

Chapter 7

Intercultural Citizenship in the Making: Public Space and Belonging in Discriminatory Environments



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7.1 Introduction: The Debate on the Conditions of Interculturalism

Public space is essential to foster a sense of belonging among immigrants and racialized groups. This is especially true for groups who are still framed as different in relation to an abstract but taken-for-granted notion of we-ness that remains strongly connected to colonial thinking (Mayblin & Turner, 2021), according to which people perceived as white and western represent the norm in European societies. In this chapter we assume that there is an interrelation between the concepts of discrimination and interculturalism that is essential for the life conditions of immigrants and racialized groups. On the one hand, ethnic discrimination constitutes an impediment for the fulfilment of interculturalist policy goals, while on the other hand, interculturalism, understood as a strategy promoting contact among people from different backgrounds, including nationals, may potentially constitute a fruitful political and discursive tool to combat discrimination (Hellgren & Zapata-Barrero, 2022). In this chapter we defend that intercultural citizenship is a useful conceptual framework to analytically examine how such belonging could be constructed in multiethnic urban neighbourhoods, understanding multiplicity of linkages across ethnic divides as a key element. For such multiple ways of understanding contact (including formal/informal, conventional/unconventional, and also nonverbal communication, body language, eye contact, gestures and even silence (Samovar et al., 2015)¹ to fulfil the conditions of citizenship-making and developing a sense

¹ See diversity-linkage theory formulated by R. Zapata-Barrero (2019a, Chap. 5).

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of belonging need to take place under conditions of equality and power-sharing or be discrimination-free. We contend therefore that these people-to-place linkages in diversity settings are even more important than the probably more traditional people-to-people linkages that usually define interculturalism (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). For instance, migrants tend to use open public spaces, community gardens, and parks to gather and congregate in ways that are reminiscent of their home country, transforming the parks of their adoptive community into familiar spaces, creating an “autotopography” that links their daily practices and life experiences to a deep sense of place (Agyeman, 2017).

Entering in the interface between discrimination and interculturalism is not self-evident. It invites us to enter a debate on the conditions of interculturalism, namely going through the key- question on the necessary favourable conditions to ensure that the promotion of contact between diverse people is positive. The literature in general highlights two necessary conditions: equality and power sharing (Zapata-Barrero, 2019a). This essentially means that in conditions of inequality and even competitiveness, the relations between people could have the perverse effect of increasing prejudices and negative attitudes, and hence discrimination.

In the current debate, interculturalism is used in multi-scale contexts, from global politics to local setting, and there is a need to clarify the scale before properly entering in empirical insights (Zapata-Barrero & Mansouri, 2021). What is emerging anew is its application to contemporary migration-related challenges within local societies that are increasingly transnational and super- diverse. A number of other European policy documents stress the importance of cities as key actors for diversity management and cohesion promotion (e.g. European Commission, 2008a, b; 2015). One of the first EU political documents making this “city turn” explicit was the European Ministerial Conference on Integration (Zaragoza, 15–16 April 2010),² held under the Spanish Presidency, which underlined once again the central role of local authorities in implementing intercultural and integration programmes. Specifically, the final declaration of the conference concluded: “Considering that cities and their districts are privileged areas for fostering intercultural dialogue and for promoting cultural diversity and social cohesion, it is important for local governments to develop and obtain capacities to better manage diversity and to combat racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination.” (European Commission, 2010; 7).

In this local scale the conditions of interculturalism requires diversity-awareness and diversity-recognition. Namely, if a person has the opportunity to communicate with others, he or she will also be able to understand and appreciate different points of views involving his or her way of life, and may also be open to change his or her views as a direct outcome of contact (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). This transformative dimension of interculturalism could take place if the public space where contact happens is free from discrimination. If this public space is instead full of

²Established by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the Council of Europe and the City of Stuttgart (www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationand-society/clip.htm).

stereotypes, prejudices, ignorance, misconceptions, then the result of contact between people will most likely be social conflict instead of conviviality. Under favourable circumstances, feelings of belonging may instead thrive in relation to concrete everyday spaces and places. The centrality of equal forms of contact is why discrimination needs to be understood not only in racial and identity terms, but also in social-class ones. Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) highlight this social class component when dealing with diversity-related prejudices. Fainstein (2005: 13), for instance, affirms that – in opposition with the assumptions of contact theory -- the relationship between diversity and tolerance is not clear. Sometimes exposure to “the other” evokes greater understanding, but if lifestyles are seen as being too incompatible, it only heightens prejudice. Wessendorf (2013), in turn, analyses the super-diverse³ London neighbourhood of Hackney and reveals complex codes of ethics in what she defines as “commonplace diversity”: a situation in which ethnic mixing is so normalized that it is hardly reflected upon, but still continues to produce distance and differentiation between people and rarely translates into private relations. She found that the generally established “live and let live” ethos that appeared as a necessary condition for conviviality in such a heterogeneous environment was challenged “when this disengagement is coupled with contestations over space”, for instance, competition over housing (ibid: 419). Just as competition, discrimination separates people, and a discriminatory context is by definition a non-shared public space. It is clearly a restrictive factor since it breaks any bridging condition and often increases social conflicts. In fact, “conflict zones” are those where racism, xenophobia, and lack of respect or tolerance prevail, together with unequal and unbalanced power relations (Zapata-Barrero, 2019a; 69).

