Paper prepared for

The Fifth Euroacademia International Conference

Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

Rome, Italy

9 – 10 December 2016

This paper is a draft

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Identification through Cultural Symbols:
The Case of "Place Internationale"

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Abstract

The paper explores the complex issue of identification, intended as the open-ended and unfinished act of signification through which a community "imagines" itself by transferring particular meanings to the surrounding reality, which finally becomes a space for cultural identity. In the formation of a social imaginary, Art has undeniably a big role, the artistic object is in fact a direct vehicle of identity representation and reproduction, subject to an intrinsic form of "translation". In explaining how art is translated into cultural symbols, the paper refers to Bhabha's concept of *hybridity*, which denies the existence of a prior given original culture and introduces the notion of "Third Space", the new third meaning emerging from two original moments in the act of cultural signification. Far from being finished and fixed, culture is always negotiated in a process of representation, signification and meaning making.

After the theoretical framework, the case study "Place Internationale", in Berlin-Hellersdorf, will show how monuments (in this case an inflatable column erected in the square centre) become vehicles and symbols of a local community identity. The column, inspired by both the Vendôme Column in Paris (destroyed during the Commune upon Courbet's proposal) and the Trajan in Rome, will continuously modify its shape, first upright and straight and then falling down in a never-ending loop. Metaphor of an eternally hybrid identity, in the column one can see two distinct moments (standing and falling), synthetized in a third new space. Place Internationale square and the column have thus become narrating objects, symbols needed by *imagined communities* to fix the perception of their identity and cohesion[i]. Next to a refugee home in the east-Berlin suburbia, the column will celebrate diversity. A meaningful public space will bring people together in the negotiation, through dialogue, of a new multicultural identity.

Key Words: Identity, Art, Symbols, Dialogue, Culture

Introduction

The rapid spread of information technologies, the increased mobility of people and goods and the progressive loss of a territorialized sense of belonging are among the features commonly associated with the present historical moment: the so called globalization era. However, links between cultures have always existed and human relations themselves tend to bring society to interconnectedness. People have always moved, identities have never been fixed and globalization is far from being a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, these dynamics have been significantly sped up in the last decades and the growing complexity of cultural relations has accelerated the emergence of new considerations on identity. Following these trends, in social and cultural studies, the concept of identity as related to uniqueness and sameness seems to have left the stage to the never-ending process of identification.

According to this constructionist/discursive approach, identity is dialogically constructed, never fixed in its meaning but rather in movement as a flux, redefined in the infinite moments of significance negotiation. Being the local and the global interconnected, cultural identities are constructed across different discourses becoming multiple and losing the distinctive sameness of self. Although relational, situational and somehow imaginary constructed, values and beliefs related to our conception of identity still shape the world we live, producing real and material effects. This is why a discourse on identity cannot be ended in the refusal of any identity existence or meaningfulness. Beyond fruitless considerations on the way to preserve identity, this paper aims at creating the case for a new constructive dialogue.

Within the theoretical framework, the concept of identity will be related to art, intended as the imaginative production of symbols that on the one hand perform the process of identification, and on the other creates the space for dialogue and discussion. In the infinite range of possible tools, art is here seen as a powerful mean to enhance interactions and cultural exchange. Simultaneously functioning as place for identification, representation and interaction, the art object is supposed to be the perfect vehicle for identification.

The case study will be used to show how these discourses on identity are expressed in existing art works, giving an empirical value to the theories. How do these artistic creations express identity? Are they actually functioning as a vehicle for identification and catalyst for dialogue and interaction? Are they meant to this purpose?

Methodology

The paper employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. After a definition of cultural identity as the research object, a descriptive case study will be used to enforce the concept. The qualitative research aims at increasing understanding on the process of identification and on the role of cultural symbols. Based on inductive interpretative reasoning, the paper finds its sources and data in textual documents and books as well as on artefacts such as the monuments. Relevant secondary data will be mostly used in the theoretical framework and fieldwork observation in the case study part. Field research in particular will highlight the practical implication of theories; the Place Internationale case study will provide an insight into the function of cultural symbols as identifiers. The theoretical part of the paper is drawn from academic publications concerning culture, identity, cultural symbols and community. Observation and direct participation to the project activities will be instead the base for the case study writing. For this particular case study, a direct type of observation is applied: the researcher has taken part to activities and workshops happening around "Place Internationale". The aim of the observatory/participatory activity of the research was defined in advance to follow the column making process and the space transformation.

