tourist attractiveness that many cities have used to transform their multi-ethnic neighbourhoods into places of leisure and consumption where tourists can enjoy “the whole world in a city” (Collins and Castillo, 1998). This kind of urban tourism has been often portrayed in negative terms: many authors underscored how the processes of gentrification exclude migrants from the economic and social benefits brought by tourism, while at the same time the reification of ethnic differences represents their cultural heritage in an exotic and over-simplistic way (Rath, 2007). Such analyses show how the connection between mobility and heritage in the urban setting is a complex phenomenon with rich potential but also risks that must be confronted with knowledge and awareness of its symbolic and political meaning. Assuming these critical stances, since 2009 the

Migrantour project has been developing an innovative approach to urban tourism: migrants of different origins are actively involved in designing intercultural walking tours and leading citizens and tourists to discover the history of immigration that shaped the development of the neighbourhoods.

In this contribution, I present a critical analysis of the Migrantour walking tours in several Italian and European cities. My research has been conducted from a significant but problematic position, because of my role as scientific coordinator of the project, alongside an interdisciplinary team including professionals from the tourism sector, members of NGOs and other academics (historians, geographers and anthropologists). In fact, my study has a self-reflective character and it is grounded in a corpus of qualitative interviews (involving colleagues, migrants and tourists) and long-term ethnographic observation of the decision-making dynamics within the project.

2. Cities, tourists, migrants: from slumming to responsible tourism

The starting point of my analysis aims to put into historical perspective the theme of the ethnic neighbourhoods as places of leisure and consumption of cultural diversity. The origin of this process can be traced back to the 1800s, when in London and, shortly after, in New York, a new trend spread among the well-to-do classes: slumming. Ladies and gentlemen would “walk the slums” for the curiosity of observing how migrants lived, “people of whom they had heard speak but whom they were as ignorant of as if they were inhabitants of a strange and distant country” (Heap, 2009). So started a process that would soon transform neighbourhoods of the great metropolises that were subject to great flows of migration into tourist sites.

This kind of urban tourism was immediately seen as problematic and ambiguous but also potentially charged with a great transformative force at the political level. For much of the well-off bourgeoisie slum walking remained merely a useful hobby for satisfying a taste for the exotic; yet for other tourists, the visits took on a different value. Consider what happened in New York: in a short time, the living conditions of migrants living in poverty in Chinatown, Harlem and the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where people went to see “the Jews and the Italians”, were brought to the centre of public attention and political debate. The tours inspired philanthropists, intellectuals and politicians leading to the birth of charitable associations and significant reforms in the field of welfare (Koven, 2004).

In the arc of a few decades the great international metropolises began, therefore, to build a part of their own tourist offerings on the theme of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. New York made its Little Italy, Little Odessa and Little India the distinctive features of an image based on the touristification of the melting pot; Paris elaborated the *bohémien* charm of its Latin Quarter; San Francisco proposed its Chinatown as a model for all the Chinese neighbourhoods that were forming across the Americas, Europe and Oceania. Indeed, it was Chinatowns, with their high degree of aesthetic elaboration and architectural stylisation that became over the course of the twentieth century, the symbols of “ethnic quarters” as places for entertainment and the consumption of diversity (Lin, 1998).



Figure 1: A photo from September 1909 showing an evening tour of Chinatown in New York.

Source: Munsey's Magazine.

After the Second World War, and even more in the last thirty years, with the acceleration in processes of economic and cultural globalisation, neighbourhoods have emerged in many other European cities that, because of their “multiethnic” label, have become significant tourist destinations, such as Raval in Barcelona or Kreuzberg, the “Turkish Quarter” of Berlin. Alongside the dominant narrative that describes metropolitan areas subject to significant migration as places of poverty and degradation, an alternative discourse was formed that represents “ethnic quarters” as places of encounter with the different aspects of a “day-to-day multiculturalism” (Semi and Colombo, 2007). From the revolving kebabs in the windows of Turkish eateries to Oriental take-aways, through to CDs of Berber music, spices, Indian bridal dresses, statues of Buddhas, Andean bags and ponchos: the variety of objects and products that symbolise and render cultural difference tangible, while also attracting the tourist eye, is huge. As highlighted by anthropologists Volkan Aytar and Jan Rath (2012) in one of the most well-known and thorough studies on the theme, the processes of touristification of cultural diversity brought about by migration is ambivalent: on one hand it emerges the vitality and dynamism of migrants in attracting visitors and investment to the areas where they live and work, especially entrepreneurs engaged in various sectors of “ethnic business”. On the other, lies criticism of the dynamics of planned transformation and “regeneration” of those areas by local governments and international investors that aim at their gentrification and, if not by expelling migrant residents altogether, then by excluding them from the benefits brought by visitors. The growing tourism and leisure industries in these neighbourhoods offer opportunities to natives and immigrants, skilled and unskilled and males and females alike. They participate as organizers of cultural events, as web designers, as owners of

cafes, coffee shops, restaurants, travel bureaus, hotels, souvenir shops, telephone and Internet shops, but also as waiters, cooks, dishwashers and janitors (...). Together, they engender “globalization from below” and create mainstream but unique products in terms of innovation, production and consumption (...). In our globalizing world – where local difference and place identity are increasingly important – heritage and cultural diversity have become crucial components of the cultural capital of post-industrial societies. (Aytar and Rath, 2012, p. 2).

