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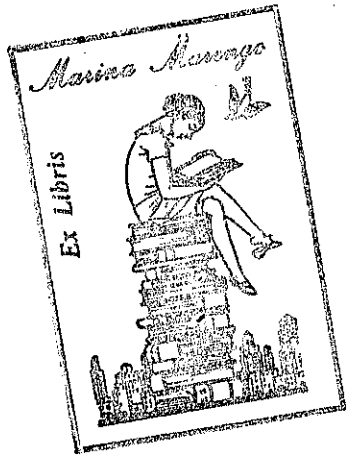
Studies in Segregation and Desegregation



Edited by

IZHAK SCHNELL
Tel Aviv University

WIM OSTENDORF
University of Amsterdam

Ashgate

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5 Interculturality: A Preferential Path in the Search for a New Urban Social Equilibrium?

MARINA MARENGO

Introduction

In the context of a more general project focussing on cities and intercultural relationships in Switzerland, this paper intends to present certain types of places in which exchange and transaction take place, not only between the immigrant and indigenous populations, but also between the different immigrant ethnic groups inhabiting the Lausanne urban area.[1] It also seeks to examine the context in which these places emerged and the discourses that underlie them by placing the emphasis on the representations that are made of these places and on the construction of sense and the way in which space is structured. Our interest in these 'hybrid places' stems from the notion that immigration in urban centres promotes a 'culture of mixedness' which in itself represents the central issue in the whole question of cohabitation between and integration of different populations at the urban level.

Our preoccupations and reflections can be situated within the larger context of the economy of the 'construction of the individual', of his/her education, personal competencies and material/immaterial well-being. Further, this approach reflects the emergence of a social economy centred on solidarity and on a new sector of production, the third sector, in which public institutions and associative networks of social solidarity intervene simultaneously, even conjointly. These types of possible partnerships are worthy of analysis and discussion.

The consciousness of and the use of a double hermeneutics – of the researcher and the competent protagonist – allowed us to demonstrate an

[1] *'Les lieux d'interculturalit?'*, FNRS Project, PNR39 – *Migrations et relations interculturelles*, Bern, FNRS, under the direction of Jean-Bernard Racine with Marina Marengo.

unexpected and as yet only partially articulated aspect of interculturality (Giddens, 1993; Kilani, 1994). Thus in this presentation we will endeavour to show that the mechanisms of interculturality function far beyond the scope of 'everyday' relationships between the indigenous and non-indigenous populations. While studying this type of relationship constitutes the basis of the main project, we are additionally aware that the problem constituted by attitudes towards change and otherness and towards cohabitation in a context of difference is almost a 'communicational problem' between official and non-official social networks.

Furthermore, an additional result of this type of study is the new awareness of unexpected forms of commitment and mediation by the observer-researcher, who becomes in turn a subject of observation.

We would like to emphasise at this juncture that we have avoided inevitably narrowing definitions of the concepts of segregation, integration and interculturality. In addition, we consider that the categorisation of our study sites as 'intercultural places' is not inherent to them, nor does it depend on the perspectives of or the theoretical choices made by the researchers involved in the project. This categorisation is the product of the protagonists themselves and of their actions. These actions are what constitute the place as it appears (Mondada, 1996). Therefore, instead of an approach which *a priori* defines the concepts of interculturality, we prefer an approach which removes the question of the definition of interculturality from the domain of theoretical discourse and places it in that of those day-to-day practicalities through which the protagonists themselves identify, describe and characterise intercultural situations in their context. The emergence of interculturality, then, is a phenomenon that needs to be studied in the field and not a predetermined theoretical construct. This position contrasts with a certain critical posture regarding interculturality, which stems from a comparison made between different cultural systems and which then decides upon their relative compatibility or incompatibility. As opposed to this approach, we prefer an empirical examination of those forms and practices which are the concrete manifestations of the emergence of intercultural relationships. In order to achieve this, it is essential to first establish an *in situ* observation of the ordinary practices of the protagonists, documented with recordings of their encounters and meetings (Marengo & Mondada, 1997). The case studies will be developed on the basis of the analyses of several semi-directive interviews that were held with a number of competent protagonists on site in a certain number of the places specifically chosen within the overall project to be the objects of more in-depth examination at a later date (Mondada, 1997).

