DIFFERENTIAL SPACE AND HOSPITALITY (II). STARTING FROM A NIETZSCHEAN LEFEBVRE*

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1. Differential space as a "dispositif"

In Lefebvre's last formulation of the concept in the fourth volume of *De l'État* (Lefebvre, 1978), "differential space" is the space to be created in contraposition to the homogeneous-fragmented space of capitalism. Convinced as he is that the crisis of the existing space is unstoppable, Lefebvre has in mind an innovative configuration intensifying the emerging trends in the capitalist mode of production to radically go beyond it: a space granting differences a positive and transformative sense, capable of conquering any resistances.

Under this regard, differential space, in general terms, appears as an "dispositif" weaving together maximal differences and minimal differences (respectively produced and induced), a complex formation that cannot be described in terms of a distinction between revolutionary vision and reformist vision[1], a formation that is not mere counter-space – as Lefebvre indeed sometimes seems to imply – but a creative, poetic, *oeuvre*-producing space.

More specifically, differential space – this is the thesis I advance here – should be understood as an dispositif (Foucault, 1994) *which in the current historical moment performs the essential function of giving an answer, in the alter-metropolitan ordering of space[2], to the pressing needs of the era of migrations* (Castles, Miller, 2009) *and of the "globalization of the religious"* (Bastian *et al.*, 2001; Torrekens, 2006)*; a space that seeks to achieve the empathic acknowledgement of the Other in the unconditional visibility of differences* (Honneth, 2004), *giving form to the sentiment of joy by experimenting with ambitious urban forms of creative hospitality based on a cosmopolitan bottom-up perspective* (Beck, 2004).

My intention is thus to extend Lefebvre's formulation, which does not focus either on the migratory phenomenon or on the religious one, nor on any of their many concrete manifestations in the cities of the world (Mc Cann, 1999)[3], or on the innumerable investigations – carried out especially in "global cities" – that have highlighted the controversial *multifacetedness* of their manifestation. Indeed, this debate gained intensity only after the death of the French author, in the form of a direct examination of the *multifacetedness* of those differences that «are constituted across many dimensions from race, class and ethnicity to gender, sexuality, age and able-bodiedness, […] none of [which] exists as a homogenous space or entity since they multiply and intersect with one another in complex, fluid, and diverse ways. Differences are constructed in, and themselves construct, city life and spaces. They are also constituted spatially, socially and economically, sometimes leading to polarization, inequality, zones of exclusion and fragmentation, and at other times constituting sites of power, resistance, and the celebration of identity. Difference is constituted in all spatial relations but the particularity of the city is that it concentrates differences through its density of people and lived spaces, through the juxtaposition of different activities and land uses and through its intensities of

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interaction and interconnections» (Bridge, Watson, 2003, p. 251).

Neither can the thesis I put forward here find support, among many studies, in R. R. Fincher and J. M. Jacobs' investigation of *Cities of Difference* (1998), which played an important role in the subsequent intensification of research on the subject (Fincher, Jacobs, 1998)[4]. These investigations define the new contours of a question that has completely abandoned early debates on difference opposed to class, and is now focusing on the question of heterogeneity as an intrinsic characteristic of space (Massey, 2005). We are talking of approaches that create a tension between the relative autonomy Lefebvre ascribes to the theme of differences – although, as is well-known, under the shield of a Marxian acknowledgement of relations of production as the ultimate determinant – and the paradigms of recognition and inequality; and even more tension with a unified theory of justice where gender, race, sex and class are the recomposed elements of a density that does not limit the scope of struggles for recognition to a mere acceptance of differences unconnected to equality in interests, income and property (Fraser, 2004; Honneth, 2008).

I will follow Lefebvre, instead, in what seems to be his most original contribution, namely, his removing of difference from the sphere of separation to render it creative, capable of providing fecund indications for the construction of the future. Because – as Negri observes – "the difference that manifests itself as creative is the passage whereby the nightmare becomes the dream, and the dream a life project (in full awareness of difficulties and limitations). If difference is resistance, the dream can live its historical projection in a fully aware and conscious manner. If difference is a mode of life, it recognizes the mode of life as productive» (Negri, 2005, p. 27).