The awareness of the various opportunities and risks connected to the interaction between migrants, tourists, entrepreneurs and policymakers in the urban setting prompted the multidisciplinary team who set up the Migrantour project to adopt the perspective developed by responsible tourism about the economic, social and cultural impact of tourism in countries in the global South as a way to imagine a collaborative means of grasping urban super-diversity in the “era of migration” and to build social cohesion in European cities (Davolio and Somoza, 2016). From this perspective, the themes of encounter and participation are at the core of project planning. In an encounter whose protagonists are the citizens that live and work in the multicultural neighbourhoods, migrants were called to design and lead urban intercultural routes sharing their own life-stories and their point of view about the past, present and future of the city. It is through this active participation that the people and places acquire the right to represent themselves rather than be represented: a crucial point in order to avoid commercialising diversity, reducing it to a product to promote and sell, or painting it in an exoticized way for use and consumption by tourists fascinated by a taste for otherness.

Moving through this hybrid field, made of connections and overlaps, does not therefore mean neglecting or underestimating the structural differences between “regimes of mobility” (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2011) that distinguish tourists and migrants across the globe and within our cities. These boundaries are often reinforced by the control, surveillance and governance of freedom of movement in the neo-liberal world. Nina Glick-Schiller and Noel Salazar have clearly indicated the need not to depoliticize the issue, while maintaining a high focus on the hierarchies of status and the conditions of inequality and exclusion produced by the possibilities and constraints linked to the inseparable binomial mobility/immobility.

3. The Migrantour network

The Migrantour project took its first steps in Turin, capital of Piedmont, a region in the North-West of Italy, a few kilometres from the Alps and the French border and with a long history of migration behind it. Here in 2009 the social cooperative Viaggi Solidali, a tour operator active in the field of responsible tourism, first thought to involve a group of first- and second-generation immigrants as companions for a pivotal set of urban walks. The idea originated from two simple considerations: Turin, like many other Italian and European cities, had not yet given value to the intercultural richness of areas in which historically a significant presence of citizens of migrant origins had settled; to understand the social reality and daily life of these areas, there was no better way than to interact with residents and seek the accompaniment of locals – “locals” irrespective of their region or country of origin or that of their parents.

Viaggi Solidali’s initiative has been supported from the beginning by the NGOs ACRA and Oxfam Italia, that have contributed their knowledge and skills in the field of integration and social cohesion projects for third-country nationals, as well as a

strong focus on the ethical values and best practices for developing full European citizenship. These three organisations, members of the Italian Association for Responsible Tourism (AITR), in 2013 identified a series of partners with experience in the field of intercultural training, migrant integration and responsible tourism to spread the project widely across Italy and Europe.

Since 2014, each partner of the Migrantour network has implemented in the chosen cities a similar programme of activities. First, a preliminary study is carried out to sketch the history of migrations that transformed the various neighbourhoods through which the intercultural urban routes pass. The second step is a training course for people interested in becoming intercultural companions. The people who during these years have applied for the courses are usually of very different origins and ages, with different life stories, educational backgrounds, skills and work experience, but sharing certain fundamental characteristics: good knowledge of the language of their country of residence; a high level of curiosity for the local history; and a desire to share their personal experience of migration and their involvement in the social, cultural and economic life of the city. The free training courses for aspiring intercultural companions aim to reinforce such attitudes. Anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and historians help share knowledge about the relationship between migration and the territory; professional tour guides and communication experts contribute to teaching guiding skills, group management and vocal skills; specialists in specific fields (interreligious dialogue, world food and cuisine, museums, cultural heritage, etc.) are called upon to deepen topics on which the walks will focus. A fundamental part of the training course concerns the field research and the active involvement of the intercultural companions in the process of finalizing the contents of the routes. This is a very important step not only for personal engagement but also for mutual exchange between course participants, since every contact, discovery and choice is shared and discussed, thus becoming part of the “community of practices” constituted by the whole group of trainers and trainees.

The walks are finally adapted for primary and secondary schools, with advanced training designed to enable the intercultural companion to work with students and young people: year after year the Migrantour routes have been tested as an effective tool for didactic courses in Global Citizenship Education. Combined with appropriate workshops or supplemented with ad hoc preparation by teachers, the walks contribute to tackling stereotypes and prejudices related to race, gender and class.