Part I: What is Cultural Identity?

The Concept of Identity

The concept of identity has evolved since the beginning of the 20th century, following the rise of multicultural societies and the growing complexity of cultural relationships. In adapting concept of identity to an increasingly interconnected world, anthropologists and cultural theories have stressed the dynamic and hybrid nature of identity.

Many critics have been raised to this dynamic use of the concept of identity (which literally recall ideas of sameness). Some argue that identity is inadequate for the analysis of complex cultural relationships and that perhaps new terminology should be adopted. The concept of identity seems however unlikely to disappear from discourses. Aware of its sometimes too broad and controversial employment, it is important to define every different dimension of identity when we use the concept in academics or even popular discourses. Being this not the place for expanding discussions on terminology, this paper will use the concept of identification and of multiple identities as theorized by the constructionists.

New alternative considerations on identity have first emerged in the 70ies, the focus on diversity and on subgroups put a focus on the coexistence of different possible construction, representations and interpretations of our society and culture. Culture cannot anymore be considered to speak with one voice but rather as multi-vocal. In situation of lack of bounds between local and global level, culture cannot be identical for all individuals: culture, as identity, becomes understood as historically specific and never form a closed and coherent whole.[ii] To this idea of plural identities, poststructuralists added the concept of "difference", considering "the other" fundamental in defining one's identity.

> "Identities are usually produced within the play of power, representation and difference which can be either constructed negatively as the exclusion and marginalization or celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity (Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1993; Hall, 1996; Bhabha, 1996; Woodwards, 1997; Gilroy, 1997), suggesting that they are relational to other identities."[iii]

According to this position, there is no positive conception of identity but only the possibility to conceive my-self in opposition to what I am not. "People only know who they are by knowing who they are not"[iv]: this definition by exclusion implies not only a relation of power, but also a continuous act of situational re-positioning. Operating across difference, defined by the exclusion of the so-called "Constitutive Outside"[v], identities cannot be seen anymore as one and indivisible.

Influenced by poststructuralist theorists, Stuart Hall provided a new definition of cultural identity as:

"…A matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, they have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power"[vi]

Identification as an Act of Signification

Cultures do not emerge spontaneously in society; they are rather the result of an artificial act of creation, called "imagination"[vii]. Distinct cultures in fact arise from the invention of traditions and symbols, the process extended in time and space through which a community bases its own identification and cohesion. Following this view, there is no prior-given original culture, but rather the result of a social invention requiring continuous reinterpretation and translation in order to become meaningful.

"…All cultures are symbol-forming and subject-constituting, interpellative practices…. (Their) own symbol-forming activity, interpellation in the process of representation, language, signification and meaning-making, always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity."[viii]

Cultural symbols, in this case artistic objects, can undoubtedly be tied to a common past, they may reflect common historical experiences and, at the same time, they are also expression of a certain identity. However, they remain empty ideas as long as we do not transfer into them our present meaning. Being the representation of an imaginative construction, cultural symbols need to be signified and their significance needs continuous actualization.

Cultural identification is defined as the act of signification of cultural symbols. Identity is not something unique and static: identifying means projecting the self into the surrounding reality in a certain time and space. Consequently our identity is never finished, nor fixed and unchanging; it acquires meaning as referred to each particular situation, relation and context. The process of identification then results in the formation of multiple identities shaped by our multiple relations with the surrounding reality. The present identity thus is just our self, contextualized in a certain time-space framework. Identity is the name we give to each different position we assume when relating to a certain reality.