The discourse on Lefebvrian differential space that I intend to go into here will therefore focus on the creativity of a process of construction of the urban space placing a strong emphasis on the emotional component, and especially on the joy of shared and unconditional acknowledgement of the Other, starting from the visibility of the immigrant and his or her religious symbols. In this perspective, difference is understood, not as cultural separateness, as argued by differentialist positions, but as ramification of a shared human condition (Dal Lago, 2009).

2. The era of migrations and the globalization of the "religious"

It is thus necessary to adapt the Lefebvrian project to the "urgencies" of the current historical phase in its configuration as the era of migrations. The world space appears today as a terrain of struggle and movement that is taking on an unprecedented political significance due to the intensity and extension of migratory flows (Castles, Miller, 2009). These true "key forces of globalization" are confronting us with the challenge of a diversification that increases existing differences and places a strain on the traditional conception of nationhood and citizenship, accentuating the difficulty of giving adequate support to "strangers" in terms of jobs, shelter, and permanent settlement.

Western societies offer these flows only limited hospitality, often strongly conditional on the acceptance of individual cultural assimilation. As Ash Amin argues, cities are taking on the form not just of gathering places for foreign immigrants, but also of hybrid realities, where the destiny of the foreign immigrant is determined by a combination of hybrid individual working activities and social projections (Amin, 2012).

The issue of social *invisibility*, raised again by Alex Honneth (2008) in his theory of the struggle for recognition, has come strongly to the fore. According to Honneth, in

the history of culture one finds innumerable examples of "dominant subjects" claiming social superiority in contemptuous and humiliating ways, who look at strangers – "non-persons", as Dal Lago (2009) calls them – as if they were transparent, devoid of visibility. These forms of contempt intertwine with the "globalization of the Religious" which for some years now has taken the form of a *deterritorialization* of religion brought about by time-space changes accentuated not only by the growth of migratory flows but also by the explosion of computer technology (Bastian, Champion Rousselet, 2001).

The globalization of the religious is a phenomenon that eludes the control of states and transcends state boundaries. It is constituted by a variety of partially contradictory movements informed by complex relations between the local, the regional and the global, and by new forms of identitarian claims in the economic, political, juridical and cultural spheres. One thus witnesses increasingly diversified and multilateral trajectories giving rise to complex hybridizations and new frontiers, less dependent on geographical location and more on the unequal distribution of market commodities. This restructuring of space undermines the hegemony of nation-states, gives rise to vaster

"global regions," and reactivates the local dimension. Furthermore, the pressure exerted by the "religious" combines with unsolved social problems (poverty, oppression and environmental deterioration) to produce a sort of «inexhaustible creativity of glocalization» (Saint-Blancat, 2001, p. 77) and introduce multiple hybridity and a relativization of identities by reconciling universalism and particularism.

In the "migratory project" there is a certain need for religious structuring that aspires to a dense visibility, to a creative deposit in the urban space allowing immigrants to become actors. This is achieved through forms of visibility (urban, among others) rejecting the reduction of the "religious" to the private sphere, and through the search for images that others can easily decode set in a public space intended as a site for the interpretation of forms of representation. In this process, maximum emphasis is placed on the *local*, which replaces the State in the pragmatic management of religious pluralism, coming out the winner among the many levels of the globalization of social phenomena (Torrekens, 2006). Public space thus takes on the appearance of a changeful site for negotiation in a sort of "multispatialized" management of religious pluralism (Badie, 1995).

For Muslim religion, in particular, the "religious" appears as an especially complex dimension of public space, due to the variety of modes of belonging to Islam, as well as the existence of different modes of recognition of cults and institutionalization of Church-State relations, and different notions of public space (Torrekens, 2006).