Today the Migrantour network includes 17 cities in six different countries: Turin, Milan, Genoa, Bologna, Parma, Pavia, Florence, Rome, Naples, Catania and Cagliari in Italy; Marseille and Paris in France; Brussels in Belgium; Lisbon in Portugal; Valencia in Spain and Ljubljana in Slovenia.

4. The intercultural urban routes in Cagliari, Catania, Lisbon and Valencia

Each city has its specific history of migration and its unique present. There are cities like Genoa and Florence where migration flows are part of a long history of travel, tourism and international trade. In others, like Lisbon and Marseille, contemporary migration reflects the complexity of their colonial and post-colonial past. Meanwhile others live, each in their own way, the contradictions and dramas of current events: Paris and Brussels, profoundly shaken by terrorist attacks during the last few years; Valencia, which rapidly lost a significant share of its migrant population as a result of the financial-economic crisis and is on the brink of a new wave of emigration. Being

of migrant origin has very different meanings and consequences for the daily life of people in the different countries in which the project developed. Similarly, intercultural dialogue at the local level operates with different assumptions and objectives according to the political, social and educational context.

The features of the Migrantour routes are flexible, so that they can reflect the different characteristics of the neighbourhoods involved in the project. These areas are often characterised by a certain discontinuity with respect to the surrounding environment: central districts with a wide variety of resident migrant groups such as Porta Palazzo in Turin, Esquilino in Rome or Mouraria in Lisbon; areas with a strong predominance of a single nationality such as the Chinese community in the Canonica-Sarpi neighbourhood of Milan or the Belgian Moroccans in the municipality of Molenbeek, Bruxelles; or multi-ethnic outskirts far from the city centres, such as Torpignattara in Rome or Orriols in Valencia. In all these different contexts, the Migrantour routes aim to identify themes and narratives to tell the story of the migrations that have transformed the area over time and the specific contribution that different generations of migrants have made to enriching the tangible and intangible heritage of the city. In several cases, the Migrantour walks represent a complementary experience linked to the visit of local museums about migration: Migrantour Paris cooperates with the *Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration*; as Migrantour Genova does with “MEM – Memory and Migration” (a section of the Maritime Museum).

A common characteristic of the walks is the effort to give a historical interpretation to the phenomenon of migration, identifying links and parallels between different flows over time and thereby providing tools for dialogue and mutual understanding between residents. Thus it emerged how all the cities developed through a similar path of immigration flows: first the urbanisation of people from the rural areas surrounding large urban agglomerations, often attracted by the initial processes of industrialisation; then a wider internal migration at a regional and national level that prompted people from disadvantaged peripheral areas to move towards more economically developed urban centres; then a phase of colonial and post-colonial migration which, in certain countries in particular such as France, Portugal and Belgium, involved chains of migration from the (ex-)colonies, often accompanied by a parallel repatriation of citizens that had previously emigrated from the homeland to overseas territories. Finally, in the current period, the international migration linked to the unequal distribution of resources and wealth between the “centres” and “peripheries” of the world in the era of globalisation. Inequalities that ground the legitimate aspiration of an ever-growing number of individuals to improve their quality of life by crossing national boundaries and imagining a future elsewhere where there are greater opportunities to live in dignity: an endeavour that, as demonstrated above in the cases of Spain and Italy, is witnessing new waves of emigration from Europe towards other countries.

In the following paragraphs, I present an outline of the Migrantour walks in four different cities of the network, two located in Italy (Cagliari and Catania) and two in other European countries (Lisbon in Portugal and Valencia in Spain)¹. I consider these case studies to be good examples of the variety of intercultural routes developed by

¹ I would like to thank the local coordinators of the Migrantour network who provided me the information included in the following sections: Laura Longo in Cagliari, Flavia Monfrini in Catania, Filipa Bolotinha in Lisbon and Tomàs de los Santos in Valencia.

the network partners and of the different characteristics of the neighbourhoods involved in the projects.

4.1 Cagliari: Marina

Marina is one of Cagliari's four historic neighborhoods, a point of connection between the heart of the city and the port. It is not the area where the majority of immigrants live, but it is where the meeting and exchanges between different cultures is more evident. It was originally designed to be an area dedicated to warehouses and accommodations for port workers nearby. Under the Pisan domination, the area was surrounded by walls then taken down to make space for a road axis which connected it to the other quarters of the city. Under the Aragonese domination, the number of residents increased, boosting the area's tendency to provide hospitality to merchants and fishers. Even today the local streets from Via Barcellona to Via Napoli are named after the communities which established some prosperous trade relations there (the Moors, the Pisans, but also the Sicilians and the Genoese). Following the 1943 bombings, the urban environment changed: some buildings in the neighborhood testify to the legacies of the war and of the subsequent reconstruction.