Within this context, we will endeavour to demonstrate the manner in and extent to which the social protagonists correlate the relative complexity of their relationships towards 'the other' with the relative complexity of the urban environment (Guarrasi, 1996; Marengo, 1997). Our approach will, furthermore, allow us to reveal the contradictions that exist between the two operative social networks that exist in the Lausanne agglomeration, i.e. the 'official' one and the 'unofficial' one.

The Protagonists' Speech or the Discovery of a Fluid, Changing and Complex Universe

Let us move on to the presentation of some of the initial findings of our inquiries. For this we shall be using extracts taken from semi-directive interviews that were undertaken in some of the places chosen for the in-depth analysis.[2] The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how the complexity of day-to-day relationships has appeared in our inquiry into interculturality. The emergence of this component seems all the more significant to us because it was not made apparent to us through our reading or scientific reflection but rather through the social protagonists who were mobilised during the course of our research inquiries.[3] We found ourselves confronted by a field which was at once alive, changing, fluid

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2 The places chosen for detailed study are the following: The Spanish Centre 'Garcia Lorca' in Crissier, the Colonia Libera Italiana association in Renens, 'Globlivres', an intercultural library in Renens, the 'Français en Jeu' ('French at Stake') association, the Islamic Centre of Lausanne in the city center, the Recreation Centre in the Bourdonnette neighbourhood (western Lausanne), and the Recreation Centre in the Chailly neighbourhood (eastern Lausanne).

3 'By the term 'social protagonist' we refer to all those individuals who contribute in some way to the construction of the places in question. However, the different levels of their respective knowledge of the places in question and the nature of the specific competencies – professional or otherwise – that each of them brings to bear in the field have caused us to distinguish between these protagonists in relation to their level of competence. To mention but one example, the persons responsible for the management of these places exercise their influence over them in a completely different way than the users of the places do. It will be our business to ascertain how and to what extent the different levels of competence proper to the different protagonists contribute to the construction of those places chosen as objects of in-depth analysis' (M. Marengo, J.B. Racine, 'Social Sustainability in the Urban Context. Official and Unofficial Social Patterns: The Case of the Lausanne Agglomeration (Switzerland)', IGU Commission on Urban Development and Urban Life, Sinaia, 18-22 August 1998, p. 5 (in print).

and sensitive, and whose level of complexity exceeded all the pre-existing hypotheses (de Béchillon, 1994).

The Individual Pathways: The Expression of a Private Complexity

In the course of the initial interviews with our field informants, we asked them to tell us how they came to commit themselves to the creation of a place of encounter, exchange, leisure or training.

Many of these narrations, often amounting to condensed life histories, enabled us to reach an understanding that there exists – despite the differences of origin, profession, education and social group – a commonality behind the choice of commitment to a place. All our competent protagonists (Swiss or foreign) possess at least a double, and sometimes multiple, cultural affiliation and daily confront otherness and 'others' in their private or professional lives: *My husband is a Muslim and so in my family we have to get on with different cultures and religions* (Français en Jeu).

The necessity of mediating between different language and/or cultural affiliations in order to manage family and professional relationships calmly and harmoniously motivated our informants to go beyond the sphere of family and/or work and to attempt to exploit their individual capacities either in the creation of a place of cultural, social and/or linguistic mediation or by their active participation in an existing place which needed people capable of playing a conciliatory and mediating role among different languages and cultures.

Making available acquired capabilities and the expression of a desire to share personal experience is also a common component in the stories of many of our informants: *In the beginning it wasn't the social centre yet, but just the local community centre. It was in an old laundry on the ground floor of an apartment building. It was tiny but there were always people there and things going on* (Centre Socioculturel de Chailly).