3. Dealing with the exceptionality of Islam, beyond building mosques

The centrality of Islamism in this trajectory is evident. Islam is the point of convergence of the Muslim cosmopolitan tradition and the search for identity of Muslim societies fueled by migratory flows and resistance against the economic violence of globalism (Saint-Blancat, 2001). In the European public space, it generates an intense conflict that is not merely symbolic in nature, but a concrete sign of control of and power over living spaces. Herein, argues Allievi, lies the exceptionality of Islam. Actually, the migratory movement as a whole has a need for religious structuring constructed under the protection of an identity made visible through material symbols that are recognizable in national public spaces. These symbols manifest the aspiration of new residents to become fully entitled actors in the urban space by conquering interstitial spaces expressing a materialized symbolic appropriation, true forms of ritual management of space. This conquest is becoming increasingly substantial. We cannot overlook the fact that the growing presence of Muslims in Europe – almost 17 million in the 16 principal European countries – is not matched by a parallel growth in the number of mosques, which today number only about 11,000 (Allievi, 2010). Thus, rather than problems of religious freedom, what immigrants face is a difficulty in gaining adequate access to Islamic worship places, which remain few in number and marginalized, especially as regards connected social, cultural, political and economic functions such as *halal* butcheries, ethnical stores and restaurants, phone centers, import-export facilities, and ethno-religious libraries within the growing network of national and transnational connections. This multitude of functions obviously can hardly be performed in the context of the reductive trend to decenter mosques, relegating them to unused buildings in the peripheries. We should, instead, reinforce the current trend to a transition from the mere prayer hall to the community center, the *mosquée de proximité*. There should be an insistence on proximity to create a neighborhood dimension, increasing investments in structures and the expansion of their spaces and functions.

It is evident that a specific urban dimension is incarnated in the use of public space, a dimension capable of providing an image that others can decode, and a privileged site for struggles for recognition and resistance against forms of exclusion. In substance, the mosque increasingly appears as «the result of a compromise between Muslim actors and political actors on the question of the visibility of the Islamic religion in the public space. It is the object that most clearly expresses the degree of visibility of the Muslim population in the urban space» (Laulloo, 2010, p. 9). Town authorities have been addressing controversies over mosques with precarious policy actions wavering between the principles of secularity and equality and the reality of the situation in cities. The outcomes of such projects are highly uncertain.

Furthermore, since September 11, Islamic cult places have been widely regarded as obscure spaces for the dissemination of anti-Western discourses. In many European cities this has resulted in a drive to transform mosques into open cultural centers where non-Muslim ears can listen in. By doing so, institutions hope to dispel the feeling that mosques are hostile to Western societies and soothe the fears of the non-Muslim native populations (Maussen, 2005). This, however, is hardly an adequate approach. This climate of fear needs to be overcome by adopting an empathic perspective seeing the world from the standpoint of minorities (Sennett, 2012; Nussbaum, 2012).

In sum, we need to approach the issue from a different angle, aiming for a joyous and creative hospitality. This is certainly an ambitious goal, but also an ineludible one.

4. For a joyous and creative hospitality

This goal should be the point of departure for a new approach to the theme of hospitality in Western cities,

starting from the religious dimension. Full recognition of differences can only be achieved if this hospitality gains unconditional visibility in the form of the urban space, as an expression of a joyous and creative "togetherness". We need, first of all, to go beyond Levinas and Derrida's general principle of unconditionality, which, while theoretically seductive, stands no chance of ever being put into practice (Bottani, 2010). It is evident that every form of hospitality involves a risk, but this is a risk we need to run, taking collaborative action within the public space and experimenting with new solutions. This is where we need to turn back to Lefebvre.

It is true that Lefebvre does not devote much attention to religion and spaces for its representation, but neither does he neglect them altogether. He sees spaces for the representation of religions as connected to the persistency of religions, to their capability to protect existing particularities, and as a defense against reductionist attempts at homogenization. He also sees them as generators of differences, not only in thought and art, but also in action (Lefebvre, 1970).