While in the past the Marina district was deemed unsafe because of the low light conditions and the people who frequented the port, nowadays its reputation has changed: its streets enhance the different elements that once came from the sea for business purposes and that today represent the multicultural richness of the city. There is food from all over the world, spice bazaars and restaurants offering culinary traditions from Indian to Argentinian. As a gathering place, the walking path of Via Manno winds inside the Marina district and, near Via Roma, there are porches which host shops of all kinds, tastes and pocketbooks. To complete the location's commercial offerings there are historical hotels, which over time housed writers and artists from all over the world, from Balzac to Lawrence and Carlo Levi.

The urban fabric is enlivened by the presence of numerous associations and social cooperatives, dedicated to after-school activities for foreigners' children, hospitality afforded to asylum seekers and leisure activities for everyone. There are also many religious buildings, in particular the churches of St. Eulalia, St. Agostino and St. Sepolcro, where excavations of significant archaeological value can be noted. The first prayer hall in the city also rises in this neighborhood, although is still too small to house the Muslim community that requires a dedicated space to exercise its faith.

The Migrantour walk starts from Piazza Yenne, the junction between Castello, Marina, Stampace and Villanova, the four neighborhoods of the historical part of Cagliari: an ideal location to discuss the importance of the square across periods and cultures. The walk continues towards Via Manno until Hostel Marina, where the concept of "hospitality" means welcoming tourists as well as students and migrants. Then the route reaches Piazza San Sepolcro, which offers a variety of choices for intercultural companions: take participants inside the church of San Sepolcro organized by its double rite – Catholic and Orthodox – as well as by a double altar; opt for a visit to the office of Sicomoro, a social cooperative committed to taking in unaccompanied underage foreigners in Cagliari; meet with the coordinators of Sportello Kepos by Caritas, a location where foreigners and Italians can be heard, where they discuss the actual and perceived presence of foreigners in the city, dismantling prejudices and sharing numbers and stories.

From the square the walk continues towards one of the narrow streets of the Marina district, Via Barcellona, in order to reach the last stop: the Indian restaurant Namasté with its owner, Jasvir, ready to speak about her country of origin and her journey as a female entrepreneur in Italy, offering some spiced tea or a sweet Ladoo.

4.2 Catania: St. Berillo and Civita

The selected area to develop the intercultural route includes the quarters of St. Berillo and Civita. The entire area is situated in the heart of the old town of the city, near the nightlife streets (pubs, restaurants and cocktail bars); its touristic character is confirmed by the strong presence of hotels and B&Bs. The urban decay endured by the housing stock, which allows for low rent rates and fire sales, contributes to its attractiveness and ethnic rooting which favour the development of migration chains and the reception of newcomers. For example, for almost three generations the Senegalese community has been residing in St. Berillo, attracted by the presence of the *Fera 'o Luni* (the most famous historical market in Catania along with the fish market, Peschiera), which provided jobs for many residents.



Figure 2: One of the stops of the Migrantour walk in Catania is the Mosque of Mercy.

Source: Migrantour Catania staff.

This territory is organized by strong public interest and rising conflict between the major political forces and the real estate industry and the weak powers of residents. Moreover, there is no shortage of centres for gathering and activism purposes, such as A.P.S. Trame di Quartiere, which organizes Migrantour Catania. Among the places of worship it is worth mentioning the Mosque of Mercy (*Moschea della Misericordia*) in Cutelli Square, an important point of reference for all of the

Muslims residing in the area, and the church of *Crocifisso della Buona Morte*, the first church in Catania engaged in the reception of refugees.

The Migrantour walk follows the perimeter of the St. Berillo quarter and descends to Civita, starting from the office of the Associazione Trame di Quartiere to the Mosque of Mercy in Cutelli Square. The part of the route covering San Berillo allows participants to cross the demolished area, but the focus of the stories told by the intercultural companions lies not merely in the historical aspect of the quarter. Stops such as the Piazza Stesicoro, *Fera 'o Luni* and the Piazza della Repubblica convey a general outline of the history of Catania and help to spur a storytelling/debate on identity and origins. A mural portraying Saint Berillo, the first non-native bishop in Catania, coming from Antioch, marks the walk and the neighborhood's "migrant" aspect from the very start. Stesichorus, a Greek poet the square was named after, allows for an in-depth analysis of Catania's Greek origins and then compares them with the companion's countries of origin (in particular Liberia, founded by former slaves who returned home). The market in Catania shares many common traits with Arabic *souqs*; the carob tree and the statue of Cola Pesce, a legendary Sicilian character, in Piazza della Repubblica offer an outlook on gastronomy (a popular sub-Saharan African dish is made of carob) and partly on local and African myths and legends.