What is particularly poignant in this context is when people restrain themselves from taking part of public spaces because of perceived (or expected) discrimination. They may for instance choose not to go to certain streets, neighbourhoods, pubs or public parks because they feel that they are not welcome (Hellgren, 2019); thereby, an interculturalist transformation of public spaces is impeded. These subtle modalities of inequalities and power shape the ways in which diversity is organized in particular places, spatializing the politics of diversification and consolidating taken for granted institutional cultural hierarchies (Ye, 2017). Public spaces constitute a resource that should be accessible to all, including old and new migrants (Peters et al., 2010). Public spaces need to be discrimination-free zones, free from diversity-related hostilities and conflicts. Studies show how discrimination may discourage the use of public parks, civic centres and other places (Wood, 2015). Moreover, this dimension needs to be brought into the intercultural debate. For instance, issues such as self-restraints and self-prevention to go to certain public spaces by racialized people because they feel unwelcome must also become an intercultural policy target for local authorities. Physical proximity of diverse populations in spaces such

³The concept of super-diversity, originally applied by Vertovec (2007), is used to define the demographic changes brought about by an increasingly diversified immigration, leading to situations in several western cities in which an increasing amount of nationalities are present in neighbourhoods, school classes, etc. (Crul, 2016).

as buses, parks, and public squares has the potential to generate hostility as much as conviviality (Ye, 2017). The existence of deeply rooted, ethno-racial hierarchies that continue to stratify people in European societies (Lentin, 2011) needs to be recognized and addressed by interculturalist theories and policies (Zapata-Barrero, 2017).

The 2013 Black Lives Matter movement belonged to this strand of the debate by claiming that such subtle forms of self-censorship need to be directly targeted by public authorities and political narratives. So, before returning to the core question linking discrimination with interculturalism, which we argue illuminates the citizenship-integration nexus by defining discrimination as a central impediment for egalitarian citizenship practices that are essential for integration to work, we need to ask: how can we promote positive contact if people live in unequal conditions in terms of legal, economic and education status, different power situations and different social statuses, and constantly are subject to racialized categorizations in everyday life (Lentin, 2011)? It is this focus that informs most understandings of intercultural policies. For instance, Barcelona and others cities within the intercultural cities programme often formulate their policies to fight against the adverse conditions for contact. A clear example is the last formulation of the Barcelona Interculturality Plan (2010), seen as an anti-racist tool and informing an anti-rumour strategy that has influenced the European Council's intercultural cities programme (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/anti-rumours>). As is made clear from the very beginning, "The anti-rumour strategy aims to raise awareness about the importance of countering diversity-related prejudices and rumours that hamper positive interaction and social cohesion and that lay the foundations of discriminatory and racist attitudes" (Barcelona Interculturality Plan, 2010). Within this policy field there is an array of actions that go from anti-rumours, antiracism and campaigns for equality of rights and respect for human rights. The promotion of anti-discrimination (agendas and discourses) is a fundamental element of intercultural policies, since it potentially focuses on the factors that hinder the emergence of positive contact zones.

It should however be noted that an explicitly equality-oriented perspective is largely absent from anti-discrimination policies, which tend to limit themselves to promoting non-discrimination as ideal and rarely address the underlying structures and mechanisms that produce discrimination (Joppke, 2007). It has been argued that this is related to the fact that the implementation of anti-discrimination directives at the European level in the early 2000s had a significant impact since they did not challenge the foundations of the policy framework based on (neo) liberal principles: discrimination was framed as an obstacle for merit-based competition rather than linked to structural inequalities (Bell, 2002). Consequently, the Anti-discrimination directives' focus on race/ethnicity rather than on equality was widely criticized for not having sufficiently acknowledged the socio-economic vulnerability of many immigrants and ethnic minority people. This may reflect how states prefer less costly, symbolic solutions that do not challenge the overall political economy (Geddes, 2004; Bell, 2002), while it appears that anti-discrimination needs to incorporate both "race" and "class" in order to better address the disadvantages that many immigrants and racialized people face. Moreover, there are contextual, legal,

institutional and structural factors that reduce people's motivation to interact and even build walls of separation between them based on misinterpretations of differences. This implies that diversity can no longer be used as a euphemism to perpetuate the us/others separation of societies, which instead of fighting against it, maintains the inequalities and unbalanced power relations in diverse public spaces.