The aspects of the long journey into Lefebvre's discourse that I think are worth taking up again and fleshing out open the way to creativity and the crafting of strategies, beyond the opposition between reform and revolution, starting from Heideggerian *poiésis*, which is pro-duction, a creative act, the fundament of the concept of *oeuvre*. For Lefebvre, *poiésis* is human activity that appropriates the "nature" around and inside the human being (the senses, sensitivity and sensibility, needs and desires). *Poiésis* is a creator of works. It involves decisions and long-term consequences that are unlimited, although "unobserved", and is a repository of technique and invention.

«Instead of reflecting the real (as in the reductionist thesis), the work replaces, shifts the real, and seems to generate it. It proposes and superimposes a different "reality". In this sense, the work as a whole contains a utopia, it is the place

of a non-place. It does not point out the contradictions of the real, but shows them by going beyond them and resolving them in real-fiction» (Lefebvre, 1980, p. 203).

In *Métaphilosophie*, Lefebvre sums up the historical trajectory of poetic thought in France after the failure of the revolution of 1848. More than a century later, he feels that the poetic project underlying this trajectory needs to be set free, giving back to poetry its full sense as production-creation. To do so, one needs to go beyond the obfuscation of the evolutionist and continuist conception of space and time, and likewise the dimming of the classical concept of reason and rationality; at the same time, one needs to go beyond the mechanist conception, fully recovering Nietzsche's lesson. According to Lefebvre, we need to rediscover the intimate "secret chord" of a poem, which is truth, and the "secret chord" of truth, which is poetry (Lefebvre, 1965, p. 142).

So what can the objective of a strategic poetics of space be? Lefebvre grants great importance to the quality of space. He regards the absence thereof as the cause of the failure of many European Community initiatives lacking «a morphological invention» (Lefebvre, 1976, p. 361). The search for this quality must rise above the horizon of ancient monastic communities, whose objective was contemplation rather than joy. This is indeed the crucial point: «An architecture of pleasure and joy, of community in the use of the fruits of the earth, has yet to be invented» (*ibid.*, p. 362). To bring such an architecture into existence, we need an invention, which – Lefebvre concedes – could temporarily be fostered by an elite rejecting quantitative models of consumption and homogenizing processes. What is needed is a space where every individual can rediscover pleasure and joy. We need self-managed initiatives capable of harmonizing produced differences that wish to elude the system, along with induced differences caused by the system itself. It is in being together, in the collaboration between diversities, that the future can be lived, not

as an anguishing destiny, but savoring the joy of the instant, which is a powerful lever for acting within a «horizon of infinite possibilities devoid of the slightest connotation of danger» (Borgna, 2009, p. 69)[5].

But to push differences towards joy, a strong enthusiasm is needed. We need to look to the new urban movements, to communicative acts inducing to collective action, achieving change through the irruption of enthusiasm, the strongest positive emotion, and the motor of proactive social mobilization (Castells, 2012). And enthusiasm should grow hand in hand with an ability to commune with migrants, relying on empathy as a concrete way of dealing with the Other «on his own terms» (Sennett, 2012, pp. 32-3; Baron-Cohen, 2012). Emotions need to be stirred up to create space for the work.

The *oeuvre* plays an important role in Lefebvre's construction, a role he briefly hints at in *Droit à la ville*: «The city can be equated to a work of art rather than to a simple material product. If there is production of the city and of social relations in the city, it is the production and reproduction of human beings by other human beings rather than mere production of objects. The city has a history, it is the work of a history, that is, of specific peoples and groups who created this work under specific historical conditions» (Lefebvre, 1970, pp. 65-6). Lefebvre further elaborates on the role of the work in *La présence et l'absence* (1980), a book explicitly dedicated to «those who could make this legacy of Western civilization fecund: the idea (the concept) of the work» (*ibid.*, p. 189).

To rediscover the importance of the work – Lefebvre observes – we need to distinguish between thing, product and the work, where the latter acquires meaning as the result of a specific assessment. On product *vs* work, Marx and Nietzsche are at odds: the former elaborates on the Hegelian idea of productive work, the action of Man on Nature, and sets limits to the significance of the artwork, whereas Nietzsche downplays the product and exalts the artwork.