Another aspect stems from the stop in Piazza Giovanni Falcone: the dialogue between religions. In the same building we can find a Catholic and an Orthodox church thanks to the parish priest of the church of *Crocifisso della Buona Morte*, who made a room for the Romanian community living in Catania to organize its place of worship. Similar phenomena are not new to the intercultural companions who all share – each in his/her own personal way – stories linked to inter-religious exchanges and local ritual traditions. The final step of the route consists of a stop in a Senegalese or Moroccan shop, based on the group's needs, which allows for an in-depth analysis of the various culinary cultures and symbolic meaning of meals, as well as a visit to one of the largest mosques in southern Italy, the Mosque of Mercy.

4.3 Lisbon: Mouraria

Lisbon and Mouraria are joined, with the history of both originating from the presence of diverse people and cultures. In 1143, Lisbon was conquered by D. Alfonso Henriques, becoming a Christian city, and was selected as the capital of the Kingdom of Portugal. The birth of Mouraria goes back to the same period, built outside the walls as the only territory where the Moors were authorised to reside. In the 16th century, the first migrants were forcedly led into slavery in Lisbon, which in that era was in fact the largest European centre of the flourishing slave trade.

On the 25th of April 1974, Portugal became a democracy after half a century of dictatorship. This was the start of the phase of decolonisation of Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Between April and November 1975, Portugal took in half a million Portuguese and their descendants from the ex-colonies. At the end of the 1980s, African migration from Lusophone countries took on an economic character. Together with flows from Africa, a growing number of migrants began to arrive from Brazil, benefiting from bilateral accords between the two countries and special provision for regularisation. Finally, from the 1990s to today, migration towards Lisbon has involved new areas of departure such as Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Russia,

Romania and Moldova) and Asia (China, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan). Over 50 nationalities are represented in Mouraria, with a percentage of foreign residents (24% of the total population) well above the average for the city. The largest groups of migrants are those from Bangladesh, India, China and Brazil, while the African communities tend to reside in outer areas, even if they regularly visit Mouraria for business, work and other services. The territory of Mouraria is extremely rich from the perspective of historical heritage, being one of the oldest quarters of the city: *Fado* was born here. Considered until recently a socially degraded area, situated close to the elegant city centre, Mouraria in reality is the new centre of Lisbon from a cultural, social and commercial point of view, because of a thorough process of urban redevelopment led by City Hall and the local organisations. Bit by bit the area has also become the stage for new artistic and commercial activity among Portuguese and Europeans, testifying to the development of new dynamics related to the leisure industry, consumption and entertainment that have identified Mouraria as a “trendy” and attractively “vintage” area.

The Migrantour walk connects five main spots in Mouraria. First, *Casa Comunitária da Mouraria*, the home of the Associação Renovar a Mouraria which has a cafeteria open to the public and a rich programme of cultural events. The Association develops permanent activities to support the local community (for example, Portuguese lessons for migrants, a legal help desk and educational support). The second stop is *Rua do Capelão*, the most traditionally “Portuguese” area of the neighbourhood, where you can take in the history of *fado* at every step. In the second part of the route, intercultural companions lead participants to *Largo de São Domingos*, where one of the most important Orthodox churches in the city rises, but which is also a meeting place for the African communities, which give life to the informal market here in which typical products (*cola, mancara*) are sold and small services (shoes and bags repair) are provided. It continues to the *Centro Comercial da Mouraria*, a shopping centre where you can find every possible type of product of Asian origin, and finally to *Rua do Benfornoso*, the heart of the Bengali community, with its restaurants, halal butchers, hairdressers and much else besides.

4.4 Valencia: Orriols

The place chosen for the activity of Migrantour Valencia is the neighbourhood of Orriols, in the northern outskirts of the city. The area, as we know it today, was formed through three waves of migration: beyond the original nucleus of local citizens, the first great migration was made up of the families or prisoners of the penal colony located in the Monastery of Sant Miquel dels Reis, for the most part republican prisoners, victims of reprisals of the Franco regime. These families came to live in the neighbourhood so that they could visit and aid their detained family members. The second wave of migrants occurred in the 1970s and was linked to the exodus from the rural areas to the city. This large migration, decisive in changing the social and urban environment of the area, came primarily from the regions of Estremadura, Andalusia and Castilla-La Mancha. The third arrival of migrants has its origins in the first years of this century and concerns foreign citizens, principally people originating from Latin America and Africa. Orriols is a neighbourhood of crowded streets, a lively quarter with a great social dynamism. It is situated outside the traditional tourist routes of the

city and is an area that has undergone a serious deterioration in its historical assets due to local policies of speculation in construction.