In some cases, sharing personal experiences and making available acquired capacities led our protagonists to become conscious of the kinds of risks necessary in order to set up enterprise initiatives. These risks were often of an economic kind: *And so we started like that, with a few books which had been donated, some books that had been lent to us by the 'Bibliothèque pour Tous'. Then it just got bigger, little by little. We paid for it all ourselves. To begin with we paid for everything ourselves* (Globlivres). But they could also be political in nature: *Some of us were members of left wing parties....In those days the Swiss Communist Party was outlawed but they met anyway. They met from time to time* (Colonia Libera Italiana).

From the private and/or professional sphere to social action, the status of these multiple affiliations and acquired mediation capacities evolved. From individual richness/complexity – even pride in having known how to get by, in having understood how to transcend day-to-day difficulties – gradually there evolved a 'culture of sharing' as well as the indispensable tools necessary to help others unravel the tangle of their different cultural backgrounds and of their family and professional lives, which were often as complicated, if not more complicated to manage than those of the founders of the places in question: *Because of my personal situation, I think I'm able to get closer to the people that come here...perhaps I am able somehow to share their anxieties, but to understand their needs too* (Français en Jeu). Or: *To begin with they felt pretty lost when they came here. But then...finding a book in their own language. Not just on the level of reading...* (Globlivres). This additional complexity arose because the cultural and geographical distances which separate the country of origin from the country of immigration increased significantly with each successive migratory wave that established itself in Switzerland.

The Spatial Establishment

Making available acquired capabilities was not and has never been enough by itself if these same people are to achieve some sort of 'official' recognition as well as a visible profile within the Lausanne area. The principal founding act in all the cases considered was the setting up of an association and the acquisition of legal status from the administrative point of view. In order to be visible and able to establish concrete social relationships with other 'plural' individuals – or at the least to take an interest in plurality and in difference – it was indispensable for them to become figures of stability in the Lausanne environment. In all the cases that we have considered, spatial establishment – i.e. the opening of premises in the association's name – was considered the significant step by those persons who are now responsible and/or by those who initially set up the places under study (Marengo, 1998): *To begin with, in order to have some kind of status, we rented a shop which was free on the other side of the square. It used to be a wine store. We got going like that* (Globlivres) but also...*I was looking for people who could speak my language. In 1961*

there weren't too many Spaniards in Renens...there weren't too many. We got to know a few people, and then, in 1963, we set up the association and we opened the Spanish centre in Renens. I was part of it from the beginning (Garcia Lorca).

The spatial establishment implied, and still implies, responsibility, not only towards other members of the association but also towards other people interested in using the premises; this fact was clearly noted by our informants. In the first place, the responsibilities felt to be the most burdensome are the economic ones. It is obvious from what our informants said that the financial responsibilities were, and still are, either a cause of anxiety concerning the management of the place or a sorce of awareness of its durable territorial status. Despite unpaid voluntary labour – which represents the most common type of participatory activity both at the outset of these places and later – an economic investment on the part of the initiators was often necessary in order to get started: *...We paid for it all ourselves. To begin with we paid for everything ourselves* (Globlivres).

Financial problems often cause the responsible persons, particularly the founders, to make real material investments of money as well as free labour in the setting up of the premises: *It was an old house in Renens, rue de la Mebre. A really old house. We painted the doors; we did up the walls inside. That's where we started from* (Colonia Libera). This personal investment led the founders and the other voluntary workers to appropriate the place for themselves sometimes to the point of opposing initiatives from new members.