As has already been noted (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2019a; 34) there is always a subtle semantic process (reflecting colonial thinking) when those who define diversity never include themselves within this category. Diversity is always considered by European standards to refer to non-Europeans. Europe has constructed diversity categories related to dimensions of race, ethnicity, religion, language, as being at the origin of social polarization and political conflicts (R. Zapata-Barrero, 2019b). In this sense, interculturalism charts the course, the focus, the horizon, and the direction of small-scale programs, and is becoming a strategic local project. One example is the intercultural cities program that the Council of Europe promoted as part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008, which today has a worldwide scope with more than 140 cities from all the continents.⁴ Implementation areas can have a variable focal length within the territorial limits of the city: as an overall local project, and on a smaller scale, at the level of districts, and even streets and concrete public settings (market, playground, etc.), particular projects, either thematic and topic-oriented or targeting particular profiles of people (young people, women, artists, intergenerational projects, etc.), or seeking to foster determinate values, beliefs and life prospects.

This chapter has two central parts; one theoretical and one that is empirically oriented. In the first part, we frame the conceptual system within which we may develop a more focused empirical analysis of intercultural citizenship-making through anti-discrimination policies. In this context we are interested in how people subjectify discrimination, and even how discrimination may be a matter of subtle normalization for certain groups of people, who are aware of their difference from the mainstream society and take for granted, thereby in practice accepting, a certain degree of inequality and subordinate positions in the general power structures. These cognitive situations of self-censorship in acceding to certain public spaces and even of self-limiting their behaviour into a non-shared public space may erode the very concept of citizenship by seriously damaging the sense of belonging. Second, we integrate empirical data on immigrants' perceptions on discrimination and belonging from multiple studies on this topic conducted between 2004 and 2020. Based on these narratives, it clearly shows that self-perceived discrimination is a shared experience by people of diverse, non-Western backgrounds, and represents an impediment for their identification with society. Simultaneously, we find that experiences of inclusion in the local neighbourhood can counteract such negative experiences in the broader society and constitute a fertile construction ground for intercultural citizenship.

⁴ see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities>

7.2 Framing the Interculturalism, Public Space and Citizenship-Making Debate

Among the multi-layered debate on interculturalism, and its epistemological endeavours Zapata-Barrero, (2019c), there is confusion sometimes between the ends of interculturalism and the means or conditions. For instance, the intercultural approach places equality not at a normative end, as multiculturalism does, but as a condition for intercultural relations. This means that its mantra is that it is very difficult to promote contact in unequal conditions, say regarding social class and education for instance, but also under different legal statuses. The foundation of interculturalism lies in the theory that states that under conditions of equality and power-sharing, inter-personal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce discrimination. This application of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) assumes that issues of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination commonly occur between people who are in a competitive logic. Therefore, prejudices not only have an identity component, but also a social-class one (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Fainstein (2005: 13), for instance, affirms that the relationship between diversity and tolerance is not clear. Sometimes exposure to ‘the other’ evokes greater understanding, but if lifestyles are too incompatible, it only heightens prejudice. Allport’s proposal was that properly managed contact should reduce these problems and lead to better interactions. These conditions for interculturalism include equal status within difference, common goals, interdependence, cooperation and support of authorities, shared law or customs. This follows that diversity- awareness, diversity-recognition and shared public spaces becomes one of the most important conditions for positive contact-promotion. On this avenue of debate, and together with equality, we also need to place power relations, Interculturalism highlights how important it is to reach power sharing conditions for promoting contact. And when we link inequality and power relations, we conceptually enter the realm of discrimination.

Discrimination is understood as a conjugation of inequality and power relations. In this sense discrimination is seen as a factor preventing contact and an intercultural policy must place increased focus on discrimination prevention rather than equality alone. But in order to better conceptually box discrimination under an intercultural lens, we also need to include its geographical dimension. By this we mean that discrimination does not occur in abstract settings but in actual, physical or virtual places, and it is often public space-related. Interculturalism has first of all an urban view of public space. Carr et al. (1993) distinguish between 11 types of public spaces: public parks, squares and plazas, memorials, markets, streets, playgrounds, community open spaces, greenways and parkways, atrium/indoor market places, found spaces/everyday spaces and waterfronts. But, it can also be neighbourhood spaces like the residential streets and forecourts (Dines et al., 2006). We can also add community gardens, libraries, public amenities, festivals and neighbourhood spaces, as reported by Bagwell et al. (2012). We cannot overlook inside buildingseither such as supermarkets, restaurants, bars, closed leisure activities, theatres, music halls, and sport centres, even if these last may have rights of

admission. Connecting spaces, such as sidewalks and streets, are also public spaces. In the twenty-first century, some even consider virtual spaces available through the internet as a new type of public space that develops interaction and social mixing. It is in fact this non-excludable nature of public space that makes the development of intercultural citizenship possible. In fact, the fact that interculturalism can mainly be applied at shared public spaces delineate the bottom-up approach for understanding its application, as a micro-politics and neighbourhood policies, as proximity policy (Zapata-Barrero, 2019a).