This idea can be expanded on by considering differential space as the work of the creative forces capable of composing maximal and minimal differences. It is a matter of freeing the creative capability of works from the suffocating action of modern state capitalism. This suffocation goes hand in hand with the suffocation of the social dimension resulting from its being trapped between the economic and the political dimension. This suffocation marginalizes creative forces by replacing them with representations – the inventory, the exhibition, the generalized museum – determined by the economic and political structure.
Within this horizon, the city «*centralizes* creation. And yet it creates everything. Nothing exists without exchange, without union, without proximity, that is, without *relationships*. The city creates a situation, the urban situation, where *different* things occur one after another and do not exist separately but according to their differences» (*ibid.*, p. 190).

5. Possible passages

However, to deploy a possible strategy to actualize and contextualize the Lefebvrian project, some passages

are needed in Western cities of the new millennium, beginning precisely from the most challenging issue, that of Islamic exceptionality. This issue certainly cannot be addressed simplistically, seeking refuge in opportunisms, velleitarianisms or paternalisms, which would leave to the Muslims the task of constructing a welcoming society outside of a suitable timeframe for the management of a change of this complexity (Allievi, 2010).

My proposal is to expand the question beyond mosques, including mosques within a "joy project" shared by both locals and immigrants in a "smart" neighborhood. To achieve full hospitality, this project should be based on a creative regeneration of what exists, and be paced to the timing of social processes. What I have in mind is a large transnational project with some basic characteristics. First of all, we need to patiently and tenaciously foster a bottom-up cosmopolitan vision. This will not be easy, but it is imperative. Beck (2004) has proposed several criteria for defining a cosmopolitan vision: looking at the world as structured reality determined by the *interdependence* of societies, as perceived through risks and their spread; *recognizing differences* and the inevitable conflicts that derive from this recognition; striving for an *empathy* founded on the opportunities and dangers of the virtual interchangeability of situations; acknowledging the *un-livability* of a global society without boundaries; asserting the principle of the *mixing* of cultures, wherein immigrants should be regarded as the main actors, whose contribution should be sought programmatically. Such a vision will not be achieved either easily or immediately, but as the result of a long-term learning process.

It is imperative to make the most of the vast available documentation on the building of mosques in Europe and the USA (Maréchal *et al.*, 2003; Maussen, 2005; Laulloo, 2010; Allievi, 2010). To quickly introduce the crucial issues, some examples may be of use, notably, that of Vénisseux near Lyon in France and that of the area near Ground Zero in New York. The first example

illustrates the slowness of these processes, even when the local administration has put the issue of Muslim cult places on its agenda. In these cases, a negotiation process is begun, where the municipality assigns the mayor a leading role and asks the associations promoting the project to mobilize and channel both political resources and specifically urbanistic technical resources. This kind of drive is necessary to influence political decision-makers on the basis of a common language, to be learned through inevitably laborious processes. These processes need to rely on relational capabilities upheld by adequate communication and technical structuring of the project and its image, in the awareness that the building of mosques is quickly becoming the controversial local issue par excellence, inevitably ending up by catalyzing oppositions and sparking contestation against mayors favorable to mosque-building (Véliocas, 2010).

We should also take stock of the mistakes and contradictions incurred in the planning of a mosque in the area near Ground Zero, in a reality well described by Martha Nussbaum: «Living in the Big Apple means to confront the reality of differences every day, and usually (if you stays in New York) you end up appreciating the energy that it yields» (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 220). In her book *The New Intolerance*, Nussbaum extensively discusses how to grant credibility to proposals for the construction of "hospitable districts" set up beginning from the cult places of immigrants, especially mosques, and which mistakes should be avoided.

