

The Concept of “Culture” in Multi- Bricocoli Ethnic Areas Regeneration Policies: Common Views, Weaknesses, Experiences, Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, cultural policies for urban regeneration have explored ways of looking at the culture of immigrant groups as a resource for the vitality of urban life and economy. In this perspective, the paper examines how the concept of “culture” can be constructed, in order to analyse the dynamics of urban multi-ethnic settlements, and to show how it can be used in urban regeneration policies that aim to face problems of diversity, local development, and social exclusion.

Two main research frameworks will be considered:

- based on the current debate on multi-ethnic societies, the paper will provide an overview of the most recognized weaknesses of the more traditional “models of inclusion” – assimilation, integration, multiculturalism – in order to point out the most interesting aspects of the emerging pluralist mode of integration. In particular, this model is interesting because it recognizes that integration is a two-way process including both immigrants and the host society;
- the pluralist mode of integration helps also to render problematic the most commonly held views of immigrants as all potentially excluded people, and of their culture as only linked to national, ethnic or religious origins. Culture is also a matter of gender, age, education, permanence within the host society, and socio-economic condition.

Recognizing these differences implies assuming that not all immigrants have the same needs and that not all immigrants are poor or potentially socially excluded. Policies that aim to deal with diversity without creating problems of social justice between immigrants and natives should be able to recognize these differences.

The paper examines how the concept of immigrants’ culture has been used in the last seven years’ experience of the SRB urban regeneration programmes of the Spitalfields area in East London, a case that, in recent literature, is often quoted as a best practice of cultural policy for urban regeneration in a multi-ethnic area.

Key Words: diversity, culture, regeneration policies