The Migrantour walk aims to connect different social, cultural and commercial spaces that render Orriols a unique area of Valencia for the richness of its intercultural character. It starts from the office of Valencia Acoge, an organisation that provides support and advice to migrants for the whole city. Then the routes pass through an area that, though not particularly attractive from an architectural point of view, has other qualities that make it an interesting environment, even if it is little known to its own inhabitants. Here the Islamic Cultural Centre of Valencia open its door, promoting a variety of activities (whether religious, educational or social) not only with Muslims, but for the whole local community. Right in front of the Centre the few remaining houses of the historic centre of Orriols can be seen, with their narrow streets and ancient residences (some of medieval origins). These remnants give an idea of the old Calle Mayor with its town hall (now demolished) and the city prison opposite. Behind this nucleus of houses, today there is a large field that should sooner or later become a garden (as often promised by the Municipality). The walk continues, focusing on social and cultural themes and visiting the project Orriols Con-Vive, an intercultural centre that has become a meeting place for the different people and organisations of the area. The next stop is one of the most interesting monuments of the neighbourhood: the ancient Gothic church of the now-vanished monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena that in 1971 was moved, stone by stone, from the centre of Valencia to Orriols. Finally, the intercultural companions lead the participants to the Evangelical Church whose members are mostly Roma people, the most important cultural minority in Spain that, despite a long history of economic marginalisation and social stigmatisation, has played a crucial role in the process of identity-building and heritage-making of the country.

5. Voices from the field: the intercultural companions

The most important element uniting the tours described above and all the other Migrantour walks is the contribution of the intercultural companions. They are women and men originating from over forty different countries who speak at least thirty different languages, all with their own set of knowledge and objectives to meet through the project: the desire to meet new people and to express their thoughts about the city in which they live, the possibility of acquiring new professional skills and, at the end of the project, obtaining an income by carrying out paid work. All those who participated in training and the creation of the routes were asked to make a common effort: to weave their own personal or family stories of migration with the history of the city, and to share their knowledge with their colleagues as a tool for building authentic intercultural dialogue capable of reflecting the complexity of the daily exchanges between cultures taking place in the neighbourhoods where the walks happen.

In this last section of my article I offer an insight into the intercultural companions' self-representations and perception of the impact of Migrantour training and walks in

their daily life, and their own role in developing the project. The following excerpts come from interviews collected by the local coordinators in each city of the network². In Bologna, the intercultural companions were trained by Next Generation Italy, an association created in 2008 by a group of young “second generation in families of migrant background”. Semhar was born and raised in Asmara, Eritrea. She recalls:

“I came to Italy for studying. I have been living in Bologna for 15 years now and I work here as an intercultural mediator. I have chosen this job because I’m very interested in migration issues and, mostly, in interculturality. I consider Bologna as my city of adoption, and I love this place nearly as well as I love my native city. Migrantour gives me the chance to know my city better, and to help others know it better, from different standpoints. We create opportunities to gather different cultures and religions”.

Her colleague Ali came to Italy from Pakistan at the age of 5. He came across the Migrantour project in the middle of a long-standing process of identity-building:

“Until the age of 18, I felt only Italian. Then someone, and the law, pointed out to me that I wasn’t an Italian citizen. Curiously, I didn’t even feel I was a Pakistani citizen. What did I have to do? After a long, tough process, I concluded that these two languages, cultures and identities were part of me. This is why now, during Migrantour’s Bologna walks, I like to illustrate the features of today’s society to different people, who share the same places and, sometimes, are challenged by the same worries. A lack of knowledge contributes to conflicts; therefore, getting to know each other is vital”.

Some of the Migrantour Bologna intercultural companions have experienced a different type of migration, namely an internal one from the South of Italy. This is the case of Filomena, whose family has been living in Basilicata for several generations now, and who came to Bologna to study anthropology. She explains:

“I fell in love with the city. I come from a village from the provinces. It is so small that one can cross it, and meet all its inhabitants, within a few hours’ walk. To me, living in Bologna has had multiple meanings: I have seen the urban spaces changing, in terms of their proportions and our perceptions. A stroll in the city allows for exploring diverse worlds: street markets with their colours and scents bring me back to the flavours of traditional peasant food from Lucania. I realize that those smells are synonyms for ‘home’; also for other people who are from distant countries”.

In Naples, the group of Migrantour intercultural companions includes twelve people trained by Casba, the first social cooperative founded in Campania by citizens from a foreign background. Among them is Pierre, from Senegal, who has been living in Naples for almost twenty years now. He is a social worker and a reference person for the institutions, city organisations, and other communities of migrants:

² I would like to thank the local coordinators of the Migrantour project who collected the interviews included in this section: Filomena Cillo in Bologna, Laura Fusca in Naples, Fatima Rochdi in Brussels and Stefan Bulat in Paris.