The argument is that public space needs to be shared and should always be open as a condition of interculturalism. When the public space is scattered and the activities of people find unjustified limits, then it is very difficult to promote intercultural relations. The importance of mobilising public spaces at the level of neighbourhoods can become imperative under circumstances in which areas that are left alone may be at risk of being managed by the market, following its consumption's logic of action, rather than that of social aims and public goods (Wood, 2015), and it can even become the concrete space of diversity-related discriminations. Following Habermas' concern, one additional problem today is that public spaces are sometimes represented as spaces of insecurity, isolation, threat, danger, conflicts, of consumption and competition, and other features that prevent diversity-contacts (Calhoun, 1992). There is also a criticism on the privatization of public spaces that may be relevant for us. The disappearance of open public spaces can generate negative social consequences and launch a spiral of decline. As the vibrancy of public spaces diminishes we lose the habit of participating in street life. The natural policing of streets that comes from the presence of people needs to be replaced by 'security' and the city itself becomes less free and more alienating. These public domain retreats are also a structural cause of lack of contact-zones for diversity-contacts promotion that we must take into account (Rogers, 2008). One condition for making public spaces work for intercultural citizenship is then to make sure they are safe spaces where people can celebrate their cultural peers with autonomy (Knapp, 2007). Here public space and discrimination represent a prominent factor for intercultural relations, since we can place discrimination issues within the framework of public space and then see how there are discriminatory public spaces. The relation between discrimination and exclusion of public space is important here and so are interrelated terms. Discrimination provokes exclusion from shared public spaces. That there are spaces that may not be fully shared by all challenges the citizenship-making process behind the intercultural strategy. This citizenship focus is also important.

Interculturalism shows its pro-active dimension in terms of fostering new forms of citizenship identity and belonging separated from birth and origin. The seminal work of Castells (1999) showed us that the question of personal identity is much more connected to how people relate to each other, rather than the traditional 'Who am I?' based on 'where I was born' (territory) or 'who my parents are' (descent). When we look at citizenship traditions, interculturalism is close to the republican tradition as a strategy connecting place-making and identity-making to frame public spaces (Zapata-Barrero, 2020).

Here the debate can spread on how far interculturalism is a strategy for community cohesion, for fostering communitarian values of respect and recognition of the other, and for creating diversity awareness. The debate, then, is not about conditions, but about outcomes of intercultural policies. The fact of citizenship-making behind intercultural strategies could be misleading if we do not consider a necessary condition for cohesion-making, namely the sense of belonging. Without a minimum feeling of belonging into a societal structure it is difficult to create cohesion and citizenship. Here citizenship-making become a channel for cohesion-making and the sense of belonging a factor for bridging citizenship and cohesion. If we go into this sense of belonging as a necessary condition of citizenship and cohesion, our society has been shaped to only give a political meaning to the sense of belonging when it is nationhood-based. This means that often the sense of belonging has been conducted around a symbolic flag. This traditional cognitive condition for citizenship and cohesion-making is today challenged by interculturalism, since the premise of making contact is a much more a cosmopolitan devise of detaching relations from racial and national dependencies (hence interculturalism adhere to post-ethnic, post-national and post-racial view of society). For interculturalism, place-making and public space become the main frameworks for developing the necessary feeling of belonging for citizenship-making.

In this conceptual system, non-discrimination plays a very important role, both for the conditions and the ends of interculturalism. From an intercultural lens, it is understood in spatial terms, at the micro level. For an intercultural mind, discrimination may prevent people from developing the sense of belonging that is necessary for citizenship and cohesion making. This hypothesis is what we would like to empirically test through different fieldworks that have been developed in recent years.

In fact, when we shift our focus from the interculturalism rhetoric towards evidences, we are still in much need of rigorous empirical studies in order to learn about the assets and shortcomings of intercultural policy, since its outcomes need to be tested, measured, compared and contrasted. It is within this line of research that we place our objectives.