In some cases, the spatial establishment came well after the setting up of the association. The consciousness of being able to fulfil a societal function, to answer the needs expressed by a particular section of the community was sometimes more important than concern about spatial establishment: *They made room for us at the CSP* [Protestant Social Centre]. *We had just the corner of a table at our disposition. It wasn't easy to manage, to make ourselves known...but it worked with the people* (Français en Jeu). It was only later because of growth and the specific tasks which they needed to do that the need to have premises of their own became imperative: *Later on we got money from grants, and recognition, and the commune* [Lausanne] *offered us these premises. It was wonderful. At last we had a place were we could work properly* (Français en Jeu). In some cases, official recognition and the allocation of grant monies was indispensable for the setting up of a place with which the responsible people could identify and that the users might appropriate.

Relationships with the Local Authorities: Between the Need for Official Recognition and the Delicate Management of Neighbourly Relations

Relationships with the foreign 'other' are at times difficult to manage. One particular aspect concerns the arbitrary contingencies of the localisation of the places in question. It may present too great a difficulty for the people responsible for the place to deal with, not in the intellectual sense but simply in terms of time and energy. If changes in localisation are frequent in order to accomodate the ever increasing numbers of people interested in a place and in the activities and/or services it provides or because of the evolution in the type and number of activities and/or services being offered, it is not always the case that the quality of relations with the local population (especially when the place is situated in a residential building) and with the local authorities improves: *Because we were a bit noisy - over there we were in a first floor flat, rue du Midi, they threw us out...* And, *...seeing as how we'd been thrown out from the rue du Simplon and we needed to do something* ...(Garcia Lorca). This is particularly the case with places linked to foreign associations. A general attitude of suspicion or even hostility on the part of local authorities is often a cause of tension, particularly in cases where the role played by the associations in the community is not recognised, which is often the case with foreign associations. These tensions may lead to unexpected results to the detriment of other foreigners present in the agglomeration. Early groups of immigrants may reject the last immigrants to arrive when the first group's territorial inscription or particularly their status as stabilised inhabitants is questioned: *They said to us* [the members of the communal council] *that there were too many associations, that there were the Turks and the Tamils...but we've been here for forty years! You can't compare us...* [the President of la Colonia] *I don't have anything against the Turks or any of the others who have arrived here afterwards, but you can't compare us to them* [to the Mayor of Renens] *They arrived here once everything was finished. Us Italians, we made it all. Because we were the first here, before the Spanish, before the Portuguese* (Colonia Libera). The intervention of other local authority figures is sometimes asked for to resolve tensions of this kind. These are usually local worthies who act as mediators between the foreign spokespersons and the local political or administrative authorities: *In the end the owner of the premises, the boss of xxxx phoned me up and said, 'I've fixed a meeting with the Mayor. We're going, me, you and the building supervisor.' We met the Mayor, the communal clerk, a*

council member... (Colonia Libera). This paternalistic factory boss is a good example of one of these 'alternative' local authority figures. Sufficiently 'enlightened' to be able to become involved in the mediation and find solutions to reconcile the two parties in question, these 'alternative' figures often play a fundamental negotiating role in the management of relations between the people responsible for the places (not only foreigners) and local institutions.

The Place and the Neighbourhood: a Privileged Link?

Our observations in the field – both in the places and in their surrounding neighbourhoods – and more particularly the things that were said by the managers and active members in the two socio-cultural centres that were chosen for the study (in the Bourdonnette and Chailly neighbourhoods) enabled us to understand the extent to which these two places play a crucial role within the neighbourhoods in which they are located – at least so far as those people who use them are concerned. It will obviously be necessary for us to extend our study even further and particularly to take the time to speak at length with the people who frequent the centres as well as with the other inhabitants of the neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, the managers of the centres have already widened our vision of the field.

In the case of the Bourdonnette Socio-Cultural Centre, the responsible people clearly showed that: *This neighbourhood is geographically isolated. It is surrounded by roads, and separated from the rest by these roads....There is a village atmosphere. It feels like one is in a village and not in a town neighbourhood. Everybody knows everybody else and says hello.* The particularity of the neighbourhood (viewed from the outside as problematic or marginal) – along with its geographical location (circumscribed by major traffic arteries on the western edge of the city) – gives additional meaning to the socio-cultural centre which is situated right in the 'heart' of this 'village'. The people responsible for the place are even able to benefit from this environment in their work. The types of relationships that they are able to establish are far closer than in other, less isolated but also less problematical neighbourhoods. The social workers are perfectly well aware of this and realise that in exploiting these 'privileged' relationships they can achieve better results in the accomplishment of their tasks.