"In this perspective, cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying outside history and culture. (…) It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning."[ix]

A "Third Space" for Negotiating New Identities

In this act of signification we are interrogating both dimensions: ourselves as a "subject" and a related "object". We confer significance to the so-called "object" by projecting ourselves into it. We recognize a piece of art, as a meaningful cultural symbol, not for the value it has in itself but rather understanding it, mediating between a pre-given intrinsic expression and ourselves, identifying with it. Art and Identity are thus defined in this bidirectional process of signification. Both the interior self and the external object in the moment of identification acquire meaning, generating a third hybrid identity. In this synthesis, the past is not forgotten or deleted but rather interpreted in a contemporary perspective. As S. Hall remarks writing on Caribbean Identities and Diaspora:

"(it has) always to be thought in terms of the dialogic relationship between these two axes. The one gives us some grounding in, some continuity with, the past. The second reminds us that what we share is precisely the experience of a profound discontinuity."[x]

A third new space is in this way suddenly created as a result of the interaction between two prior distinct identities. Any idea, object or thought becomes "identification point" in this Third Space. Through a continuous process of actualization meaningful symbol of cultural identity are created and represented. This process never ends because significance is created within it and also artistic cultural symbols, far from being fixedly determined in meaning, require constant reinterpretation in order to function as identifiers. Through this process, we identify ourselves by transferring particular meanings to the surrounding reality; making culture alive in the moment we live it.

"Hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other position to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures…. The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to

something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation."[xi]

Therefore, negotiation assumes a crucial role for a community in signifying its cultural symbols. Cultural symbols acquires significance when referred to a particular situation, they are in this way open to be interpreted in relation the present time and space. Even when these symbols are given they are always opening the stage to new discussions: the infinite identities emerging from the unceasing process of identification need in fact to be negotiated in order to acquire a common meaning, base for a cohesive community identity. A community therefore define its identity constantly negotiating cultural meanings among its members, encoding and decoding cultural symbols in an infinite process of signification, or identification.

Within this framework, the role of art is not limited at providing the "raw material" for identity representation. Art has also the intrinsic function of stimulating constructive debates, and at the same time it is able to turn upside-down any pre-given object's interpretation, suddenly revolutionizing our identification with an object, idea or thought. In its very nature, art presumes interpretation as complementary to its own expression. In this sense art is a very powerful tool for identity representation, always reminding us the necessity of thinking in terms of Third Space creation, freeing ourselves from any fixed conception of cultural identity.

Undoubtedly the "imaginative" symbol-forming activity had a crucial role in the past for the formation of national identities. Flags, hymns, myths or columns were fixed in their symbolic nature and used to build a cohesive identity. Although recognizing the symbol-forming function of culture, we need to look beyond the simplistic imposition of identification symbols. In the perspective of the nowadays multicultural and interdependent global society, even pre-imposed cultural symbols need to be constantly redefined in an open discussion that will finally lead communities to identification.

Part II: "The Middle in Nowhere" Case Study

History and Description of the Project

Starting in 1958 as an artistic project in the underground stations, "Art in Underground"[xii] has over the years emerged to the Berlin's surface, always introducing and stimulating discussions on the concept of public space and on its relations with the local community identity. The 2016/17 edition of the project is "The Middle in Nowhere" ("Mitte in der Pampa") and it takes place along the U5 line, going from Alexanderplatz to the Eastern suburbia in Hellersdorf[xiii], with the aim of defining a new dialogical interaction between centre and periphery in Berlin. Installations, performances and workshops by eight international artists will be realized around stations on the U5 and U55 lines between Central Station and Cottbusser Platz on the Hellersdorf housing estates in the outskirts. Organized by the Berliner artistic society nGbK, the project mainly focuses on art as a tool to enhance participation and dialogue.

"Place Internationale" is the heart of the curatorial teams' concept for the Art in the Underground project "Mitte in der Pampa". An abandoned transitional space is being transformed into a square with an inflatable column at its centre. The column is inspired by both the Vendôme Column in Paris, destroyed during the Commune at Courbet's proposal, and the Trajan one in Rome. The name "Place Internationale" comes from the name given to the Paris square after the toppling of the Vendome Column in 1871. The artistic reconstruction of the column will be realized by the curatorial team of the project with the aim of transforming a green open land into a temporary infrastructure and a meeting point for artists and neighbours. In March 2017, the inflatable column will be erected and toppled at events during the two years project. It will continuously reshape itself, first straight and then falling down in a never-ending loop as a metaphor of the dialogical nature of cultural identity symbols, recalling the need for dialogue and discussion.