7.3 Self-Perceptions on Discrimination and the Mitigating Effects of Place-Based Belonging

There is a vast body of research on the detrimental effects of the discrimination that frequently affects immigrants and racialized minorities in European societies (e.g. Crul et al., 2012; Safi, 2010; Lentin, 2011, 2014; Seng, 2012; Bobowik et al., 2014; ENAR report, 2014). There are also several works that look into the ways in which groups who often perceive exclusion and non-acceptance from the majority society construct alternative forms of belonging; for instance, in countercultures and

movements (McDowell, 2016; Pilati, 2016), or in the construction of a collective identity that is closely linked to the physical space, generally the city or the neighbourhood where everyday life is played out (Oosterlynck et al., 2017; Hellgren, 2019). This identity-construction is often problematic. For people who live in marginalized housing areas, for instance, feelings of shame or anger over the stigmatization of their neighbourhood become mixed with feelings of solidarity and belonging. People who frequently experience that they are looked down upon; that their right to be in a certain place is questioned; that they are suspected of stealing or other infractions; or even are insulted, in other parts of the city, may feel more relaxed and at ease in the own neighbourhood, where they are known. The solidarity towards the neighbourhood may however also be put to a test for residents who manage to climb upwards on the social ladder, and lead to personal conflicts in taking the decision to move out or stay (Barwick & Beaman, 2019). The destructive effects of the “downward spiral” in areas marked by unemployment and social exclusion, resulting from the tendency that only those who have no other option end up staying, is well-known and documented, and needs to be taken into account in order to avoid a romanticizing and naïve view on the often harsh realities of many multiethnic neighbourhoods in European cities.

Nevertheless, what is particularly relevant in the context of this chapter is to understand the physical space – and hence to place the focus on people-to-place linkages rather than only applying a people-to-people focus, as is usually taken for granted in debates on interculturalism – as a “construction site for intercultural citizenship”: how is this happening (or not), and under what circumstances? As discussed above, we consider the perceptions of discrimination – both in terms of actual experiences and of an internalized “normalization” and expectation to repeatedly be discriminated against based on one’s ethnicity and previous experiences – among racialized people as an important impediment for the bottom-up construction of an intercultural citizenship based on egalitarian relations between people from the ethnic majority society as well as immigrants and ethnic minority groups.

In this section, we will provide empirical data that ground these theoretical endeavours.

First, we will briefly present the empirical studies that the data used are extracted from. Then, we will use extensive, qualitative interview data providing narratives on the character of the discrimination that the respondents perceive, and the consequences it has for them at a personal and social level. This approach is intended to provide a deeper insight into the severe consequences that also “invisible” forms of discrimination may have in terms of sense of belonging to society, illustrating empirically in what ways discrimination constitutes an impediment for the kind of intercultural citizenship that we outlined above. Finally, we shift our perspective on the empirical data and focus on the narratives on belonging and the respondents’ relationship to the place where they live their lives.

7.3.1 *The Empirical Material: Analysing Data from Different Research Projects*

The data used for our analysis was collected for several different research projects addressing inclusion/exclusion among immigrants and racialized people.⁵ This involves important advantages. First, it allows us to use extensive qualitative interview material: the literal transcripts from altogether 185 interviews conducted between 2004 and 2020 with immigrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, children of immigrants, and racialized citizens as the Spanish Roma population, were used. Second, the great variety of the material is enhanced by the fact that it is multi-sited: the data were collected at different sites in Spain and Sweden. For the purpose of this chapter, we were interested in explicitly contrasting the different narratives on discrimination and belonging that were included in the transcripts from these projects, regardless of the differences in framing between them. The rich data allowed for comparisons between the experiences of racialized people with different educational and income levels, between different forms of racialization (based on skin colour or prejudices about cultural or religious differences, for instance (Silverstein, 2005)), and in relation to different societal contexts. This multi-comparative approach was considered of central importance for the reliability of the findings. All of these 185 respondents declared that they experienced discrimination regularly, most typically in public spaces, in shops and supermarkets, in access to housing and employment, or as disrespect at work.

In coding the interview transcripts and conducting a thematic analysis, a distinction was first made between the respondents' narratives on how they experienced and perceived different types of discrimination, and the consequences these experienced had for them in terms of sense of belonging and identification with society. Different experiences of discrimination were categorized as "direct" or "indirect" discrimination, where the first refers to overt discriminatory experiences as racist insults or explicit forms of rejection (for example the case of a black flight attendant who was denied employment as the HR representative claimed that "this airline is not used to working with coloured people"), while the second category covers a wide spectrum of more subtle forms of exclusion or rejection. For instance, the experience of repeatedly not being selected for employment despite being a qualified candidate, or simply perceiving that one is looked down upon and avoided in a wide range of situations, based on physical features. Skin colour was common for