In the view of the people responsible for it, the Chailly Socio-Cultural Centre serves a function identical to that served by the Bourdonette centre

for a different category of population – especially foreign families recently arrived in Lausanne and in need of a place which can receive and look after their children during the daytime: *...there you are, those are the centre's regulars. This is like home to them. They are not really watched. Sometimes we find it quite hard to get them to go home, as often there's nobody in the house* (Centre Socioculturel de Chailly). At the same time, however, the social workers are well aware that the neighbourhood is 'special' because of the presence of a population belonging to a high level socio-economic group and that this often results in tensions or a lack of communication with the centre's users. On the other hand the people responsible are also conscious of the fact that this place provides an opportunity for both children and parents to have encounters outside the circle of their own social affiliation: *When parents get together, they are only interested in their kids...Here they can meet and talk to people who otherwise they would never get to meet* (Centre de Rencontre de Chailly). As opposed to the Bourdonnette, where the population changes fairly rapidly and where the adults are not very present, there exists a well-established adult presence at the Chailly Centre, constituted particularly of elderly people who have generally spent all their lives in the neighbourhood and sometimes have even been involved in the setting up of the centre. These adults do on occasion have some difficulty in sharing the centre's facilities with the younger people as they have, over a period of decades, come to think of it as theirs: *They've understood now that we don't want to exclude them, that the Foundation*[4] *is especially aiming at the young people. But it was hard going to begin with...They still have attitudes which are a bit racist, they don't want to be disturbed* (Centre Socioculturel de Chailly).

The Place as a Pretext for Knowledge and Discovery

The links that exist between this type of place and its environment can be strong enough in certain cases to condition the relationships established between our informants in the places themselves and the population living in the surrounding neighbourhood. These relationships can often be rather complex and sometimes contradictory. The difficulties involved in the management of relations with others enables us to understand the intensity of the established links and to better analyse the role that the places chosen for the in-depth study play for the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods.

[4] FASL, Fondation pour l'animation socioculturelle de Lausanne (Foundation for Socio-Cultural Animation of Lausanne).

Finally, these difficulties may allow us to understand the manner and the extent to which these places contribute to the establishment of links between the living environment and the social, cultural and religious lives of the immigrant populations as well as promoting contact and exchanges between these immigrant populations and the local inhabitants.

Going beyond the problems and difficulties of management, these places often fulfil the role – a function which is of especial interest to us as geographers – of being a pole of attraction along more or less diversified itineraries within the Lausanne urban area. *Of course, Globlivres is 'the library' but it's a reason to get out of the classroom too. There's the subway trip and exploring the city, the Bourdonnette, the university, Renens...* (Globlivres, a specialised teacher responsible for an integration class and a library user). This would appear to present a new avenue for research. Our collaborators will help us in the exploration and perhaps they will take us even further into this intercultural universe which is becoming more complicated, more fluid and more changeable daily and as a result more difficult to examine and comprehend.

Maintaining Independence: A Complicated Interplay of Balance and Power

The management of relations with local or foreign authorities is one of the most obvious manifestations of the complexity of the role that these places and our collaborators play in the Lausanne urban context. On the one hand, the need to be visible and to benefit from official recognition incites the managers to seek official backing, whether financial or otherwise: *We are not integrated into anything. On the one hand, we've always insisted on the importance of maintaining our independence, because that seems to be indispensable to this work because you need to be free to choose as regards the real requirements.... But, on the other hand, we are neither recognised nor integrated into any stable structure, so the library might have to close in a few months' time if the money runs out* (Globlivres). On the other hand, the desire to maintain a certain independence and to not accept compromises make these relations somewhat ambiguous, and even stormy at times, because the local authorities and the representatives of the foreign authorities (for example, embassies or consulates) in the area get together to elaborate strategies in order to avoid or repress the problem, whether it be of a relational or a financial nature. In some cases, independence in relation to the local and foreign authorities may be thought of as being the

principal advantage of the place: *Ever since its founding, the centre has always been managed in an autonomous way without any institutional funding – whether it be local or from Muslim countries. We fund ourselves...our members can make whatever contributions they want to and can afford* (Lausanne Islamic Centre).