Along the two years project different workshops will take place in partnership with local institutions: the Jugendclub U5, the Melanchthon Gymnasium, the Refugee Home and the Alice Solomon University. They will aim at enhancing public participation, with a special focus on young people, in the public-space transformation process. Through informal meeting, discussions evening and workshops, the neighbourhood will be directly included in the transformation of the abandoned land into a square as well as in the column making process. To give an example, children will be playing some of the Trajan column scenes, pictures of them acting will be finally used in the column decoration, printed in the fabric-frieze.

Aim of the Project

"We see ourselves as the initiators of an artistically mediated exchange"[xiv]

The project's concept directly aims at destabilizing the top-down relationship between centre and periphery, using artistic tools to bring people together and open a new centre in the periphery. Giving voice and "Right to the City"[xv] to the marginalized suburbia, an inflatable dynamic monument, representing the impossibility to fix one's identity in the top-down imposition of a cultural symbol, will be constructed. It will open the possibility to give one-another feedbacks, perhaps in an indirect and unexpected way thanks to art. The artistic projects are in fact meant to be neither top-down nor bottom-up, but rather positioned somewhere in between.

> "Public art can be a means of communication, exchange and sharing. Through collaborations with the public it can extend participation in cultural processes to new areas of society. Public art can break down traditional hierarchies and initiate and publicise communicative processes and knowledge transfer between artists and residents."[xvi]

The project asks questions spatially, socially and politically about how decisions that are made in the centre have an effect in the peripheries. It inserts in the current discourses on urban planning that are of growing importance in the developing metropolis of Berlin. Themes such as population growth, housing shortage, the issue of the quality of living space and of open space, the relationship between the inner city and the periphery requires every-day confrontation for addressing a healthy city development. "Mitte in der Pampa" work actively on issues, without imposing a plan for local development, but rather stimulating reflections, trying to create awareness on the fact that the whole population should be involved in this debate.[xvii]

The project focus on city planning is not misleading. Although the project directly aims at addressing issues of public space and at tacking urban needs, it has an immediate impact on questions of identity. The city is in fact the first stage for the play of identification; public space covers the crucial role of stimulating and shaping people's identities and this capacity is drastically accentuated when we add art to it. The synthesis of the whole project's concept in the Column that will be erected and toppled in "Place Internationale" is purposing to the public a cultural symbol that on the one hand is rooted in the past and on the other creates a completely new identity, or, to better say, a new place for identification. The discussion on the use of public space passes through discussion on identity; being it the only way to transform an abandoned green land into a meaningful place for identification.

Part III: Identity as reflected in the Columns

Monuments and Cultural Symbols

Honorary columns in history have always been used as monumental embodiments of a certain culture, to provide a point for the identification or "identifier" for a certain community. The column is first of all a landmark, it can be seen from far and it attracts people to a site. In its vertical shape and with a statue usually erected at its top, the column is a monument symbolizing the magnificence of a certain culture and of its great victorious conductor. In examining meanings and characteristics of monuments, this paper refers to the urban sociologist Henry Lefebvre affirming that monuments have a contradictory nature. They played a central role in history, in the political arena and for the transmission of certain messages. On the one hand,

> "The monument is essentially repressive. Is the seat of an institution…the great monuments have been raised to glorify conquerors and the powerful…(the monument) controls people, but it does so to bring them together"[xviii]

On the other hand the action of meaning encoding or signifying is enlightened:

> "A monumental work…has a horizon of meaning: a specific indefinite multiplicity of meanings, a shifting hierarchy in which now one, now another meaning comes momentarily to the fore, by means of – and for the sake of – a particular action."[xix]

In line with this second consideration, we understand the impossibility for a monument to maintain intact the same symbolic significance given, through the action of signification, at the moment of its creation. All symbols need to be continuously reinterpreted to the present events in order to maintain their symbolic value.

Trajan and Vendôme Columns: "Powerful Emblems of Authority"[xx]

"In the face of its variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment."[xxi]

Despite the "horizon of meaning" potentially embedded in them, monuments have been actually "used as powerful emblems of authority through which to make or indeed break an individual's image"[xxii]. Within this framework, monuments as the Trajan and the Vendome Column were tools through which celebrating a certain culture and perpetuating the emperor's image. The two columns had in fact been built as permanent reminders of victories and triumphs. The Trajan Column presents the military prowess of Trajan and his impressive victories against the Dacian; while the Vendome Column illustrates Napoleon's "grandeur" in the battle of Austerlitz.