First of all, she argues, planners should refrain from taking any action until they have clearly defined the character of the project, its nature and its function through a clear preliminary agreement with the promoters. Nussbaum places the stress on the opportunity to discuss the whole project in broad and in-depth consultations among New Yorkers of various confessions, Muslim leaders in the country, scholars and journalists.

One of the mistakes made by the builders of the mosque in New York was to go public with the project before having reached a clear agreement on what its nature was going to be, and before having consulted with the local community. This was a serious mistake, especially considering that this community's original objective had been to create a multi-confessional center as a symbol of religious reconciliation and concord, showing that Muslims can cooperate with people of other religions in a climate of concord and inclusion right there where many New Yorkers had been killed – including Muslim New Yorkers.

The most sensitive question was to decide whether the center was to be a mosque or a mere "space for prayer", the difference being that a mosque is under the obligation to admit any Muslim, whereas a prayer space can select its users.

Furthermore, maximum clarity is required in fund raising. Should funding come from all the world, without excluding non-democratic Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, or just from the USA, and especially New York, and from those who adhere to "American values"?

Effective communication is needed, and should be based on preliminary consultation. The discussion that followed went beyond the general acknowledgement of the limitations of urban plans. Indeed, on Park 51 the battle was not over a new urban regulation of Lower Manhattan; it was only waged on the terrain of ethics.

Such past experiences should be gathered and incorporated into a wider strategy. We should strive, starting from cult places, for a complete reorganization of the urban space to allow Muslims to cohabit with autochthonous residents, and we should do so with imagination and creativity, completely regenerating the existing space. The objective should not be to "allow" the constitution of an Islamic space (Allievi, 2005), or to foster the formation of plural religious centers, but to create a connection between the Islamic space and the autochthonous urban subsystems. The goal should be to define strategies consistent with the two modes of settlement of Muslims in Europe, *viz.*, the one mainly found in north-central Europe, where «Islam becomes evident, where it no longer needs to be expressed because it is lived» (*ibid.*, p. 124), and the one prevailing in Mediterranean Europe. Focusing on this second mode, we could think of working synergically with the ongoing renovation of semi-consolidated urban areas as a result of tertiarization processes connected to the entertainment and shopping industry. We need to reconsider the structure of cities from the perspective of joyous hospitality, in a spirit of empathy and maintaining an open discussion between the model of the Mediterranean European city and the Islamic model. It would be a matter of implanting and bringing together the basic elements of this model (mosques, *kuttab* and *madrasa*, schools and institutes, *wafq*, and religious foundations owning cult and teaching places), as well as organizing work and a shared project for the whole range of immigrants' everyday practices (residing, praying, working, meeting, having fun, studying). The project should also take account of studies of the impacts of mosques on land-use (Mourad, 2006; Belli, De Leo, 2011).

There could be two points of attack: mosques, and an inversion of the trend for immigrants to settle in the most deteriorated neighborhoods due to difficulties in accessing the real estate market. We need to plan neighborhoods offering creative hospitality, looking beyond the already problematic issue of mosque-building. Ample consideration should be granted to the quality of urban space and the overall essence of a rich urban life. We could think of incrementing and concretizing the four virtues that Marion Young (1990) regards as foundational of her normative ideal of urban life: social differentiation without exclusion; a variety of activities; an eroticism open to the new, the surprising, and the strange; publicity of the critical

activity concretized in the existence of spaces and sites for discussion open to all.

But our main concern must necessarily be the material and symbolic components of a decent life in the city. We can then think of expanding Young's "four virtues" through strategies for the regeneration of deteriorated urban parts, affirming the symbolical value of creativity applied to manifestations of deterioration in the Western city, and proposing a dense and innovative conception of "smartness", well beyond the technocratic horizon (Donolo, 2011) that informs it: an emotional, bottom-up smartness. The goal should be to strongly prompt administrations to accelerate a growth phenomenon that should not be left to a laborious and spontaneous struggle to fit into the interstices of the urban fabric (Cagnardi, 2000).