Maintaining a balance in the management of these places between official recognition and backing on the one hand and independence on the other would seem to be rather a delicate business. Up until the present, our collaborators have firmly emphasised that maintaining their independence in the daily running of their institutions is of fundamental importance. Without this, the social control that the authorities would be able to exercise would, in the opinion of our collaborators, prevent the spontaneity of communication and relationships with 'the other' and would render all the efforts of the management and staff of these intercultural places useless.

The Observer Observed: Volunteer Culture and Politico-Social Culture - Are We Moving towards a Separation of Functions and the Social?

During the past two years of fieldwork in all of the chosen intercultural places, the researchers frequently found themselves confronted by a more and more explicit request for feedback and critical analysis of the data gathered from the mobilised competent protagonists. Even though such feedback was specifically and officially planned in the main project, it was originally intended to be provided at the conclusion of the study when all the data had been collected, collated and analysed. These requests for feedback, however, opened up the prospect within our research of yet another avenue for the comprehension of the way the management of relations with 'the other' is established within the Lausanne agglomeration. Thanks to the protagonists' requests to be allowed an active participatory role, we were led into a network of social operators which allowed us to make further discoveries. Though they have not yet been fully verified, we intend to study and analyse them at a later date.

It seems to us that this request for feedback is chiefly the expression of a need on the part of the protagonists for an outside point of view and opinion which would be without an official role to play in the places in question. This need was created by the researchers themselves though they did not intially realise this. The very fact of interviewing the protagonists within their places made them realise that they needed an opinion from the

observing researcher even when, in some cases, the process of critical re-appraisal of the functions and objectives of the places was already under way. The observing researchers, for their part, were slowly integrated into the protagonist group through their participation at internal meetings and staff discussions.

From the moment that they agreed to no longer be merely passive and external observers, the researchers' role changed completely. They in their turn became the objects of observation and began to play an active role although they did not have any official status.

From this moment, the researchers were integrated into the different groups of competent protagonists and, thanks to their knowledge of other places, found themselves fulfilling a role of go-between between certain place managers and different social networks in the Lausanne area.

If this process intially appeared to have been primarily engendered by the researchers' presence in the intercultural places, it subsequently became apparent that the requests for them to become more active was due to a lack of some sort that the competent protagonists were not always willing to openly express. The reason for this was that the protagonists had not been aware that such a lack existed perhaps because the needs of these intercultural places, of their managers and staff and of their users had not been sufficiently and clearly discussed despite the discussions that did take place.

As time passed, the researchers became mediators between the managers of the places, between other competent protagonists functioning in the places and other competent protagonists who met in the places but who functioned in other contexts (teachers of integration classes for foreign children or various professional and voluntary social workers who functioned in other centres and in other professional spheres) (Kilani, 1994).

Does this role which was attributed to the researchers and this need for informal mediation not hide a need for greater official recognition and backing (material, moral, training) for our protagonists from the representatives of the official social networks (administrative and political) as well as the need for greater contact or more mediation between the representatives of an only partially recognised social network such as the ones in which the managers of our places operate and the representatives of officially recognised social networks? The question is relevant because, in point of fact, the competent protagonists, whether they be professional or voluntary, all know each other or know how to contact each other should the need arise (Tabin, 1997).