Both the columns hence stood as ideological manifests. In the Trajan Column the image of the emperor had to emerge according to canons and rules dictated by the commissioner himself, which acquires thus the role of signifier of the monument. The princeps was deciding themes of the narration, sequence of the scenes, the aim of the column and its manipulation techniques. The column meaning was therefore established by the emperor with different purposes: from the glorification of his "virtus" in war to the celebration of his "sapientia" as a man of culture.[xxiii] Using standardized iconographic techniques, the column had to be understood by everybody and read by as many people as possible, to fix a certain imposed significance not only in the Roman society, but also in the universal memory.[xxiv]

Similarly, the Vendome column represented Napoleon I victories with a direct reference to the Trajan Column by which it was inspired. The monument, erected to the glory of the "Grande Armée", was topped with a statue of Napoleon I in his coronation robes, crowned with Laurel. Remarkable in this column is the synthesis of elements from the past actualized in modern terms, charged of a completely new significance, even though this significance was still imposed to the public. Napoleon I used the column and the past to celebrate himself and the superiority of his "New Rome" empire.[xxv]

These two monuments, representing certain continuity between two distant historical moments, were at the same time symbol and ideological legitimation of a socio-political order. Significance was established by an act of power; identity was univocally delimited by tracing clear cultural borders between an included inside and an excluded "Other". Passively defined by the exclusion of the different, in line with Derrida's theory of the "Constitutive Outside", identity was top-down oriented and controlled by the centre where monopoly of power resided. Clear areas of significance were in this way established to base a community cohesion and strength; cultures were consequently translated into single delimited entities and identity was fixed in its meaning.

Nevertheless, the violent history of the Vendôme Column, toppled by the communards in 1871, should inspire a deep reflection on the impossibility of fixing forever such symbolic meanings. Despite the pursuit of eternality of these two symbolic columns and the awareness of the necessary process of symbols' invention behind a community creation, commonly resulting from imposition or manipulation, a reflection should be made on the base of Lefebvre statement on the nature of a monument. "Although the monument is always laden with symbols, it presents them to social awareness and contemplation just when those symbols, already out-dated, are beginning to lose their meaning."[xxvi] The significance of a certain symbol would be lost in the same moment of its fixation. Cultures cannot be imposed, manipulated or pre-decided. Although happening in the past previous to the formation of socio-political entities, the imposition of cultural symbols cannot function in the nowadays interconnected world of migration and cosmopolitan cities.[xxvii]

The Process of Identification: "Place Internationale" Column

"Symbols do not so much express meaning as give us the capacity to make meaning"[xxviii]

In the eastern Berlin suburbia, we see a new column being erected and contemporary identification questions displayed. Matters of culture, identity and public space are of fundamental importance and the answer is due to be either imposed by the centre or negotiated in a constructive and all-comprehensive dialogue. "The Middle of Nowhere" is actively working for improving the second option, creating, through art, a new place for identification and consequential discussion. A green-abandoned land surrounded by residential buildings will be transformed into "Place Internationale"; local people will meet around a new centre, neither top-down nor centre-periphery imposed but rather created, even if temporarily, for and by them-selves. The square is an attempt to raise the voice of the whole population; it is a temporary purpose to give people the possibility to transform a public place according to their own

needs and visions. In this sense, the classical hierarchical relationship between centre and periphery is here overturned. If we understand the creation of collective memory and the act of traditions invention as an act of power, we observe how in history this power has been mostly exercised by a centre over a periphery. Central authorities usually control and manipulate collective memories and identities providing to people cultural symbols and pre-established meanings. Conversely, this project stresses the importance for the periphery, in this case for the Hellersdorf community, to make and control its own story, its own public space and its own identity.