⁵The core results of this research is published in several journals and edited volumes (see, e.g., Hellgren, 2008, 2014, 2015, 2019; Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021a and b). Zenia Hellgren was the PI and/or researcher and in charge of the empirical studies conducted in all of them. For a full list of these research projects, see her personal website: <https://www.upf.edu/web/zenia-hellgren/research-lines>. One of these projects, REPCAT (The Role of the Ethnic Majority in Integration Processes: Attitudes and Practices towards Immigrants in Catalan Institutions), received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 747075.

many of the respondents, and severely harmed their self-esteem and sense of belonging to society at a general level. In this context, specific attention was paid to the dimension of self-restraint that we discussed in the theoretical section above, as this was considered an essential factor for the willingness to interact with others in public spaces and thereby participate actively in the “making of intercultural citizenship”. Finally, the respondents’ narratives on their relationship with the place where they live were coded, including both positive and negative aspects of such identification.

7.3.2 *Self-Perceptions on Discrimination*

The analysis of the 185 interviews about self-perceived discrimination clearly show that visible difference such as skin/hair colour, “indigenous features” (salient among Latin American migrants in Spain, particularly for those of Bolivian origin), or religious clothing in the case of Muslim women, were overall perceived as the principal cause for both overt forms of racism and more subtle forms of rejection. Overt discrimination was most common in the narratives of people of African descent, (visible) Muslims, and Roma. Particularly among the Roma respondents, it was common to express how the perception is passed from generation to generation that one will (in these respondents’ view, inevitably) be exposed to racism and rejection because of their belonging to the Roma ethnicity.

I was in a playground with my daughter and another mother yelled at her little son, loud and just in front of me ‘look how dirty you have gotten, you look like a gypsy’. This kind of things happens all the time and it is hard to explain to my children, I try to protect them but they begin to understand now, how people look at them. –*Roma woman, 2020*

This kind of experiences contributed to the widely shared sentiment that one is safer in their own neighbourhood, and that it is not worth the exposure to humiliation that is often involved in trying to access places that are perceived as “not for us.”

Always, always, when I go to *Zara* downtown for instance, a security guard shows up and walks closely behind me all the time. So, I prefer to buy my clothes at the market in *La Mina*, because there they treat me well, even if I like the clothes at *Zara* better. –*Roma woman, 2018*

There are also many narratives that illustrate how the subtler forms of rejection, most typically that of never being selected for employment, influence on the affected persons’ self-esteem and sense of identification with the broader, mainstream society, even if many of the respondents also express how they actively struggle against the negative effects of discrimination at the individual level.

I know when I don’t get a job because of my skin colour. After so many years of being exposed to it [discrimination], one knows just by the way people look at you, or talk you to. But once when I applied for a job as shop assistant, the lady actually told me that she could not hire me because the clients cannot identify with a black person. –*Woman of Burundian origin, 2014*

I try not to think that it is because I am black if I don't get a job or a rental contract, and I am still applying for these things. I have to be aware of the problem [with racism] without becoming paranoid. I cannot assume that it is because of my origin every time I am rejected, and I am not going to stop wanting things just because I may have fewer chances. –*Man of Guinean origin, 2013*

Many of the respondents felt significantly limited by the fact that they had experienced discrimination in the past, and therefore expected to experience it again, which made them avoid situations where this was considered likely to occur. Overall, the analysis of the interviews lends empirical support to assert that the damage caused by discrimination is severe in terms of self-limitations and non-belonging – even if it, as Crul et al. (2012: 28) points out actually “only happened once or twice in a lifetime”. This is also where the link between (both actual and expected) discrimination and the relationship to place becomes particularly evident: while discrimination thus hampers the feeling of identification with and sense of entitlement to the place (for instance, youngsters who perceive that they are unwelcome outside their own neighbourhood may claim that the city is “not theirs”), a positive relation to the physical space that is significant for the individual, most importantly their own neighbourhood, may counteract negative experiences of discrimination in society as a whole and create a sense of belonging that is essential for the person's wellbeing, even if it is a form of “underdog belonging” (Hellgren, 2019; Barwick & Beaman, 2019).

7.3.3 *The Relation to Place and the Construction of Belonging*

The importance for developing a sense of belonging of immigrants' and racialized people's identification with the physical space where everyday life is played out, most typically the neighbourhood, has been stressed by numerous authors (e.g., Oosterlynck et al., 2017; Crul, 2016; Wessendorf, 2013). It has also been argued that for people who are exposed to discrimination based on their origin, the local level is more central for processes of identification and belonging than the national level (Barwick & Beaman, 2019). The relationship with place can apparently, at least to some extent, compensate for the discrimination and marginalization that racialized people often experience in their contacts with the mainstream society. It may, for instance, be far easier for an immigrant to identify as “Barcelonian” than “Catalan” or “Spanish.” In one of the research projects used for this article, the main conclusion was that experiences of racism and discrimination were similar among racialized immigrants and minorities in Stockholm and Barcelona, but the sense of wellbeing and identification with the city was overall far greater among the respondents in Barcelona. The city's more “cosmopolitan” character and ethnically mixed public spaces were given as the main reasons for this, while on the reverse, the high degree of spatial segregation in Stockholm, where most non-white people live in high-rise buildings in the outer suburbs, was considered a central reason for discontent and detachment, and directly counterproductive for integration processes (Hellgren, 2019).