Such an initiative could be something similar to the "Save Me" campaign set under way in the German Federal Republic to assist refugees in a condition of poverty in camps all over the world, a base movement that extended to more than 30 towns and regional localities (Harth, 2010). It would provide an opportunity to experiment with the public urban space, establishing a *democratic iteration* with local institutions through democratic participation promoted by groups of immigrants, technicians and associations (Benhabib, 2004).

6. We need to accept the risk of offering an "impure" hospitality

"Urban hospitality" is homologous to the Lefebvrian differential space, *i.e.*, it offers extreme forms of spatial ordering (?). It can be described through the metaphor of "infidelity" to the legacy of European cities, with an allusion to the dilemma of "impure" hospitality narrated by Pierre Klossowski (1965) in his trilogy *Lois de l'hospitalité* (1965) and especially in *Roberte ce soir*: a hospitality that rests on the host's "sharing of happiness", where this happiness consists of the host's conjugal relationship with his wife; even if this sharing can lead as far as infidelity of the wife with the guest (Marroni, 2004).

A risk? Certainly, but where there is risk there is salvation.

Notes

1   On Lefebvre's classical distinction between maximal and minimal differences, see Belli (2012, p. 43).
2   Rather than calling them "post-metropolitan" (Brenner, 2000; Soja, 2010), I prefer to call them "alter-metropolitan" (to stress the difference with the multi-scalar configurations read by American geographers), as Negri does with "alter-modern" vs "post-modern".
3   McCann has observed that, in spite of Lefebvre's evident overlooking of the issue of racial identity, his work nevertheless helps us to understand how in American cities the production of public space and the maintaining of security is connected to their representation, whereby in the processes connecting subjective identity with material urban spaces there is a constitutive mutual relationship. On the distance of Lefebvre's discourse from cultural differentialism as regards the presumed threat posed by immigrants to Western culture, see, among many studies, Dal Lago (2009).
4   The book focuses on the theme of identity and difference in a crucial phase in social theorists' interest in urban life. The authors approach postmodern critical theory with a dubitative and problematic attitude that leads them to shatter pre-existing social and urban theories. «Emphasizing differences does not mean simply to distinguish new, more nuanced, or unpredictable geographies of the city. It also means to deal with the several ways in which social and spatial specificity can transform structures of power and privilege, the ways in which oppressed groups can, through a politics of identity and place, claim rights, resist, and subvert» (Fincher, Jacobs, 1998, p. 2). The orientation is to draw urban geographies no longer based on traditional social categories (race, age, gender etc.) but on new, more nuanced ones (stages in life, physical disabilities,

religious beliefs). The book also deals with the crucial theme of whether the just city can coexist with the city of differences. And it leans on the position of Iris Marion Young (1990), who sees oppression as a consequence of complex differences systematically reproduced by the principal economic, political and relational institutions. The authors propose a pragmatics of justice built around equitable redistributive actions inspired by a respect of difference and, in the last analysis, by Lefebvre's "right to the city". They also take up again Nancy Fraser's argument for a justice built on both redistribution and the acknowledgement of differences, distancing themselves from universalizing spatial visions and opening up to geographies giving due regard to the Lesser, the Marginal, the Other. Agreeing with Eleanor Kofman ("Whose city?"), the authors also advocate heightened attention to the theme of migrations and gender differences, both in studies on the labor market and in studies on the housing, services and welfare markets. They categorize migrants as an integral part of the emergent underclass in the main European cities. In the authors' consideration of the specificity of European cities compared to American ones, the former appear as entities resisting globalization-induced processes of homologation. In particular, Fincher and Jacobs interpret Lefebvre's "right to the city" not only as the right to appropriate spaces for participation in decision-making processes, but also as an integral aspect of citizenship.

5   This quest for a new space making the most of the encounter with the Other realizes joy in Spinoza's sense of the word, as a «transition […] from a lesser to a higher perfection» (Spinoza, 2000, p. 219). For a sociology of affections going beyond the individualist fabric towards the "common" by incorporating Spinoza's thought in a Foucauldian horizon, see Negri (2012).

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