A crucial role is here played by Art, mean and tool for making a place meaningful and for stimulating identity "reflections" and dialogue among people. People, integral part of the column-making process thanks to the workshops, will continuously relation themselves to a cultural symbol they personally created. In the act of signification called cultural identification, they will question themselves and the artwork, giving birth to a new *third identity*, synthesis between past continuities and contemporary discontinuities. Being a hybrid between two past columns and representing both of them simultaneously in process of movement and transformation, the column in Berlin is in itself "Third Space". Erected and the toppled, the column will evoke the past, creating at the same time a new symbol, which emerges from the contemporary re-interpretation of these two previous social identifiers. Consequently, the new column in Berlin will make people think about previous and current ideas of public identity and common space.

The column makes the case for a situational identity, defined in a never-ending process of "becoming" rather than "being"[xxix]. Both the observer and the artistic object acquire new meaning in relating and looking to each other in a certain time-space framework. In the multiplicity of possible identities reflected by the artwork, everyone will be stimulated at searching for his/her identity interacting with the column and with the others. A cultural symbol is here purposed for stimulating its significance negotiation rather than for imposing a certain cultural pre-given identity. The final aim of this artistic project, purposing new cultural symbols, is to stimulate dialogue and cultural exchange between people, creating on the one hand a new meeting point (Place Internationale) and on the other hand a new identification object or "identifier" (the column) for identity projection and reflection. Artistic expression is thus used not only as a mean for creatively or even upsettingly reinterpreting the past, but also as a multifaceted mirror reflecting multiple identities that simultaneously coexist in the object. Through art, with infinite possible interpretations, the discussion on identity emerges offering unexpected rooms for multicultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

> "When multiculturals negotiate cultural identity, they do not just retrieve their knowledge of the pertinent cultures. They turn cultural traditions into objects of reflection; they cognitively juxtapose these traditions, and evaluate their significance with references to prior cultural experiences and current intercultural relations. While the multicultural mind grows out of multicultural experiences, multicultural identity is a product of deliberate reflectiveness as well as an on-going personal project."[xxx]

Conclusions

> "Man is an animal suspended in web of significance he himself has spun…These webs constitute 'culture'….Culture is created and continually recreated by people through their social interaction…(it) does not contain meaning intrinsically: rather, it is found to be meaningful by an act of interpretation… The vehicles of such interpretations are symbols. By their very nature symbols permit interpretation and provide (…) people with the means to make meaning"[xxxi]

Cultural identity is defined as the way we understand ourselves as belonging to a social group or a community, on the base of shared sets of values and practices through which we interpret and give certain significance to reality. Although they might appear as naturally distinct entities, cultures are interconnected and heterogeneous. Individuals of the same group happen to have completely diverse conceptions of reality and borderlines between cultures have actually been invented by the regulative action of anthropologists[xxxii] on the one hand and by communities' central authorities to justify themselves on the other.

> "There is no such thing as a closed culture. Cultures grow and change from constantly changing interactions…culture is not an abstraction, it is a living, open totality that evolves by constantly integrating individual and collective choices that are taken in interaction with other, similar wholes…Culture is the product of a complex inheritance constantly submitted to critical scrutiny and the need to adapt, a constant conquest to achieve"[xxxiii]

This paper started from the assumption of "cultural invention" to give an exhaustive explanation of the role that cultural symbols have been playing in societies. Cultural narratives are at the imaginary base of communities' cohesion; symbols, such as hymns, myths or traditional figurative representation, have been created for people to

perceive themselves as belonging to a certain cultural group, in order to construct collective memory. If in the past symbol-forming activities were normally controlled by powerful authorities through significance manipulation and imposition; our present hyper-connected society, raising new questions on identity, stimulates us to discuss the role of cultural symbols in a more contemporary perspective.

Defined the concept of cultural identity and its implications in the theoretical part, the paper moved to the analysis of a case study in which two different models of symbols signification are simultaneously submitted to our attention. The project "The Middle in Nowhere" in fact represents on the one hand the past Trajan and Vendome columns, both vehicles of a pre-established message in them symbolically embedded; on the other hand an innovative artistic performance expressing the coexistence of multiple meanings in the process of identification. In "Place Internationale", the neighbours will finally have the possibility emancipate their identities from central imposition: a new place for identification will be created by them and for them through Art.