In understanding multi-ethnic environments as potential construction sites for an intercultural citizenship from below, the liberating effect that such spaces have for many of the respondents provides important insights. Overall, the respondents express that they feel more comfortable and experience a greater sense of belonging in ethnically mixed surroundings, and some of them who had positive experiences abroad consider melting pots such as London, New York, or Brussels, as the ideal places to live.

When I was a teenager, we went to visit family in Brussels in the summer holidays. There is a much larger African diaspora there, many black people, mainly from Congo. That feeling, of not being a minority, not looking different... I did not realize until I came back home how relaxed I had felt [in Brussels], without really knowing why. Also in the US, people ask me where I'm from, but they mean from which American state! I did not feel so exoticized there. There is much racism but people don't find it strange to see black people everywhere, even as bosses. –*Woman of Congolese origin, 2014*

In most of the narratives used for this chapter, the yearning to feel that one is treated “like anyone else” is central. This is, for many of the racialized respondents, only possible, to some extent, in their own neighbourhood, or in other multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. However, this does not mean that multi-ethnic places are safeguarded from racism and discrimination. As Barwick and Beaman (2019: 2) point out, “even in super-diverse cities and neighbourhoods, ethnic and religious minorities often experience stigmatization and discrimination”.

Furthermore, there are important complexities involved in the different forms of identification with the physical space that racialized people construct. Indeed, many of the super-diverse neighbourhoods in European cities with high proportions of residents who have their roots in other countries are also marked by severe socio-economic difficulties (Crul, 2016). As Crul (ibid) points out, this “super-diversity” does often not involve the native population, who lives and works in other, mainly white neighbourhoods and hardly sees how “the other half” lives. This consequence of urban segregation may be the focal point that needs to be addressed in order for the ideal construction of an egalitarian intercultural citizenship that we defined in the theoretical section above to become more of a reality: such a project can hardly work if it does not involve a majority of natives as well.

As for now, the forms of belonging and intercultural identification that emerges in super-diverse neighbourhoods is often what best may be described as an “underdog identity,” which is often based on shared experiences of exclusion and discrimination (Hellgren, 2019; Barwick & Beaman, 2019). This sentiment is reflected in many of the respondents’ accounts on how they perceive that others see them as inhabitants of a stigmatized housing area.

Have you seen the streets? There is garbage everywhere, they don't even care about cleaning here. But we are actually a part of Badalona though it doesn't feel like it, we even speak about it like that, ‘are you going to Badalona?’ And if we go to the centre, people look at us like... it bothers them. This [the own neighbourhood] is the only place where I feel comfortable. –*Roma man, 2020*

I went to high school in a fancy neighbourhood, with lots of ethnic Swedes, quite upper class...and when everyone talks of integration, they usually mean that I should integrate into their society, but not so much that these rich ethnic Swedes should integrate into our society, into my neighbourhood where lots of people have an immigrant background. So, I feel that there are two sides of the coin, so to speak, but only one part is expected to integrate and adapt to the other. –*Man of Eritrean origin, 2014*

There are also narratives of the kind of stigmatization that may affect racialized people who move upwards on the social ladder. This highlights the challenges involved in breaking destructive mental schemes that prevail among the mainstream society, according to which racialized people are automatically assigned pejorative labels as “underclass,” or, if wealthy, “probably a gangster.” This respondents’ experiences are similar to Barwick and Beaman’s (Barwick & Beaman, 2019: 10) finding that second-generation Turks in middle-class German neighbourhoods feel that they must be cautious to avoid negative attention, for instance to not buy a fancy car:

The neighbours were suspicious, my name being the only foreign one. ‘How can he afford to live here, is he a criminal?’ And I had to work very hard, to not end up in [marginalized suburb], but I did not want that for my children. –*Man of Chilean origin, 2015*

Similarly, Schuster (in Barwick & Beaman, 2019: 10) found that the fear of suffering mistreatment in predominantly “white areas” may lead ethnic minorities to avoid such places, and that for this reason they may prefer to continue living in marginalized housing areas even if they can afford to move out – thus preventing the middle- and upper-class areas where mainly white people live from becoming more ethnically diversified. Indeed, such examples illustrate how deeply incompatible prejudice and discrimination are with the construction of an intercultural society, and also, how essential it is to combat urban segregation in order for the sense of belonging that emerges in relation to public space to be inclusive also of the native population.