The gap between the two networks has widened continually since our field research began. At first it was just a matter of an unexpressed impression which the competent protagonists had not yet put into words. After two years in the field, a greater understanding of the different networks has allowed us to grasp the sense of the processes which are under way and to understand some of their mechanisms.

By all accounts an 'intercultural communications' problem seems to exist between a voluntary and a socio-political position. The problem appears to be due to the different statuses accorded the official and non-official networks as well as to the ever widening divergence of their respective social projects.

Social Networks in Deadlock

How can the communication problem between the two social networks be resolved or alleviated? Protagonists who function in the non-official network are expressing their needs and lacks more frequently as a result of the numerous new problems and difficulties that have become apparent as users of the intercultural places make more and more diverse requests (Voyé, 1995).

In some cases the difficulties are of a financial nature as requests for services and new types of social assistance increase. In response to the ever increasing range of problems that need to be solved, the managers of the places are only able to provide satisfactory solutions for a percentage of those making requests, even where they are in a position to benefit from partial or total official social network funding.

In other cases it is a need for training in the management of day-to-day operations which is requested from the representatives of the official social networks. The competent protagonists, voluntary or professional, find themselves more and more often in a position wherein they must confront problems and answer questions for which they were not trained. In some cases, the users of a given service seem to believe that the protagonists must be able to provide an answer or a solution to all their problems or requests. These paradoxical situations are becoming more and more frequent, yet the requests of our competent protagonists to the representatives of the official network go unheeded.

It would seem that official and non-official networks are continually evolving at different speeds and in different directions. Whatever the case may be, the non-official network seems to be running out of steam. The

events created by the managers of the different intercultural places, therefore, constitute an 'appeal to the authorities', which do not, however, elicit either concrete propositions or even partial solutions. Without the backing of an official network, the unofficial network will not be able to advance or even to respond to the current social demand. Without concrete assistance in the areas of training and funding, the whole non-official network is in danger of collapsing. Even when the 'authorities' do give their support it is often at the price of imposing relatively strict conditions, so that, if the competent protagonists initially congratulate themselves on having been finally attended to by the authorities, they quickly realise that they have in the process lost a significant part of their maneuverability in the field where the real problems and needs have to be met. The non-official social network requires large measures of flexibility and independence, qualities that the official social institutions are not always happy to allow. Yet without independence, they are not able to go forward and develop at their 'natural' speed, i.e. as dictated by the new needs as they become apparent in Lausanne's society (Vincent, 1996).

In the cases of both the foreign associations examined,[5] their managers are more and more aware that the authorities of the countries of origin will no longer be – as they have been until now – the best placed to assist them in the solving of new problems as they arise or to support them in new initiatives. In expressing their desire to officially integrate the researchers into their intercultural places, they were conscious of their need for mediators who, though close to them from the point of view of their origins and culture, operated in a different domain: *We need some one who knows how to say these things and who knows who to write to the right people too* (Colonia Libera). The observer's role was not merely transformed into that of a mediator with the outside world but also into that of a person whose function it is to encourage the protagonists to express themselves more openly and to involve themselves in fresh initiatives. The official incorporation of the researchers could then in some way legitimise their taking the initiative and at the same time allow the existence of an 'official' and 'competent' scapegoat in the cases where those initiatives might fail.

Conclusion

By means of this presentation, and through these few examples, we hope that we have been able to demonstrate how the complexities of relations

[5] The Spanish Centre 'Garcia Lorca' and the Colonia Libera.

with 'the other' can emerge and even affirm and inscribe themselves lastingly within the urban environment and especially in this case of the Lausanne agglomeration despite the difficulties of managing these relations on a day-to-day-basis. It is clear that the data at our disposal are not only fragmentary but still in the process of collation and treatment; they do not yet allow us to give to our analyses all the confirmation that we believe they deserve.

Nonetheless, by means of these narratives, which show how these intercultural places were constructed and how they continue to develop, it has been possible to gain access to a relational universe whose complexity is not an abstract concept but the concrete materials which our protagonists have learnt to handle and manage on a daily basis.

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