Given that cultural identity is redefined for every different time-space framework and in relation to each particular object, we understand interaction as essential in the process of identification. Prominent is therefore the role of Art: open to various interpretations and functioning as identifier, the artwork inspires not only interaction but also dialogue and hopefully mutual understanding, as a consequence. Hellersdorf and many other big cities peripheries are tackling today intensive migration fluxes; in the era of mass movements and global pilgrimages discourses of distinct cultures have no more sense. The postmodern self is a stratification of different situational identities and the concern for cultural authenticity preservation should leave the place to the recognition of the prominence of intercultural communication in order to increase people acceptance of diversity as well as their reciprocal understanding. This would be the only way to create a new third space in which people with different backgrounds can cohabit, not in mere tolerance and respect of each other but rather sharing values and ideas generating innovative thinking. Communities will thus be able to make a step beyond multiple identities integration, creating entirely new identities resulting from cultural hybridization. In contrast with a static view of culture that has to be preserved and protected, pluralism and diversity are fundament and pillar of new transnational cultural identities.

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[i] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991)

[ii] Margaret Wetherell and Chandra T. Mohanty, *The Sage Handbook of Identities*. Thousand (Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 63-72

[iii] Mustafa Koç, "Cultural Identity Crisis in the Age of Globalization and Technology," *The Turkish Journal of Educational Technology* (2006) http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED501435.pdf

[iv] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222-36

[v] Concept of "Constitutive Outside" from Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler 1993.

[vi] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

[vii] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*

[viii] Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space", in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 207-21

[ix] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

[x] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

[xi] Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space"

[xii] Art in the Underground has a long history that began in 1958 on the platform of the U2 underground station at Alexanderplatz and was present there up to 2008. Since the start of the 1990s, open competitions entitled "Art instead of advertising" have been organised by working groups under the auspices of NGBK. Initially, these competitions only involved the advertising panels on the walls behind the railway tracks, and from 1999 onwards they also included the platforms. In these competitions, artists are encouraged to treat the locations in a less "museum-like" manner and instead to work with them more within the context of their functions as public transit spaces.

[xiii] Hellersdorf is a locality in the borough of Marzahn-Hellersdorf in Berlin. Between 1986 and Berlin's 2001 administrative reform, it was a borough in its own right, consisting of the current area of Hellersdorf as well as Kaulsdorf and Mahlsdorf. Before German reunification in 1989 it was part of East Berlin. Situated at the eastern part of Berlin, the area is mainly a large housing estate from the 1980s, made up of "Plattenbau" (concrete slab) buildings.

[xiv] Jochen Becker et al., *What is outside?* (Berlin: nGbK, 2016), 21

[xv] Henri Lefebvre, *Das Recht auf Stadt* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 2016)

[xvi] Jochen Becker et al., *What is outside?*, 13

[xvii] Jochen Becker et al., *What is outside?*

[xviii] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 21-2*

[xix] Henri Lefebvre, *The production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 222

[xx] Diana Rowell, *Paris: The 'new Rome' of Napoleon I* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012)

[xxi] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (Chichester: E. Horwood, 1985), 15

[xxii] Rowell, *Paris: The 'new Rome' of Napoleon I*

xxiiiAccording to S. Settis, the column has to be read as the central part of the Trajan forum, a forum reminding a military camp, "castrum", in its architectonical spaces. To this function of military glorification, the prominence of culture has to be added and considered. In proximity to the libraries and celebrating war events, the column remarks the simultaneous importance of culture and war. "Fortis vir sapiensque" was Trajan, the roman hero represented in the column, the personification and deification of "sapientia" and "virtus". Military value and literary knowledge are thus linked together in the column commemoration.

[xxiv] Settis et al., *La Colonna Traiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1988), 106-9

[xxv] Valerie Huet, "Napoleon I: a new Augustus?", in Roman Presences, ed. Catharine Edwards (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 63-5

[xxvi] Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*

[xxvii] Rowell, *Paris: The 'new Rome' of Napoleon I*, 57-64

[xxviii] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community,* 15

[xxix] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"

[xxx] Ying-yi Hong et al., "Multicultural Identities" (the paper appears in *Handbook of Cultural Psychology* (New York: Guilford), ed. S. Kitayama and D. Cohen

[xxxi] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5

[xxxii] Fabietti Ugo, *Identità Etnica* (Roma: Carrocci, 1998)

[xxxiii] Jean Tardif, Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Security, *Global Policy Forum* (2002), https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/162/27588.html#