7.4 Concluding Remarks: Interculturalism from below

The debate on interculturalism needs to be more practice-oriented and its main argument better evidence-based. This chapter tries to contribute to this research avenue within interculturalism by linking several theoretical and empirical arguments. The premise is that interculturalism is a policy strategy that is basically intended for citizenship-making in diverse societies. As a strategy it needs to focus its conceptual and policy efforts to better connect the ends and means it seeks to put forward to reach these policy ends. Interculturalism has no strong normative dimensions in its core concept, as was the case with multiculturalism, often driven by a sense of justice and equality (Fossum et al., 2020). But this normative-free dimension of interculturalism does not imply that it does not need to deepen its engagement with the conditions that make positive contact possible in ethnically diverse societies. At this juncture, the debate on the conditions of interculturalism is

straightforward, since we cannot take for granted that the environment where contact takes place does not affect the citizenship-making process of interculturalism.

We have considered equality, power sharing and belonging as the main components of successful citizenship-making, and we have focused our argument on the basic structural restrictions that people may encounter in their everyday practice, which affects to what degree they are open to relate to other people. The main argument put forward here is that people-to-place linkages may be determinant for people-to-people linkages, which is as we understand interculturalism. This people-to-place linkage needs to be discrimination-free, and empirical findings from diverse settings and contexts show us that there is a self-censorship pattern that may prevent people to be motivated to relate with other people, across ethnic, racial, and other barriers. These subtle and often very difficult-to-prove self-behaviours, together with other more explicit forms of discrimination, often further contaminate public space, which is already contaminated by market inequalities and physical insecurity. Hence, the conditions of interculturalism are key to better shape the intercultural debate when the focus is on public space, belonging and discriminatory practices.

The empirical data from several research projects has helped us to better ground these conceptual endeavours. These multi-sited data lend support to the argument that people who are visibly different from the white, western norm feel more at ease in public spaces with high degrees of ethnic mixing. Several scholars have engaged with identity-formation in multiethnic or “super-diverse” neighbourhoods, where many different nationalities, colours, cultures and religions meet, and young people grow up with hybrid identities and form solidarity and a sense of belonging across ethnic boundaries (e.g., Barwick & Beaman, 2019; McDowell, 2016; Hellgren, 2008; Stevenson, 2003). If we dare to be optimistic, perhaps this ongoing process of emerging identities could be described in terms of “interculturalism from below,” grounded in attitudes and practices at the micro level. This ought to be fundamental for an actual interculturalist transformation of society to take place, beyond the political and academic debates and agendas.

There is however still a gap regarding the involvement of the native-origin population in these processes. Ethnically mixed or super-diverse neighbourhoods generally count on low levels of native inhabitants, and those who do live in such areas and share public spaces with newcomers and racialized minorities are often natives in vulnerable positions and with low socio-economic status, who share many of the disadvantages that affect racialized people to a high extent. As discussed above, thus, the type of intercultural identity-formation that takes shape in these areas is often what we denominated as underdog belonging, based on a shared situation of disadvantage, and sometimes, distancing from the mainstream (McDowell, 2016; Pilati, 2016; Hellgren, 2019). In that sense, such identities would rather be in opposition with the construction of an intercultural citizenship, based on egalitarian relations between minorities and natives.

What kind of ideal scenario would we then imagine, if intercultural ideals were successfully translated into the construction of more egalitarian, discrimination-free (super)diverse public spaces? Several of the respondents mentioned multiethnic

cities such as New York, London, or Brussels as closer to their ideal cosmopolitan urban space than their own residential areas in Spain or Sweden. As discussed above, there were also salient differences between the relationship to space between the interviewed residents of Barcelona and Stockholm. People of diverse origins expressed more satisfaction in relation to the public spaces of Barcelona than Stockholm, because they perceived Barcelona as less segregated, more open-minded and more visibly ethnically mixed (Hellgren, 2019). Naturally, we need to be cautious in order not to romanticize the ideal of harmonic coexistence in “cosmopolitan” spaces. All the aforementioned cities are for instance strongly segmented across socio-economic divisions. Also, as Wessendorf (2013) argued, diversity per se does not imply that solidarity or identification between people is automatically fostered.

Rather, in the best of cases, the kind of conviviality that emerges in superdiverse urban settings seems to be that of “respectful indifference”. Yet, in line with the recent handbook of the governance of migration and diversity in cities (Caponio et al., 2019), we may conclude that apparently, immigrants and racialized people experience a greater sense of belonging in more diverse public spaces, and that part of the intercultural project inevitably needs to consist of a struggle against discrimination and spatial segregation, involving both ethnic majorities and minorities.

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