“When I was a child in Dakar back from the seaside and with some friends, we dropped into the market to get some ‘aussa’, a type of stock made from entrails and prepared in huge cooking pots by men: a coin was enough for buying a taste. I often share this memory when telling about ‘bror e’ purp’ – octopus broth – sold by the merchants of the Borgo di Sant’Antonio market in the morning, to fight cold. I am always profoundly moved: on the one side, this brings me back to my childhood and, on the other side, I am happy to see the reactions in those who listen. They are moved too, because they identify with what they hear”.

His colleague Yuliya is Ukrainian. After joining the project, she decided to become a licensed tour guide and now works full-time in the tourism sector:

“I consider Migrantour a necessary initiative. I guide Neapolitans to places that they fear or simply don’t know. I bring them into contact with my Ukrainian culture and with the culture of many new Neapolitans from all over the world, who work, pray, and achieve their aspirations here. We live our lives. This cannot be frightening”.



*Figure 3: One of the intercultural companions of Migrantour Naples at work with a group of tourists during a walk in a market area.
Souce: Migrantour Naples staff.*

In Brussels, Migrantour is coordinated by AlterBrussels, a not-for-profit association engaged in promoting the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the city through alternative forms of tourism both for the inhabitants of Brussels and for tourists. Neimar, from Brazil, is one of the intercultural companions who lead the walks in the neighbourhoods of Matongé:

“I have lived in Belgium for two years. At the beginning I was struggling to speak French because of my accent”, she says. “Being actively involved in the Migrantour project has made me aware of the richness of this double culture. I guide tours in several city neighbourhoods and museums, but I am fond of Matongé: it reminds me of home, a little. I feel comfortable here”.

The route in Cureghem, another neighbourhood of the Belgian capital, was instead designed by Ibrahim, from Albania:

“Preparing walks in Cureghem gave me the chance to get to know my personal and family history better. I have learned how and why we came to Brussels. I love the interreligious visits we organise here. Contributing to cross-cultural dialogue and being a mediator give me a sense of self-empowerment. I am happy to share these moments with travellers and hosts. This is particularly true when our walk ends up at Saaber’s, who is a Syrian refugee specialising in toasting dried fruit and who has opened his shop in Cureghem. He has managed to rescue his equipment from Syria. The streets are filled with the scent of Saaber’s dried fruits!”.

Many intercultural companions claim that a personal interest linked to knowledge possessed before the migration was empowered thanks to the new skills acquired during the training courses provided by the Migrantour project, and therefore transformed into an opportunity for personal growth and concrete professional improvement. This is, for example, the case of Siga, one of the intercultural companions of Migrantour Paris, who designed and now leads the walks in the “African fashion district” of Goutte d’Or:

“I am French from Mali. I was already personally interested in the themes of history and migration and now I have been able to integrate my own knowledge thanks to the training course. The Migrantour project has enabled me to enrich myself culturally through the diversity of meetings and tours, and to overcome some stereotypes I myself had about immigration”.

The mixing of personal vocation and new, open horizons linked to the Migrantour project also emerges from the poetic words of Sanja, an intercultural companion on the art tour in Belleville, Paris:

“I come from Croatia and my friends call me ‘migratory bird’. My love for travel does not allow me to rest long in a place. Living in Paris, in the working-class neighbourhood of Belleville, you only need to cross the road to meet different but at the same time, blended, cultures. Here I discovered a small world that keeps on amazing me. Paris has become my nest and now I can travel the world simply by walking through the streets of Paris. For me, this cultural diversity is a good example against all the difficulties and limitations of society such as racism and nationalism. It is not surprising that a neighbourhood like Belleville is an oasis of creative energy where everything is possible. What could a migratory bird want more than having a nest in an oasis?”.

6. Conclusions

Mobility studies have shown that, despite their diversity and specificity, migration and tourism are two interconnected and intertwined phenomena of the contemporary world (Urry, 2000; Adey, 2017).

Since 1950 the global number of migrants and tourists has risen from one hundred million to over one billion per year (Unwto, 2009). In the era of globalisation, as the Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai clearly noted: “Tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33).

Cities are undoubtedly a privileged environment for observing and analysing the combined effect of migration and tourism. Research that sought to grasp urban super-diversity by focusing on the uses of urban space, rather than on the reified categories of “ethnicity” and “community”, proved to be particularly fruitful. This approach makes it possible to place at the centre of ethnographic observation the needs of citizens, the issue of the (un)equal access to public space and the conflicts over the different interpretations of local heritage. From this perspective, neighbourhoods emerge as a key dimension, both for integration policies implemented by local governments and for socio-cultural initiatives designed by researchers who want to apply their scientific knowledge (Pastore and Ponzio, 2012).

As outlined in the previous paragraphs, the Migrantour project appears to be an interesting example of how concepts, theories and methodological tools developed by anthropologists, geographers, sociologists and historians in the field of migration, tourism and urban transformation can be applied to identify the needs for change expressed by a territory and its inhabitants, to start a collaboration with the local population and to plan an intervention aimed at creating new possibilities for employment and civic participation.

In these short final remarks, I would like to recall the title of my contribution and the epigraph I chose to introduce the text. To what extent can the claim for a “crooked, open, modest city” launched by Richard Sennett (2018) in his recent and influential book *Building and Dwelling, Ethics for the City* be evoked as a paradigm to analyse the relevance of the Migrantour project?

I consider that there is no disputing the fact that our contemporary cities are definitely “crooked”. In the narrow streets of Marina in Cagliari as well as in the bustle of the open-air markets in Catania, in the gentrified patchwork of Mouraria in Lisbon as well in the juxtaposition of concrete low-income housing and the stone jewels of the Renaissance in the outskirts of Valencia, migrants and tourists represent tangible elements of what Appadurai (1996) defined as the “ethnoscape” of globalisation. Our cities are crooked because they are full of “disjunctures” and “differences”: and these inequalities underlie the premise for the step towards the second, crucial element of Sennett’s list. In his analysis about contemporary society, Sennett laments that the “closed city” – segregated, regimented, and controlled – has been spreading, affecting the lives of billions of individuals in urban agglomerations in the global North as well as in global South. As a radical, vital alternative, he argues for the “open city”: “Ethically, an open city would of course tolerate differences and promote equality (...) but would more specifically free people from the straitjacket of the fixed and the familiar, creating a terrain in which they could experiment and expand their experience” (Sennett, 2018, p. 9).

It seems to me that the above-mentioned testimonies by the intercultural companions explicitly or implicitly express the wish to “open the city”, taking a clear stance in the struggle that Sennett rightly pointed out as one of the most crucial political challenges of our times: that between the supporters of the “closed city”, xenophobic and subjected to an anti-democratic regime of control, and those who instead support the possibility of an “open city”, which presupposes a cosmopolitan way of thinking and living in an urban space.

Here we reach the third and final element: modesty. Designing and leading an intercultural urban route is useless if the participants of the walks do not assume a specific ethical commitment to practice “a certain kind of modesty: living one among many, engaged in a world that does not mirror oneself. Living one among many enables (...) richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning. That is the ethics of an open city” (Sennett, 2018, p. 302).

In conclusion, a “modest city”, so understood, is the only possible environment where a project like Migrantour, or other similar experiences of intercultural urban tourism, can effectively support social cohesion and build mutual comprehension and respect among all residents, and at the same time avoid the risk of becoming just another way to exploit migrants using an agreeable and joyful label.

References

- Adey P. (2017), *Mobility*, New York, Routledge.
- Appadurai A. (1996), *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Aytar V., Rath J. (eds, 2012), *Selling Ethnic Neighborhoods: The Rise of Neighborhoods as Places of Leisure and Consumption*, New York, Routledge.
- Callari Galli M. (eds, 2004), *Nomadismi contemporanei. Rapporti tra comunità locali, stati-nazione e 'flussi culturali globali'*, Rimini, Guaraldi.
- Clifford J. (1997), *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge & London, Harvard University Press.
- Collins J., Castillo A. (1998), *Cosmopolitan Sydney: Exploring the World in One City*, Sydney, Pluto Press.
- Davolio M., Somoza A. (2016), *Il viaggio e l'incontro. Cos'è il turismo responsabile*, Milan, Altreconomia.
- Glick Schiller N., Salazar N. (2013), Regimes of Mobility across the Globe, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39, 2, pp. 183-200.
- Hall C.M., Williams A.M. (eds, 2002), *Tourism and Migration. New Relationships between Production and Consumption*, Dordrecht, Kluwer.
- Heap C. (2009), *Slumming. Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Koven S. (2004), *Slumming. Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Lin J. (1998), *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Pastore F., Ponzio I. (eds, 2012), *Concordia Discors. Convivenza e conflitto nei quartieri di immigrazione*, Rome, Carocci.

Rath J. (ed, 2007), *Tourism, Ethnic Diversity and the City*, New York & London, Routledge.

Riccio B. (ed, 2019), *Mobilità. Incursioni etnografiche*, Milan, Mondadori.

Semi, G., Colombo, E. (eds, 2007). *Multiculturalismo quotidiano. Le pratiche della differenza*, Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Sennett R. (2018), *Building and Dwelling, Ethics for the City*, London, Penguin Books.

Unwto (2009), *Migration and Tourism. Exploring the Relationship between Two Global Phenomena*, Madrid, Unwto.

Urry J. (2000), *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, London, Routledge.